

Qualitative responses to Members Questionnaire Survey

Has the scheme enabled you to fill gaps in funding? Do you think the scheme was effective in supporting local groups?

- It's give members in Chard an opportunity to pool their resources to achieve a bigger amount of funding
- I have been able to support groups that before have not been in my remit to do so
- I have probably been able to fill gaps but am not yet 'au fait' with which projects are eligible for other grants
- It's improved communication for the local community
- I've helped small groups with small needs, unable to qualify for other SSDC grants
- I can help organisations needing a quick response
- Very effective – you can see the money being used
- I was able to fund a project that would not have taken place without my funding
- We've been able to get CCTV in and running
- I've funded refurbishments for otherwise ineligible buildings and 'one-off' projects
- Good for small grants or top-up to help things proceed to fruition
- Has certainly filled gaps in funding
- Very useful for pump priming with minimum bureaucracy
- You could argue that all the groups were eligible for other SSDC grants in some way or another. However almost all the groups I supported would not have thought of going to SSDC for such a small grant, therefore the events or projects would not have happened or would have taken a long time to achieve for small organisations
- With my £2.5k I supported applications who failed at the Opportunity Crewkerne. My funding also encouraged match funding from other areas, and other grants gave much needed encouragement to their own fundraising, where funds are hard to acquire
- All my grant went on an urgent requirement to replace a community centre's door, which couldn't wait for the committee cycle
- It is useful for small grants where the money removes the need to apply for SSDC grants
- I think we provide grants for small community projects through the Areas and this is just one more tier of funding. The plus side is the speed in which the money can be accessed
- It helped organisations ask for a small amount of money that can be released quickly
- Core funding for small voluntary groups
- Filled gaps but these were not priority schemes – eg. funding village notice boards is a ridiculous use of the funds and PCs should raise this through their precept
- Groups are always pleased to have handouts but the worthwhile schemes could just as easily have been funded through our existing Area mechanism. If this is not flexible enough to deal with small grants then we could easily change the criteria and leave the Area Officers to deal with applications in the existing way which is proven
- None – the ADM already has a delegated budget of up to £300 that can be used to fill gaps of urgent need
- Some parishes strongly suggested that I support a project that they could well fund themselves!
- Not sure – other funding sources take perhaps longer to find
- The simplicity and ease of applications meant things could happen quickly and successfully

Have you had any feedback from groups you've supported?

- Parish Council and public very grateful
- All very grateful – good press coverage
- Feedback all very positive
- Good feedback – encourages local publicity and more fundraising
- I've had good feedback and have been invited to see the work my funding has achieved
- I'm awaiting feedback from 2 projects – this will involve my presence once the video camera has been commissioned and the climbing ropes installed. Both groups are encouraging PR.

- Appreciated by all supported
- Local groups very supportive. It's given me greater feedback from community groups
- Very helpful – good feedback
- Yes – very pleased
- Very enthusiastic emails and thanks from all groups
- For me this was one of the most pleasing things. My experience has been that most of the groups have become more aware of the partnership working available. It has made them realise they may be eligible for SSDC grants and elsewhere, that what they do is valuable to our communities sustainability and that we as their elected members and the Local Authority recognise that
- “Thank-yous”
- Projects were slow in coming forward
- All the groups feel it is an excellent way of getting small amounts of money quickly without jumping through so many hoops, forms and red tape
- Feedback ranges from relief to ecstasy
- Good response especially from schools
- It has been appreciated by the groups I've supported and it has enable them to fund other projects with the parish precept
- The schemes I supported would have happened anyway

Has the scheme added flexibility and value to your role as a Councillor?

- It shows that SSDC is hands on and aware of shortages within own wards
- I'm able to actively support important community projects
- It's given me more local and personal contact
- It shows that councillors now have the ability to give financial backing where it counts – locally
- It's the perfect vehicle for being a 'ward champion' – it's good that we follow up on results ourselves, and it's good for working collaboratively with other councillors outside my ward
- It has enabled me to bond with local groups I ordinarily wouldn't have known about
- It's enabled me to interact with parts of the community with which I would never really have any bearing. Likewise more people see myself in person rather than hearsay
- I feel at the grass roots you know the genuine needs of the people and town
- Able to be a local champion
- I've been able to select the needs of Somerton and Compton Dundon
- I can help pump prime small groups
- Given me more personal involvement
- Can be seen to be involved by whole community
- It's helped reduce bureaucracy and grant applications to committees
- The speed of achieving the grant and the simple form filling exercise made the process very easy and quick. It was nice not to just be a 'signposting' service – rather to be able to actually make a decision! The variety of the schemes supported was pleasing. It raised the profile of what local councillors can achieve and I hope enthused more people to become involved in the political process because they could see that it can make a difference to people's lives
- It allowed a more timely response
- Very effective scheme – definitely gives Councillors better visibility locally
- I think it has been good to put money into small projects but we do this anyway through Area grants
- Able to support groups who are doing small projects in the community. I feel we are more involved in knowing what the organisations are doing in our community
- It is the flexibility of the scheme to cater for modest requests plus the minimum of bureaucracy involved – it is responsive in the true meaning of the word
- Excellent way of improving communication links between Councillors and residents
- It feels like buying votes
- Not all schemes are worthy causes but there is pressure to be seen to spend the money
- No – it could have been invested more effectively on a collective area basis using the existing mechanisms

- Not at all – should be part of the regular Area process
- It has been seen by some in the parishes as a bribe and therefore devalued my role
- Marginal
- It has been useful and has helped groups
- Sorted small issues out more quickly

Any other comments?

- It's an excellent scheme
- Having established this scheme the expectations of the residents of South Somerset are that it should continue and improve
- We've now raised expectations and would be letting people down if it stopped
- I only wish it hadn't been so long awaited, and it would help if the councillor was informed quickly once grant has been paid
- It was very well run and it was a real plus to the community having a fund to help smaller community projects
- I was very impressed how the staff at SSDC supported me with my requests. A bit more guidance and help with the forms would help, but personally I found no problems
- If the scheme is to continue I'd like to see a talk from an officer to Full Council showing some of the achievements and how councillors have helped the community
- It's been easy to understand and to be able to select your choice
- The scheme is just about right
- It should be available for individual and group work ie. bigger issues
- It should be run again just as before. It's easy to understand; an excellent idea
- Excellent scheme to enable me to help directly
- Same again
- From my perspective the scheme was very well managed
- Less paperwork please
- An excellent scheme. Hope it continues.
- Staff were incredibly helpful and flexible.
- We could cut down on paperwork – paper notification could be replaced with email
- Having originally been sceptical about these grants I have done an about turn. In addition for new councillors and frontline councillors it does make you feel as though you can make a positive decision on something yourself. If you look at the bureaucracy involved in (for example) opportunity events (excellent though they are) where 18 organisations were supported, the Frontline Councillors scheme has assisted over 70 schemes in the area with little expense apart from the original pot
- I feel it was an excellent pilot scheme. I hope we can carry on with the scheme. I hope next time we can work more with our County Councillor to put our resources together
- All the grants I have made have made a real difference on the ground and I sincerely hope they can continue
- Should continue along the same lines, less paperwork if possible
- 77 organisations shared our 40k (at Opportunity Crewkerne 9 organisations shared 30k). Rather than going to Committee this was done on a personal basis – as a Councillor you had contact with the group, established a link with them. £250 can make a big difference to some groups in our communities and I consider this an excellent way for the district to give support. As a back bench councillor it gave me the opportunity to award groups in my community using my own judgement and local knowledge. If funding for the new year is in doubt I would rather keep these grants than the opportunity events
- We shouldn't run it again – the Area Development Team should have authority and budget to deal with these issues
- There is no mechanism for checking relative need compared with other wards groups
- I dislike giving money to "those who turn up"
- Very well run – especially admin staff. An excellent scheme which should continue
- I think the funding of £2,500 for councillors to spend in their wards is a good thing, must keep it going
- Same format again, but maybe some examples of possible 'client' groups that might be eligible

- Need to be assured that the priority of funding is appropriate
- I would prefer a simpler system where all the money is allocated to the Area pot and organisations/good causes are encouraged to submit bids. If the scheme meets an agreed criteria, is supported by the ward member and funding is available then we should allocate this on this basis, including grants for as little as £250
- The budget should be delegated to the Area Committee and the ADM to invest with more focus and strategic links.
- Great pilot! Pleased it's over and let us now invest the same budget through our existing processes and mechanisms and with more focus
- There is no financial control. No accounts to see that the money was used in the way it was intended. Accountability of grants needs to be restated
- Small sums are the only area where this type of grant would be acceptable
- I think SSDC is so well aware of community engagement and does such a good job that it has been a diversion to some extent
- I believe that the objective assessments carried out by the Community Development Officers for such community projects is deemed to be a lot fairer and transparent by local people
- I think the same funds should be available through Area sources (some difficulty at local level being selective)
- I'd prefer the funds to be put into the Area Committee
- As before – worked well, no changes needed. I think the 1 approval needed with the Area Dev Officer does enough to safeguard the District Council

FCCS - Feedback from Area West Councillors Workshop 2/4/08

(Paul Brazier - Area West Support Team Leader)

10 of Area West's 16 Councillors were present. Informal discussion was instigated about the scheme by asking 3 questions. The replies are listed below.

1. How well did the scheme achieve it's purpose?

- Brilliant, worked very well
- New organisations and groups could be encouraged and started with relatively small grants
- Much better spread of money than other schemes – small grants given to many groups (106 individual grants to 78 organisations)
- Small grants can have a big impact on small groups, and encourage those just starting up
- Positive effect of Councillors becoming aware of and involved in new and small groups in their ward because of the scheme, increasing their on the ground knowledge and presence.
- Encouraged to see small groups being able to do more because of the grant fund
- Some Cllrs encouraged groups to find match funding, which helped the group become more outward looking in finding support
- Good that Councillors could work together to all support a group (14 organisations had grants from 2 or more Cllrs)
- Pleased to support both revenue and capital items, projects and purchases
- Some Cllrs held back a part of their fund to offer to groups who were unsuccessful at the 3 major Opportunity events. This helped spread SSDC money to more organisations and reduced SSDC double funding of the same groups.

Overall – liked the scheme, found it really helped local groups and reaches places other schemes do not.

2. How easy was the scheme to use?

- Easy to use
- Release of money was very quick
- £250 minimum was realistic (only had 1 grant below that figure)
- Feedback forms received from a few groups so far, cannot foresee a problem with getting the forms returned
- Pleased that Admin will chase up feedback forms using a diary system
- Did not want to be sent the separate letter to say grant was awarded (so in West we decided early on to e-mail a copy of the award letter to Cllrs instead)
- BACS details sometimes difficult to get. Some would have preferred to present a cheque (I explained that SSDC discourage use of cheques on cost grounds. In West we often take forms without BACS details if Cllr cannot easily get them, and follow up with organisation direct)

Overall – easy and quick to use, want admin to be as simple as possible

3. Should the Scheme continue?

- Yes, strongly supported
- One Cllr was not in favour of the scheme, thought there was not enough accountability

Overall, would like to see scheme advertised in future, to make all organisations in the community aware. This could result in more organisations contacting the Cllrs

Overall – very supportive that the scheme should continue (with one dissent).