

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 26 June 2019

Present:

Councillor Vizard (Chair)
Councillors Begley, Moore, J, Oliver, Pattison, Pierce and Quance, I

Apologies:

Councillors Wardle and Foggin

Also present:

Director (JY), Active & Healthy People Programme Lead and Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance:

Councillor Phil Bialyk - Leader
Councillor Amal Ghusain - Portfolio Holder for Equalities, Diversity and Communities

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APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillors Foggin and Wardle.

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19

None.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 20

None.

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COMMUNITY AND ARTS GRANTS REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder for Equalities, Diversity and Communities introduced the report which described the public consultation on the proposed Exeter Grants Programme, highlighting feedback themes and proposing a revised Grants Programme to replace the current core, rent, city and grass roots grants. The report included:-

- The proposed Exeter Grants Programme;
- The report of the consultant - Red Quadrant;
- Equalities Impact Assessment : Exeter Community Grants Programme;
- Equality Impact Assessment - Exeter Community Grants Programme Transition Impacts on previous grant receiving organisations; and
- Summary of Issues Resulting from the transition from the Old to New Grants Programme.

The Director spoke to the presentation setting out the process for modernising the community and arts grants programmes following the commissioning of Red Quadrant to undertake a review and listening exercise in 2018 and further consultation in March 2019 with community groups and organisations on the draft proposals. A strong consensus had emerged for a single city fund and the Director explained the proposed framework, governance, priorities and timetable for implementation. The presentation detailed the proposed breakdown of the total Community Grant Programme of £1,065,000 into the following five grant categories:

- Exeter Ward Grants;
- Exeter Community Buildings Fund;
- Exeter Small Grants Fund;
- Exeter Large Grants Fund; and
- Exeter Move More Small Grants.

The Grants Programme would be resourced by the Neighbourhood Proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the New Homes Bonus and funds other than the General Fund.

An Independent Information, Advice and Advocacy Service would be created to help and advice residents with a particular focus on increased digital inclusion and an Exeter Voluntary and Community Sector Support Service would be established to provide practical support and training. It would have a key monitoring role in the grant giving process to ensure that application processes are simple and easy to access and encouragement given to underrepresented groups. Crowdfunding and digital platforms would help engender collaboration and new models of delivery. Tender bids would be invited for this process.

The Director further explained that an Exeter Grants Panel, membership to reflect the political make-up of the Council and with two community representatives and advisors would be established, responsible for strategic direction and ensuring that grant awards are made in line with the framework. In addition, a one-off start-up budget of £30,000 would be necessary to commence the initial processes including the commissioning of a simple to use website.

The Leader endorsed the transition to a new grant making process, highlighting the six priorities of:

- address inequalities;
- improve health and wellbeing;
- get people active;
- support communities working together to address local needs;
- encourage volunteering; and
- improve where we live.

He referred to the City Council's commitment to maintaining a robust grant giving programme for Exeter of over £1million. He also reported that the remaining Exeter Town and Parish Council Grant of £89,367, originally a joint funding initiative with the County Council, had been passed to Exeter City Council, and would be spent to aid the transition arrangements to the new grants programme. One-off grants to help support core running costs would be allocated to Ex Access and Devon Rape Crisis, both organisations providing services to vulnerable groups with protected characteristics under the Disability Discrimination Act (2010).

In addition, £25,000 would establish an additional Young Persons Small Grant Fund to be launched alongside the Exeter Grants programme to support grass roots projects generated by young people and £24,369 would be held in reserve to cover any particular unidentified emergency need that could emerge in 2019/20 from a group or organisation.

The Leader, Portfolio Holder and Director responded to Members' queries.

The start off budget of £30,000 was to assist initial mobilisation, in particular the creation of a website, a decision yet to be taken on the means of delivery. In the spirit of seeking to encourage community and voluntary participation in the new process, some assistance with expenses could be given to the community representatives on the panel whose independent contribution as specialists would be of great value. To proceed quickly with mobilisation, it was not considered appropriate for governance arrangements to be reviewed by Scrutiny Committee, the Leader undertaking to ensure that the Panel did engage Scrutiny Chairs as appropriate. He referred also to the monitoring role of the Exeter Voluntary and Community Sector Support Service which would also be facilitating an annual community conference where issues could be raised and to the annual Panel report on the programme. The Panel would also undertake any necessary adjustments during the year should these be necessary.

The Leader and Director clarified the match funding proposals within the different grant categories confirming that the term was not prescriptive and that the use of specific resources rather than actual funds would also be acceptable, as appropriate. The Director stated that sustainable support could embrace many alternative sources and funding packages, including, for example, crowdfunding. She also highlighted that the strategic city fund was a first step to securing additional investment through external partners and funders who could be seeking to offer added value and leverage for their own funds where sought by communities. A flexible approach would be necessary and this would apply also to nascent organisations who would seek some guarantee of Council funding to kick start their plans as well as more established groups who would look to a recognised funder in the first instance in order to build momentum for their projects. The Leader assured Members that these and other issues would be kept under review as the programme progressed.

For ward grants, for which £65,000 had been identified, the "sub-committee" determining bids would be the three respective ward Councillors. Community buy in to the bids was important and Members asked for guidance to be provided on the governance of this aspect of the grants programme.

People Scrutiny Committee noted and unanimously supported the revised Exeter Grants Programme in the light of feedback from the comprehensive public consultation process and the amendments made to the original proposals noting the actions taken to support organisations in the transition from the old to the new system and requested Executive to:-

- (1) support the report and recommend Council adopt the proposed Exeter Grants Programme and allocate a start-up budget of £30,000 from the New Homes Bonus Local Community Reserve to mobilise the new Exeter Grant Programme;
- (2) support the report and recommend Council approve the creation of the Exeter City Fund from the sources described and notes that the extensive listening and consultation process had enabled the Council to seek views on

spending priorities with regard to the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy in line with CIL Regulations 2010 (Regulation 59F) and the underpinning Planning Practice Guidance (PPG Paragraph 73); and

- (3) recommend Council approve the establishment of the Exeter Grants panel to provide strategic oversight and leadership of the Exeter Grants Programme.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.35 pm)

Chair

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