

Report to: Community Grant Panel



Date of Meeting 08 October 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Community Grant Fund

Report summary:

Community grant funding plays a key role in helping the voluntary sector uplift and empower the local communities they are working in and helping community buildings remain open and well maintained.

Following a review of EDDC's previous grant funding available for the voluntary sector a new funding scheme the 'Community Grant Fund' is being established. This grant funding will be available for the voluntary sector thereby helping support small community projects and community buildings.

This report details some of the key criteria and differences from our previous funding schemes.

The attached draft policy sets out the details of each part of the fund available, proposals for the amounts of funding that the voluntary sector can apply for and how the fund will be administered in practice.

If Members of the Community Grant Panel (CGP) agree to the proposed funding scheme a report will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Community Grant Panel

1. Agree the draft policy for the new Community Grant Fund
2. Recommend the final scheme to Cabinet.

Reason for recommendation:

The Community Grant Panel agreeing the draft policy will allow the proposed new Community Grant Fund to be presented for approval to Cabinet with the Community Grant Panel's recommendation.

Officer: Sharon Church, Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

☐ Assets and Economy

☐ Communications and Democracy

- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☒ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Community Grant Fund is a new fund being made available for the voluntary sector to apply for funding in the financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27. In the event of remaining or new funding being made available the scheme will continue into 2027/28.
- 1.2 This new fund will replace three previous schemes (Action On Poverty Fund, Community Buildings and Small Community Grants).
- 1.3 As agreed by Cabinet in February 2025 the remaining funds from the above schemes will be used for the new Community Grant Fund.
- 1.4 The total budget available over the two financial years will be £204,842 giving £102,421 per year for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Any funding not spent within the relevant financial year will be carried forward to the next financial year.
- 1.5 The draft policy for the new fund has been developed based on criteria set for the above previous funding schemes. In addition, research with other Local Authorities and internal teams administering grant funding has been carried out. Consideration has also been given to the voluntary sector feedback gathered on our behalf by Devon Communities Together and the VCSE co-ordinator for East Devon.
- 1.6 In addition a consultative meeting of the CGP was held on 5 August 2025 to provide the opportunity for Members to give initial feedback on key principles and criteria for the new draft policy. Some of the key points raised at that meeting included:
 - Some improvements to the policy wording and clearer distinction between Small Community Grants and Community Buildings.
 - Importance of prioritising funding of Community Buildings for rural areas.
 - Clarify the eligibility of Beneficiaries and who can apply for grant funding.
 - Allowing the scheme to run into a third year and to carry over any underspend

- Clarification on the decision-making process which will include officer recommendation
- Members keen for the scheme to go live as soon as possible.
- Members raised the importance of co-designing the application form with the VCSE and ensuring that we made it clear that we will want to promote successful applications.

Notes of the consultative meeting were emailed to all Members of the CGP.

2. Proposed New Fund

- 2.1 The attached draft policy sets out how the new fund will have two separate parts - namely the Small Community Projects and Community Buildings. This is to reflect feedback from Senior Officers and/or Members that we need to have funding available for both these areas.
- 2.2 Applications for grant funding will be linked to the Council Plan priorities – A supported and engaged community and Financially Secure and improving quality services. Carbon reduction funding and support for local businesses will be excluded from this fund as separate funding is currently in place for these areas.
- 2.3 Applications will be open to voluntary groups, charities and social enterprises with grants allowed between £300 and £1,500 for small community grants and between £500 and £10,000 for community buildings. The maximum funding for community buildings has been increased to £10,000 (previously £5,000) to help provide support for larger works such as roof replacement and kitchen and toilet refurbishments.
- 2.4 Feedback from the voluntary sector was received that match funding was a barrier for them being able to apply for funding and deliver projects, therefore the match funding requirements for small community grants and for grants of under £3,000 for community buildings has been removed.
- 2.5 As we are expecting a high number of applications from a diverse range of organisations for the small communities grant and due to the limited amount of funding available, we are suggesting that the maximum grant available for Community Buildings is capped at 50% of the overall fund.
- 2.6 Whilst funding will be available for small community projects across the district, community buildings will be restricted to rural communities within East Devon . The exception to this will be for those town parishes where they have a rural settlement/village within the town parish boundary. For example, Sidbury is a village that sits within the parish boundary of Sidmouth. Decisions on whether a community building sits within a rural settlement/village will be determined by the CGP.
- 2.7 We are keen to fund a wide variety of projects that help to support our residents, especially those where services touch on multiple areas such as helping prevent health conditions and improving financial situations, and/or where projects link in with already existing services to help strengthen and build collaborative working across sectors and help to avoid duplication. For example, community projects that combine growing fresh fruit and vegetable and cooking courses with that produce could have multiple benefits such as sense of belonging to a community, addressing loneliness, helping provide food for less and the health benefits that eating fresh food brings. All these outcomes may therefore help to reduce the need on statutory and other services such as the NHS, emergency funding etc.

3. Administration and approval thresholds

- 3.1 The fund will be administered by officers currently supporting the Financial Resilience team in issuing emergency and discretionary payments. This team is managed by the Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager and as part of the Anti-Poverty work the team are already working closely with the Voluntary Sector. Officers will be fully trained in scoring applications.
- 3.2 Applications for grants will be determined by officers using an agreed scoring matrix such as a Red, Amber, Green rating.
- 3.3 Decisions on applications for grants under £3,000 will be presented in a summary report to Members of the CGP which will include the officer's recommendation on the decision.
- 3.4 Applications for over £3,000 will initially be reviewed and scored by officers. Each application will be submitted along with relevant supporting evidence/information and an officer recommendation for these applications to be determined on a case-by-case basis by Members of the CGP.

4. Key Outcomes

- 4.1 To ensure oversight of how funding has been utilised outcomes of each project will be required on a regular basis. These outcomes will be dependent on the size of the project and the amount of funding granted.
- 4.2 In addition, reporting periods will also be dependent on the size of the project and amount of the grant awarded with more regular reporting periods being required, for example these may be at the end or throughout the duration of the project and/or grant period if the grant is for a large amount and seeks to help a large number of residents over a longer period.
- 4.3 When appropriate regular updates of funding awarded and outcomes will be provided to the CGP overseeing the administration of the funds. An annual report will also be produced and presented to Cabinet confirming the spend, spread and scope of each project submitted.

5. Summary

- 5.1 Feedback we have received from the voluntary sector has confirmed that they are now finding it more difficult to source funding. The proposed new Community Grant Fund scheme will ensure that we can provide much needed financial support to a wide range of voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. The funding will also allow us to help community buildings to remain in a good state of repair, thereby helping them to remain a key and much needed local resource of rural areas.

Financial implications:

The grant sums detailed in this report are from approved budgets already in place.

Legal implications:

Grants will be awarded in accordance with the adopted criteria and will be subject to a grant agreement.