

Crowdfunding Report November 2019

For discussion and decision: the future of Crowdfund East Devon

Possible recommendations:

- That the Community Grants Panel / East Devon District Council formally propose to Devon County Council that we keep monies left in the Crowdfund East Devon pot at the end of 2019 / 2020 to keep running our crowdfunding scheme in 2020 / 2021.
- If there are an appropriate amount of monies leftover, the Community Grants Panel / East Devon District Council formally propose to Devon County Council that we use some of these monies to set up a small grants scheme in 2020 / 2021 for our not for profit groups.

Background

A crowdfunding partnership was set up between Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Police and various district councils, including East Devon District Council in 2018.

Initial monies - Initially SMT and Councillors allocated £50,000 from our Transformation Fund to spend via crowdfunding. Our part of this, Crowdfund East Devon became live in February 2019. £4,000 of this money was granted to Axminster's community waffle house in March 2019, they are a Community Interest Company whose aim is to combat loneliness, mental health issues and isolation: <https://waffle.org.uk/why/>

Further monies - The Communities Together Fund, a partnership fund from Devon County Council and EDDC for local community groups and town and parish councils, ran for one year in 2018/2019. As it only ran for one year before DCC decided to no longer make a contribution to the fund, there was a £95,000 underspend from the £195,000 available. The vast proportion of this money was from DCC. DCC did not insist on the money being returned, and indicated that it was happy for EDDC to use it to invest in East Devon community projects, especially so if it were spent piloting crowdfunding. This £95,000 was added into the crowdfunding pot.

SMT gave the instruction that the remaining £46,000 from the Transformation Fund should be held back and the Communities Together Fund underspend should be spent first. It's still currently being held back, I'm waiting for feedback from SMT on what to do with regard to this.

What's happening in 2019 / 2020

The £95,000 from the Communities Together Fund underspend has now been available through Crowdfund East Devon for 4 months.

To publicise the availability of the funding to not for profit groups including town and parish council's, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises and others I have:

-) Sent out several press releases.
-) Used social media, posting many times on both Facebook and Twitter.

-) Sent several emails to all East Devon's town and parish councils, let them know about it, and asked them to spread the word to not for profit groups in their town / parish.
-) Sent emails to all East Devon Councillors, and asked them to spread the word amongst not for profit groups in their Wards.
-) Sent emails to relevant EDDC staff and asked them to spread the word.
-) Got the press releases featured in both Devon Voluntary Action, Action East Devon and Devon Communities Together newsletters.
-) Asked Action East Devon to publicise to groups they're still in touch with.

To inform not for profit organisations and encourage them to apply to Crowdfund Devon I am running free 'Introduction to Crowdfunding' sessions. I've so far delivered three, on:

-) 30 July 2019
-) 2 September 2019
-) 1 October 2019

A total of around 50 representatives of voluntary and community groups and town and parish councils have attended these sessions. I've also planned another two on 18 November and 2 December.

A lot of East Devon's voluntary and community groups are run and staffed by older people, who may not be so comfortable with using an online system. I worked with Action East Devon when they were still a CVS to explore how we could help community and voluntary groups to apply. After feedback they'd had from groups on crowdfunding we offered:

-) Training on how to put a Crowdfunder project online, 10 groups trained.
-) Training on how to create a video for your crowdfunding project, 8 groups trained.
-) Training on how to use social media, to publicise your crowdfunding project, 8 groups trained.

These were delivered on 10 October, 31 October and 7 November in co-ordination with Cosmic, a social enterprise based in Honiton. The availability of these workshops was publicised again as above.

As with the Communities Together Fund, and the Parishes Together Fund before it, it takes a while for community groups to engage with new funding streams. In its first year the Parishes Together Fund only gave out about 60% of the available funding, the following year it was 85%.

Groups will need to spend time getting together their project, working out their costs, figuring out who their crowd is, and planning their crowdfunding campaign. So even though groups have been trained, it'll take a while for them to make their projects live on Crowdfunder. There are a few projects in the pipeline that I expect to become live on Crowdfunder in the New Year.

Beer Men's Shed

So far in the four months that the £95,000 has been available, we've given out £4,500 to a project from Beer Men's Shed, who improve mental health and social isolation through engaging men in groups where they do practical activities:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/beermensshed>

The Beer Men's Shed project was for £10,000, they raised the other £5,500 they needed from elsewhere through Crowdfunder including local residents, local businesses, people that visit Beer on holiday, local groups and others.

In the wider Crowdfund Devon Partnership

In a recent Crowdfunder report:



So for every £1 pledged by the Crowdfund Devon partners towards projects, a further £2.45 was raised from the crowd.

What's could happen in 2020 / 2021

Crowdfund East Devon

If there is any Crowdfund East Devon monies available at the end of 2019 / 2020 we need to decide now what we want to happen to those.

The majority of the money is Devon County Council's money. I have provisionally proposed to Devon County Council officers that we keep any monies remaining and continue to distribute it through Crowdfund East Devon in 2020 / 2021 to East Devon based community projects to benefit the local area. As they are supporters of crowdfunding and want to keep the Crowdfund Devon partnership going they've said that they would be likely to support this, rather than asking for it back.

This would allow community groups who are currently having ideas for, planning and working on their crowdfunding projects enough time to get involved and fund their projects, which can take a while.

Small grants scheme

Depending on the amount of money left in the pot we could also offer small grants to our community and voluntary groups as a separate process. For example, we could set aside £15,000 from whatever is left (providing there is enough to warrant this) and invite not for profit groups to apply for grants of up to £300-£500. These amounts are to be discussed.

However, due to the resources available in terms of my time I wouldn't be able to administer many more grants than this would allow.

This year (2019 / 2020) Devon County Council has been offering a similar easy to apply for grants scheme, with grants of up to £300. It has been an overwhelming success both in terms of grants applied for and outcomes achieved within the community with such small amounts of funding. They have stated that the take up within East Devon has been high. Devon County Council officers have provisionally said they would consider us doing something along these lines. Their small grants scheme is called the Making the Connection Grant:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/communities/making-the-connection-grant>

The details and criteria for any small grants scheme would be decided by the Community Grants Panel.