

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Community Grant Panel held at online via Zoom on 2 February 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 10.52 am

76 Public Speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

77 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25 November 2021 were agreed.

78 Declarations of Interest

Minute 81; Councillor Jess Bailey; Personal Interest: Devon County Councillor.

79 Matters of Urgency

None.

80 Confidential or exempt items

None.

81 Grant options

The Group were presented with a report that outlined various options for dealing with the Crowdfund East Devon underspend, if Devon County Council (DCC) remove themselves from the Crowdfund Devon partnership as expected.

Options were:

- Continue Crowdfund East Devon with the Crowdfund Devon partnership via Crowdfunder (minus DCC) until the fund is spent. Without DCC as lead authority, the costs of running the Crowdfunder platform increase to the region of £6 - £7K;
- Distribute grants through crowdfunding, using a different crowdfunding platform, as being explored by other district councils;
- Create a ring fenced fund to continue the Small Community Grants fund already set up after 2023 – the current pot for this grants fund is likely to be spent in 2022/23;
- Give each Councillor just over £800 as a “locality budget” style fund as a trial scheme. Such a scheme was expected to be resource heavy to set up and administer; only able to run as a one-off scheme unless Members were able to commit budget to future years;
- Run participatory budgeting events in the style of “Dragon’s Den” throughout the District in order for applicants to pitch for the grant. Again, this option was resource heavy and could be limited depending on meeting in person under COVID safe conditions.

Discussion by the Group included:

- A reminder of how the existing scheme had operated, including some examples of successful projects;

- The Small Community Grants fund currently stood at £20k; the Crowdfund East Devon underspend was currently £74k;
- Some dissatisfaction with the current Crowdfunder platform, not drawing in sufficient applications, and for some inexperienced communities, difficult to navigate; in contrast, other Members felt that this option was easily accessible to many community groups;
- No support for a “Dragon’s Den” style of application because of the resource implication and that many applicants would feel uncomfortable with that approach;
- Exploring other crowdfunding platforms should be undertaken to find a cheaper way of running the scheme;
- No support for a “locality budget” approach, because of the significant resource and the expectation that it will be extended to future years;
- Based on the projects awarded funding to date through Crowdfund East Devon, for every £1 of funding given by the Council, delivered £2.47 from other sources;
- Regular training sessions were given by the Engagement & Funding Officer to those seeking to crowdfund, alongside some specific assistance for those struggling to make an application;
- Applying the funding criteria already in place for the Small Community Grants fund to a new, medium community grant fund. This would be a more traditional funding scheme, thereby drawing the current Crowdfund East Devon grants scheme to a close. This concept, working on the basis of grants being between £500 to £5k on a matchfunding basis, with 50% of the project costs being provided from elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATION to Cabinet

That a Medium Community Grants fund scheme be set up, using criteria similar to those in place for the Small Community Grant fund scheme, whereby applications can be made for grants in the region of £500 to £5,000 as a one-off scheme to award the £74,000 Crowdfund East Devon underspend. This would be on the basis of applicants raising a minimum of 50% of their total project costs from elsewhere.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

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

Officers in attendance:

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

Councillor apologies:

V Ranger

Chair

Date: