

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Community Grant Panel held at Online via zoom on 22 July 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.03 am and ended at 11.00 am

54 Public Speaking

There were no members of the public that wished to speak.

55 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 23 March 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

56 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jess Bailey; Minute 59; Personal: Member of West Hill Parish Council, and Devon County Councillor.

Cllr John Loudoun; Minute 59; Personal: Involved in saving a village pub approximately five years prior; and Member of Sidmouth Town Council.

Cllr Geoff Pook; Minute 59; Personal: Member of Beer Parish Council.

57 Matters of Urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

58 Confidential or exempt items

There were no items that officers recommended should be dealt with requiring exclusion of the press or public.

59 Community Buildings Fund

The Panel received a report outlining options to consider in refining the eligibility criteria for the Community Buildings Fund. Any changes to eligibility that the Panel felt should be recommended would have impact on budget and therefore needed to be taken into account in the budget setting process later in the year for the 2022/23 budget.

The Panel considered the merits and implications of including:

- All community buildings within town areas
- Community buildings in town areas but outside of the town boundary
- All community pubs.

Discussion included:

- The scheme provided relatively small amounts but were valued by local schemes where funding couldn't be sourced from the local town or parish council;
- Being mindful of any increase in budget in relation to the ongoing budget situation;
- Concern in expanding those eligible to apply, as that may mean stretching the existing fund too thinly;

- Sympathy for small communities, including churches, who struggled to get financial support; but care in opening up the fund to cover such anomalies as set out in the report;
- The current budget had not been increased in line with inflation for many years;
- The current community buildings fund criteria asked if the applicant had approached the local town or parish council for funding – in some cases such funding was not available or supported by the local parish;
- Opening up the eligibility to include community pubs and those community buildings in town areas but outside of the town itself, meant that a possible additional seven projects could be included;
- Taking into account the lack of inflation applied and the additional projects that widening the eligibility could permit as discussed by the panel, the panel reached an indicative budget figure for 2022/2023 as £35k.

The wider issue of supporting local community buildings that were available to the public to use was discussed, in terms of the proposals for the community asset transfer procedure. Many Panel members agreed that debate needed to take place on how public assets could be supported in terms of capital funding from the Council, but this discussion fell outside of the remit of the Panel. The Chair and Cllr Pook agreed to take this issue to the Asset Management Forum Chair to pursue further.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

1. that the Community Buildings Fund eligibility criteria be extended to include:
 - a. Community buildings within town council areas, but outside of the town itself and in a separate village;
 - b. All community pubs.
2. to recommend to Council that the budget for the Community Buildings Fund be increased to £35k for the financial year 2022/2023.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

J Rowland (Chair)
J Bailey
J Loudoun
H Parr
G Pook

Officers in attendance:

Jamie Buckley, Community Engagement and Funding Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer