

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 29 October 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Community Grants Fund

Report summary:

This report sets out the new proposed Community Grants Fund Policy.

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.

This grant funding will be available for the voluntary sector, thereby helping support small community projects and community buildings.

Funding will be for financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27. In the event of remaining funds or new funding being made available, the scheme will continue into 2027/28.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet

- (1) adopts the Community Grant Fund policy.
- (2) approves the issuing of grants in accordance with the Community Grant Fund policy
- (3) grants delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services in consultation with the Chair of the Community Grant Panel as the Portfolio Holder for Finance to make any changes to the policy.

Reason for recommendation:

In agreeing the policy, the Community Grant Fund can be made available for the voluntary sector to apply for this much needed funding as this funding has already been earmarked.

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 [Community Grants Fund Policy](#)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025, 6.00 pm - East Devon](#)

[Agenda for Community Grant Panel on Wednesday, 8th October, 2025, 6.00 pm - East Devon](#)

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
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Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 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 was approved by Cabinet on 5 February 2025.
- 1.2 The draft policy for the new fund has been developed based on criteria set for previous Community Grant funding schemes which EDDC ran. Research with other Local Authorities and internal teams administering grant funding has also been carried out and consideration has been given to the voluntary sector feedback gathered on our behalf by Devon Communities Together and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) co-ordinator for East Devon.
- 1.3 In addition, there has been two meetings with the Community Grants Panel:
 - Consultative meeting on 5 August 2025
 - Community Grants Panel meeting held on 08 October 2025

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 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 in rural areas. 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.

- 2.3 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, the draft policy proposes that the maximum grant available for Community Buildings is capped at 50% of the overall fund.
- 2.4 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
- 2.5 The Community Grant Panel asked officers to check that carbon reduction grant funding was available for organisations to apply as this area is excluded from this scheme. EDDC are currently running the Carbon Action Fund which allows for the voluntary sector to apply for carbon reduction funding. Should the Council cease to provide separate grant funding for carbon reduction then the wording within our policy has allowed for this Council priority to be included.
- 2.6 The Community Grant Panel made the following recommendations, which have now been reflected in the draft policy being presented to Cabinet:
- Including a procedure to check for existing grant application, in order to determine if a previous grant (for example during the first application window) had been used and provided the desired outcome, before any decision was made on a further grant during another application window. This was to ensure that funds were correctly used before agreeing to further funds to the same applicant.
 - Include asking if the applicant had made any request under another name or community group in the previous three years.
 - Clarify working days consistently through the document.
 - Make clear in the recommendation to Cabinet that any future changes to the policy could be actioned by delegated authority by the Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services in consultation with the Chair of the Panel.
 - Look at other options for expediting the decision process by means of online meetings and delegated authority to the Chair as Portfolio Holder Finance for those grants under £3,000.
- 2.7 Decisions on applications for grants under £3,000 will be presented in a summary report which will include the officer's recommendations to Members of the Community Grants Panel. To allow for expediency The Chair of the Community Grants Panel, as Portfolio Holder for Finance will retain delegated authority to make decisions on applications for grants below £3,000 in consultation with the Communities Grant Panel if required.
- 2.8 Applications for over £3,000 will initially be reviewed and scored by officers and submitted with an officer's recommendation to the Community Grants Panel to determine on a case-by-case basis.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 Work has started on co-designing the application form with the VCSE co-ordinator and Strata. Arrangements are being made with the voluntary sector to help test the application form when it becomes available to ensure it is as easy as possible for the voluntary sector to apply.

- 3.2 We are in discussion with our Communications team to look at branding and promotion of the scheme.
- 3.3 Training officers within the Benefits and Financial Resilience on governance and scoring applications will be arranged in due course.
- 3.4 If Cabinet agree to the policy, we will set the grant application windows and future meetings of the Community Grant Panel and look to go live by the end of this calendar year.
- 3.5 The Community Grant Panel were keen that as part of this funding we will be looking to ensure that the voluntary sector is providing outcomes of how this funding is benefiting communities of East Devon and that we are promoting these. This is reflected in our policy and will be part of the grant agreements.
- 3.6 An annual report will be produced and presented to Members.

4. Summary

- 4.1 As set out in the report to the Community Grant Panel feedback from the voluntary sector has confirmed that they are finding it more difficult to source funding. The proposed new Community Grant scheme will ensure that we can provide this much needed support to the sector.
- 4.2 The Community Grants Panel are keen to ensure that this funding is made available as soon as possible with the recommendations set out in this report.

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