

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE

Date of Meeting: Scrutiny Committee People – 1 March 2018
Executive – 13 March 2018
Council – 24 April 2018

Report of: Programme Manager – Communities

Title: Community Grants and Communities update

Is this a Key Decision?

No. ??

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council.

1. What is the report about?

To provide an update on the following:

- Community grants
- Community builders
- Grass Roots Grants/ Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Exeter : A young people friendly city - Exeter Youth Voice

2. Recommendations:

2.1 The report recommends that:

- (i) Council approves the recommendation to review the grant allocation policy and process in 2018 to consider modernisation and consolidation of the grant programmes and revised criteria linked to council priorities.
- (ii) Council approves the recommendation that the Neighbourhood CIL and New Homes Bonus funding agreed for community building in the city should be front-loaded in light of the Wellbeing Exeter and Sports England Local Delivery Pilot programmes for an initial 3 year period 2018 / 2020.
- (iii) Council notes the progress of the Grass Roots Grants / Neighbourhood CIL spend over the first year of this funding being available and recognizes the contribution of the Exeter Community Forum Grass Roots Panel in supporting this process.
- (iv) Council notes the 2nd stage of the Exeter Youth Strategy work in terms of the launch of the Exeter Youth Voice project.

3. Reasons for the recommendations:

3.1.1 In light of increasing pressures on the Council budget over the next few years, a review process will ensure that grant allocations are more strongly linked to council priorities and maximize opportunities for match funding. By taking a more strategic approach the Council can build on the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) that it has already adopted through its endorsement of the Exeter Community Forum (ECF) Community Strategy in 2016. This approach encourages community collaboration and requires communities and local organisations to work together to build

community capacities to take action to address local priorities and build stronger communities.

- 3.1.2 Front loading funding into the community builder roles over the next two to three years will enable all wards to have access to a community builder as well as a community connector. There are sufficient CIL receipts in place to speed up this investment which had originally been planned over a five year period whereby many wards would not have benefited from a Community Builder for 2 to 3 years. This proposal means all wards could have a community builder in place during 2018. Community builders are working with communities, identifying social resources, stimulating activity and helping those communities to thrive and develop.
- 3.1.3 Three Grass Roots Grants rounds have taken place so far with £167,913 awarded to eight organisations. The next round will take place in March 2018.
- 3.1.4 The Exeter Youth Strategy consulted with over 600 young people in 2016/17 as part of an Exeter Board led initiative. The consultation found that young people want to have a more meaningful voice in decisions made in Exeter that affect them. The Exeter Youth Voice programme has been designed in partnership with the Member Champion for Young People and other key youth work partners in the city. The project will run for 12 months and aims to encourage young people across Exeter to have their say on issues that affect them and to raise the profile of their issues and concerns in decision making. The long term aim is that Exeter Youth Voice will support the formation of a Youth Forum that will be able to work with the council and give feedback and recommendations on key strategy decisions. The funding for this project for the next 12 months has been allocated from Exeter Board funding (primarily Devon County Council Communities Together Funding).

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:

There are no resource implications that have not already been through the scrutiny, Council and Exeter Board agreement process.

5. Section 151 Officer comments

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council to consider. The front loading requested can be covered through existing resources and will be monitored to ensure that overall funds from CIL are not over allocated.

6. What are the legal aspects?

The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 state at Regulation 59(1) that 'A charging authority must apply CIL to funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area.

Regulation 59F(3) states that 'The charging authority may use the CIL to which this regulation applies, or cause it to be used, to support the development of the relevant area by funding:

- (a) the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- (b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area'.

7. Monitoring Officer Comments

As this report states, there are a number of sources of grants within the Council. It is intended that the review process will seek to review the number of grants and that the legal basis for the award of grants is identified in order to comply with statutory provisions, particularly concerning the provisions of EU law on state aid.

In relation to the proposed funding for Community Builders, the award must be in accordance with the provisions of EU law on state aid.

8. Report Details:

8.1 Community Grants – The City Council has an extensive Community Grants Programme where around £1.5 million p.a is awarded to community and art organisations through a range of grant processes. 366 grants over 2 years have gone to 194 organisations under 10 different grant ‘types’, but 50% goes to a small number of organisations.

There are plans to review the city council policy, system and process in 2018 to consider consolidation of grant programmes and revised criteria linked to council priorities.

Opportunities are being explored to create a Strategic Exeter Community Fund for added value and sustainability. Further information and recommendations will be made later this year.

(See appendix 1 for a grant overview and a breakdown of grants awarded 2016/17.)

8.2 Community Builders Update - At the City Council Executive meeting on 11/07/2017 and endorsed by Council on 25/07/2017 members agreed for £610,000 over five years (£300k New Homes Bonus (£300k) and £310k from neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levy: CIL) to fund Community Building across the City. This is to compliment and build on the existing community builder roles that are funded through the Integrated Care Exeter (ICE) Wellbeing Exeter programme until March 2018.

Delegated powers were given to the Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing, Communities and Sport, and Communities Programme Manager to agree adjustments to the original plans for the deployment of Community Builders and for them to do this in consultation with the Chair of the Exeter Community Forum.

The original plans, designed with Exeter Community Forum steering group (and in consultation with the Council Community, Health, Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure Portfolio Holder and the Member Champion for Communities,) were based on allocating a small number of community building hours to 10 areas in the city and to spread the funding over a five year period with a fixed amount of 166 hours per week which totals 4.4 whole time equivalent (WTE) staff. The original plan also assumed that the host (employing) organisation would match fund by 25% and local community groups would be asked to make contributions. The 25% from the host organization is now considered to be unrealistic at this stage.

Since the decision made by Council in July 2017 issues have emerged which present an opportunity to re-think and better align the original plan with other stakeholders:

- Wellbeing Exeter has been funded for a further 2 years through Devon County Council and NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to enable it to expand across the whole City from April 2018
- Community Building is an integral part of the Wellbeing Exeter model and ECC CIL funding for Community Building will be aligned with DCC and CCG funding for the co-ordination and social prescribing elements of Wellbeing Exeter. Exeter has been awarded Sport England Local Delivery Pilot status which will bring further resources into Wellbeing Exeter.

- CIL receipt projections are higher than predicted creating a larger pot of Neighbourhood funding (15% of all CIL receipts) than originally anticipated.

As a result of the mainstreaming of Wellbeing Exeter and the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot status we now need to consider expanding community building at scale and pace so that all wards can have access to a community connector and community builder. There are still some priority areas over others, with areas that have higher levels of health inequalities and lack of social cohesiveness and community capacity to address local needs falling into these priority areas. However by taking a strategic approach, linking with other initiatives offers a greater opportunity to implement and evaluate the impact of community building across the whole city from 2018.

The original plan, agreed in July 2017, was to fund community building over a five year period. This report recommends that this funding should now be front-loaded in light of the Wellbeing Exeter and Sport England programmes for a 3 year period in the first instance: 2018 / 2020. Anecdotal feedback indicates that the community builders can have a real impact on improving people's lives and supporting the local community to work together with the council and other partners in the city to achieve great outcomes for all. This revised approach will enable the roles to be properly evaluated as part of the Wellbeing Exeter and Sport England programmes and will allow the council to understand the full value of this work. If it is demonstrated that Community Building as part of the Wellbeing Exeter approach, is having a positive impact on the health & wellbeing of citizens this will then enable the council to identify further funding from neighbourhood CIL and potentially other external sources.

8.3 Grass Roots Grants/Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy - At the People Scrutiny Committee held on 2 June 2016, and Council on 26 July 2016 it was agreed that the Council would welcome recommendations from the Exeter Community Forum (ECF) Grass Roots Grants Panel as to how to spend the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infra-Structure Levy (CIL) (£3.75 million over 10 years.)

Grass Roots Grants include a number of programmes which all contribute towards the goals of the ECF Community Strategy endorsed by the Council. These include:

- Supporting Community Action –towards the costs of setting up or running a project that must be delivered within 12 months of the grant.
- Supporting Community Buildings - to support the costs of improving an existing building or towards a new building.
- Support for the Community Builder programme (see 8.2)
- Support for Community Planning – this is a new initiative that will be launched later this year.
- Community Collaboration – supporting community organisations to grow their capacity and capabilities to work with other organisations and to help start new initiatives.

All grant applications need to be led by local community organisations working to benefit the interests of the local community of an area or community of interest.

Three rounds have taken place so far with £167,913 awarded to date to eight organisations. The next round will take place in March 2018.

(See appendix 2 for breakdown of grants awarded.)

Grass Roots Grants are promoted through the City Council website, Exeter Citizen and through Social Media sites as well as through Exeter Community Forum newsletters. City Council Members are encouraged to promote the opportunities available to local

community groups in their wards. Information on the grants process and priorities for funding is available on the City Council website with links to the Exeter Community Forum website: <https://exeter.gov.uk/people-and-communities/communities/exeter-community-forum/>

8.4 Exeter Youth Voice - The City Council is taking the lead co-ordination role for this next stage of working towards a Youth Strategy for the city. Organisations are currently being invited to submit an Expression of Interest to facilitate the 'Exeter Youth Voice' initiative with young people across the city. This work builds on the consultation that took place with young people during 2016/17 resulting in the launch of the Youth Strategy in March 2017. The project will be delivered in partnership with the city council Communications and Marketing Team who will be supporting the process and help to profile the views of young people.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

Supporting Exeter's communities:

- Oversee implementation of the Community Strategy
- Explore how Asset Based Community Development can be introduced across the council and key services
- Work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of Exeter's communities.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 Community Grants – There is a risk that some community organisations and groups who have had grant funding from the council over a number of years, will become concerned that a community grants review process may result in grants no longer being available to them. This risk is already mitigated in that grant awards clearly state that there are no guarantees of on-going funding. The review process, and any formal consultation on a change in policy by the Council, will clearly set out the statutory responsibilities of the Council and the need to regularly review spending to ensure value for money. Following consultation, should it be required, recommendations to Council will include an equality impact assessment to aid members in decision making.

10.2 Community Builders – There is a risk that the impact of community building across the city is not understood. Through the integration of the community builder network within Wellbeing Exeter this risk is largely mitigated. There is a formal multi-agency Steering Group that oversee the implementation of Wellbeing Exeter led by a council Director. There is already a formal written agreement and service specification including a formal performance management framework in place between the City Council and Devon Community Foundation (Programme Manager of Wellbeing Exeter) which will be subject to regular monitoring and evaluation by officers. Reports will be presented regularly to Exeter Health & Wellbeing Board and through to People scrutiny committee.

10.3 Grass Roots Grants/Neighbourhood CIL – There is a risk that by agreeing to accelerate the community builder programme there is insufficient funds available at this time as the council is prohibited from borrowing against future CIL receipts. In other words CIL receipts cannot be spent until they have accumulated sufficiently to fund projects. There is currently £987,259 available for Neighbourhood CIL spend (01/02/2018) which provides sufficient funding to cover the acceleration of the community builder programme.

10.4 Youth Voice – There is a risk that this listening project could raise expectations that the Council is able to make the changes that young people would like to see. This is being mitigated in a number of ways including a multi-agency steering group supporting the initiative who will be in a position to respond to ideas or recommendation that fall within the

scope of their responsibilities. The council Communication and Marketing team are playing an active role in advising and supporting the project delivery team to ensure that communications are appropriate and that the “listening” nature of the project and that any critical issues for the council are identified and responded to.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

Supporting the capacity of community organisations to take initiatives, including through identifying priorities for the use of CIL, has the potential to support a wide range of groups across the city and thereby address issues such as equality and diversity, health and wellbeing.

12. Are there any other options?

There are currently no other options to take forward this agenda in Exeter as this work helps to fulfill the councils objectives of **Supporting Exeter’s Communities**.

Dawn Rivers
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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Exeter: A Young People-Friendly City – Towards a youth strategy for Exeter (March 2017)
<https://exeter.gov.uk/media/3758/exeter-young-people-friendly-city-a5-booklet-v5.pdf>

Exeter Community Forum Community Strategy <http://exetercommunityforum.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Exeter-Community-Strategy-adopted-22-03-16.pdf>

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