

Chichester District Council

CABINET

3 November 2020

Covid Recovery Grants

1. Contacts

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2. Executive Summary

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** That Cabinet recommend that the merging of the Community Recovery Grants Fund and Economic Recovery Grants Fund be approved by Full Council

4. Background

- 4.1** At the meeting of 21 July 2020, Full Council received the Covid Recovery Report and as one of the outcomes, approved the creation of a Community Recovery Grants Fund of £250,000 and an Economic Recovery Grants Fund of £250,000. Delegated powers were granted to the Director of Housing & Communities and the Director of Growth & Place to approve criteria for the grants.
- 4.2** Following discussion with the Grants and Concessions Panel, a formal Grants Scheme (Appendix 1) for the two pots was devised and approved by the Directors in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and the Cabinet Member for Growth, Place and Regeneration. The scheme was advertised from Friday 14 August 2020, and was open for online applications from 20 August 2020. For each fund, small and large grants were offered:
- Small grants up to £1000 which could include retrospective costs incurred in keeping people safe during lockdown. To enable quick decision making, approval delegated to officers.

- Large grants up to £5000 for projects being progressed in recovery (maximum award 50% of project costs). Officer recommendations to be made by officers to Chairman of the Grants and Concessions Panel, following email consultation with the Panel members.

4.3 In anticipation that there would be significant demand, the scheme was initially offered for four weeks to 18 September 2020. While there was a high level of interest, the funding has not been exhausted, and at the closing date the total value of bids received was as follows:

4.4

Pot	Allocation	Total applications (number)	Total applications (value)
Small Community Grants	£100,000	32	£25,250*
Small Business Grants	£100,000	57	£43,386.36**
Large Community Grants	£150,000	13	£42,081
Large Business Grants	£150,000	38	£120,591.80

Please note this is the value of applications to 18 Sept 2020 and not the value of approved grants, or monies paid to applicants.

4.5 Updates have been provided to both the Grants and Concessions Panel and the Housing and Community Recovery Group, and on the basis that funds remain available, an extension to 23rd October 2020 was recommended, and subsequently endorsed by the Director of Housing & Communities, and the Director of Growth & Place in consultation with the respective Portfolio Holders.

4.6 At the date of writing, the level of application following the extension has significantly reduced. Up to date information relating to the level of application will be verbally reported to Cabinet at the meeting. The extension coincided with the Government's clarifications about social distancing measures and reduced opening hours for some businesses, and applicants on both sides have needed to reflect on what is appropriate going forward.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

5.1 The Grants were proposed as one of a series of measures in the Council's Recovery Action Plan, which was to be short term and focussed, with targeted interventions that is agile and helps support communities, businesses and the Council's Services recover from the impact of C19.

5.2 In developing the Covid recovery Grants Scheme (Appendix 1) the scheme outlined key principles which were tested through the application process: Financial probity, Timeliness, Benefit, Value for Money, and Environmental Impact.

6. Proposal

6.1 In anticipation that the funds identified for Community and Economic Recovery remain underspent, Grants and Concessions Panel requested an update report to their meeting of 21 October 2020 and have made the above recommendation. In the interim, aligned changes to the existing scheme will be recommended to the Directors and respective Cabinet Members for immediate implementation.

7. Alternatives Considered

7.1 Following initial conversations with the September meeting of the Grants and Concessions Panel and the subsequent meeting of the Housing and Communities Recovery Group, the Panel are expected to be considering:

- A further extension of time. While they were typically interpreted as further restrictions, the Government guidance of 22 September 2020 sets out the safe parameters in which group organisations and businesses can operate for the next 6 months, and as time passes there may be a growth in confidence to resume activities, but require funding to support.
- Scheme redesign. The initial focus on recovery has been challenged by the announcements above, and it may be appropriate to reconsider the most pressing needs for support to the respective sectors at this time.
- In combination with the above, it may be appropriate to divert monies from one scheme to the other. While neither scheme is overbid at this time, the level of applications from businesses is higher (particularly on the large grants side) and hasn't diminished to the same level experienced on the community side.
- Deferral. As above it may be that unspent funds should be reserved for more focussed recovery activity in 2021, when the regional and national context is better understood.
- Return. The funds have created by reducing the sum allocated for the New Homes Bonus (Parish Allocations) Scheme, and the balance of funds could be returned for its former purpose, or for reallocation to other areas of the Council's Recovery Action Plan.

8. Resource and Legal Implications

8.1 The Covid Recovery Grants have been administered within a previously allocated budget and utilising existing staff time, and all of the above options are anticipated to be achievable with existing resource.

9. Consultation

9.1 While the focus on a high volume of applications hasn't facilitated much discussion with groups or businesses not applying, some feedback has suggested possible reasons for not applying to the fund:

- The perception of complexity/bureaucracy. Recognising the unprecedented circumstances, the Covid Recovery Grants applications have been facilitated on line and the number of questions significantly reduced. Applicants have been complimentary of the processing of small grants particularly, but the very fact that the Council has had to devise a scheme and indicate who is and isn't eligible may be putting people off.
- Time. Businesses and Community Groups alike are often reliant on one person who has the knowledge and decision making to make grant applications, and in current circumstances it may well be prioritising keeping a business or group running over finding the time to make an application.
- In respect of larger grants, the need to find match funding has been a concern.

9.2 The options are to be discussed further by the Grants and Concessions Panel and their recommendations will be reported to the Cabinet meeting.

10. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

10.1 The future remains uncertain and the full impact of C19 on our community, businesses and the Council will not be known for some time. It is hoped that the level of C19 within the District stays low, but social distancing measures are affecting the community and local businesses' productivity, and local or national lockdowns may still be required. Whatever decisions are made, the Council should remain flexible and adaptable to this changing context.

11. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation Positive - Applications are currently required to comment on their environmental impact and it is hoped that this will result in better outcomes, The scheme is particularly encouraging of the local supply chain		
Human Rights and Equality Impact – In focussing on keeping people safe, the scheme aims to have positive impacts.		
Safeguarding and Early Help – where projects relate specifically to young people or adults as defined by the Care Act, funded bodies are required to confirm their safeguarding arrangements.		
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Current application processes have due regard to GDPR in the collection of data, storage, and consent from the applicant.		
Health and Wellbeing – as above, the focus on keeping people safe, the scheme aims to have positive impacts.		
Other (please specify)		

12. Appendices

12.1 Covid -19 Recovery Grant Scheme outline

13. Background Papers

None