

South Norfolk Council Member-Led Grant Rules March 2017

These ground rules set the criteria in awarding Member-Led Grants. However as the purpose is to increase flexible and responsive local decision-making, Members are encouraged to make quick, sound decisions which support groups or initiatives that meet identified local need.

1. Local working

1.1 The Council has a long standing commitment to empowering people and organisations to do more to help communities throughout South Norfolk. The Council supports its Members in meeting the ambitions of the community and identifying and delivering local solutions, which in turn support the Council's corporate priority areas and the way in which we work:

- Economic Growth, Productivity and Prosperity: Providing the conditions to stimulate growth, productivity and prosperity, sharing the benefits of growth with our communities
- Health, Well-being and Early Help: Proactively working with communities to provide help at the earliest opportunity and enhancing the health and well-being of our residents
- Place, Communities and Environment: Improving the quality of life of our communities and enhancing the built and natural environment in our towns and villages
- MFT: Customer focussed, can do and collaborative and business like, efficient and entrepreneurial

1.2 All Members will take a central role in identifying and delivering improvements to the quality of life of people in their communities. Members are expected to be active in consulting with the community, identifying local needs and working with the communities to identify how best to achieve these needs.

1.3 This means combining and utilising all the experience, knowledge, skills and networks of the Members to understand what goes on in their communities and what the important issues are for local people, and to come up with innovative and effective solutions to make the necessary improvements.

1.4 The key to effective community empowerment is strong community involvement. We want to ensure that the priorities of the Council and the priorities of local people and communities can be aligned wherever possible, and delivered upon.

2. The Community Action Fund

2.1 There will be some initiatives which will require larger amounts of funding and to support this, the Community Action Fund is in place. The aim of this funding is to:

- build capacity within communities so that groups are enabled to be self-sustaining without ongoing practical and financial support from the Council,
- stimulate local economic growth, and
- facilitate creative partnership approaches to helping people in need at the earliest opportunity.

2.2 Each Member is responsible for receiving, considering and proposing applications for funding from the allocated budget. The applications must meet the following criteria:

- i) The funding will normally go to a local community group, but may be awarded to social enterprises, businesses, charitable organisations or other public agencies if the aims are being met - but **NOT** to an individual.
- ii) The granting of funding is for a specific activity and will not imply an ongoing commitment nor have a revenue implication for the council;
- iii) The activity being funded:
 - a. Has not already taken place (retrospective funding is not permitted);
 - b. Could not easily be funded elsewhere
 - c. Can demonstrate how it meets a local need and provides support to the community
 - d. Does not cover costs of routine maintenance
 - e. Supports the Council's priority areas
 - f. Has not received Member-Led funding from the Council funding over the past 2 years.
- iv) The project or activity promotes communities working together and does not unfairly discriminate against people from different backgrounds or religions;
- v) The funding can be used by the community group during the 12 months following receipt;
- vi) The funding cannot be used to support any activity more than once in a two year period;
- vii) As far as the Member is aware, making the payment to the recipient would not result in fraudulent or illegal activity or any practices which would bring South Norfolk Council into

disrepute. This would include ensuring that all recipients have any required permissions in place

viii) The funding must not replace funding previously provided by other statutory agencies such as the County Council; and

ix) Funding must not form part of the Parish precept.

2.3 Funding can be used for new or existing projects and work carried out by community groups and other agencies within South Norfolk. Projects should support the Council's priority areas. Members should also be satisfied that the project or activity being funded would increase community capacity and enhance the quality of life for local residents. They should also be clear that it will promote sustainable development in the area (that is, it balances social, economic and environmental objectives and does not cause damage in any of these areas).

3. The Application Process

3.1 Clear process needs to be followed when allocating large amounts of public money, therefore procedures will be followed to administer the Community Action Fund:

- a) It is the Member's responsibility to obtain sufficient information on which to base an application for funding. If the Member does not consider that project or activity fits the criteria or they do not wish to fund it, the Member should liaise directly with the organisation to inform them of their decision.
- b) Once the Member is satisfied that the project or activity fits the criteria and are happy to allocate their funding, they should complete the online application form in conjunction with the applicant(s). Two or more Members wishing to support the same project or activity should fill in one application form.
- c) Once submitted, the online application forms will automatically be sent to an allocated Inbox.
- d) All applications will be considered at the Community Action Fund Panel which meets up to twice a year (May/June and September/ October).
- e) The Panel will consider all applications in order to reach a decision as to which Groups should receive funding, and how much. In some cases the Panel may make a recommendation to assign a proportion of the total monies requested to ensure that the budget is optimised.
- f) The Community Action Panel consists of:
 - Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities and Leisure or substituted by another Cabinet member.

- Chairman of the Stronger Communities & Leisure Committee, **or** Deputy chairman, if not available, another member from the Committee can be substitute.
- Shadow Portfolio Holder, **or** substitute from their political party.

The following officers are also in attendance at panel meetings, but not voting members:

- Director responsible for Communities (or substitute Director if necessary)
- Either the Early Help & Prevention Manager **OR** the Community Capacity Manager

A minimum of two Members must be present at the Panel for it to be quorate.

The voting members will make recommendations for allocation of the grant monies; the final decision will be with the Director for Communities (or substitute) who will consider the views of voting members of the Panel.

- g) Members who submit applications can attend the panel meeting and speak on behalf of their application.
- h) The Panel cannot defer an application. It is either awarded or rejected at the meeting. If it's refused due to insufficient information, the application can be resubmitted at the next Panel meeting. However an application cannot be submitted more than twice. If it is refused twice, a period of 12 months must pass before being submitted again.
- i) There is no limit to the amount awarded at any one Panel; but the total budget must be spent within the financial year and will not be carried over.
- j) Officers will advise Members of the outcome of the application. The Member should request successful organisations to advise them of the outcomes achieved as a result of the funding, which can be published by both the applicant and the Council to promote good practice.
- k) All funding allocations and outcomes achieved will be made public on the Council's website and will be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee through monitoring reports twice a year.
- l) Those recipients of funding towards a physical asset are encouraged to place a Council plaque or sticker on the asset to recognise the funding contribution.

4. Role and responsibilities of local Members

- 4.1 The primary aim of community capacity building is to encourage and enable individuals, groups and relevant organisations to shape their local area and the provision available. All Members have a vital role to play, working in and with their communities to identify important issues, to help to develop potential solutions, to influence outcomes and to have a positive impact on the quality of life in South Norfolk.
- 4.2 Members must be able to represent their local community effectively to maintain open communication with the Council.

The minimum commitments all Members are expected to make are:

- a. to keep informed on key local issues and promote their community; and
 - b. to be accessible to members of the community, to act as a conduit and facilitator for local people and groups, and to provide information to the Council on local needs and issues.
- 4.3 Each Member will be allocated a budget (the Members' Ward Fund) to:
- increase levels of community capacity at a very local level;
 - allow flexible and timely funding of very small initiatives within communities;
 - enable communities to help themselves, as early as possible; and
 - enhance the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of the community.
- 4.4 Each Member is responsible for making decisions to allocate funding from their budget. The decisions must meet the following criteria:
- i) The payment must be over £100;
 - ii) The funding will normally go to a community group, but may be awarded to social enterprises, businesses, charitable organisations or other public agencies if the aims are being met - but **NOT** to an individual.
 - iii) The granting of the funding is for a specific activity and will not imply an ongoing commitment by the Council nor have a revenue implication;
 - iv) The activity being funded:
 - a. Has not already taken place (retrospective funding is not permitted);
 - b. Could not easily be funded elsewhere
 - c. Does not cover costs of routine maintenance

- d. Can demonstrate support in the community
 - e. Has not received member-led Council funding over the past 2 years.
- v) The project or activity enhances the quality of life of people living or working in the Ward and does not unfairly discriminate against people from different backgrounds or religions;
 - vi) The funding can be used by the community group during the 12 months following receipt;
 - vii) The funding cannot be used to support any activity more than once in a two year period.
 - viii) As far as the Member is aware, making the payment to the recipient would not result in fraudulent or illegal activity or any practices which would bring South Norfolk Council into disrepute. This would include ensuring that all recipients have any required permissions in place.
 - ix) The funding must not replace funding previously provided by other statutory agencies such as the County Council.
 - x) Funding must not form part of the Parish precept.
- 4.5 Each Member is responsible for assessing, agreeing and evaluating each initiative against these criteria. Each Member must satisfy himself/herself that the funding of money would not bring the Council into disrepute or result in fraudulent or illegal activity. It is the responsibility of each Member to evaluate the merits of any payments.
- 4.6 There must be a transparent audit trail in respect of decisions. In compliance with the legislation, the individual Member is responsible for ensuring a record is made in writing of any decision or action she or he has taken. The online Member Ward Grant Notice of Decision Form will form both the request to process a particular payment and also the record of that decision and reasons for it.
- 4.7 Following submission of the online decision form the Finance team will process payment of the grant. From the point that the form and all supporting evidence is received, officers in the Finance team have 5 working days to process the payment.
- 4.8. In performing this role, local Members will be expected to work with a range of partners and stakeholders including town/ parish councils, local community groups, town teams, local action groups, and County Councillors.

- 4.9 Members will be encouraged and supported to undertake a “ward walk” at least once per year from which they will have drawn evidence for the decisions they make about how to allocate their budget.
- 4.10 Twice a year the Scrutiny Committee will review grants paid in the previous six months and make any necessary recommendations.

5. Identifying other funding streams

- 5.1 Members should ensure that relevant community groups are aware of other funding that is available and assist if the activity or project they wish to be funded would be more appropriately funded from another source (including other Council funding schemes). Details of both schemes will be available on the council's website.
- 5.2 Members should seek to assist organisations in securing funding from other sources if their application does not fit the criteria of either funding schemes or they require additional funds. Advice may be sought from the Community Capacity Team.

6. Interests and Reputation of the Council

- 6.1 The following process should apply to any applications where Local Members declare an interest (including pecuniary) in the project for which they are making an application.

Community Action Fund

- 6.2 Where a Member has an interest they will be prompted to supply details on the online application form before they can continue with the grant application.
- 6.3 The application form will be shared with all Members of the Community Action Fund Panel for approval, prior to final approval from the Director for Communities. Details of the interest will be cited.
- 6.4 Should concern be expressed about the interest, the case it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer, or the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Members' Ward Fund

- 6.5 The Members' Code of Conduct applies to the exercise of the Scheme. Members must declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) or Other Interest (OI) in the proposal. No proposal may be put forward in which the Member has a DPI or OI which would require the Member to have withdrawn from a meeting.
- 6.6 Should a Member have any queries they should refer to the Monitoring Officer, or the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Community Action Fund – declaring an interest in the approval process

- 6.7 Should a Member of the Community Action Fund Panel have an interest (excluding pecuniary) in a grant application that they are approving, the Member may continue to act in processing the application; however, should they believe the nature of their interest means that they cannot consider the application with an open mind, they will refrain from the process.
- 6.8 If more than half of the Members of the Community Action Fund Panel have an interest in the application then it will be passed directly to the Director for Communities for consideration.

7. Finance and Recovery of Unused Funding

- 7.1 All spend will be subject to sufficient funds in the specific budget.
- 7.2 As stated in the criteria for both funding schemes, funding will not be paid to individuals. For un-constituted bodies that wish to obtain funding from these budgets, they should consider the following:
- a) opening a relevant bank or building society account relating to the activity;
 - b) collaborating with a local organisation that would meet the funding criteria
- 7.3 The Scrutiny Committee will give consideration to budgets, spend and projections. The Council will incorporate those reports into its financial and performance management and reporting arrangements.
- 7.4 Any underspend from the Community Action Fund or Members' Ward Fund of over 10% of the budget amount will be brought back into the Council. This is unless the money has been specifically allocated to a project that has been delayed. In which case the underspend can be carried forward but this will be the exception rather than the norm. Members should aim to spend their full allocation for the year.
- 7.5 In the first year of a new administration Members will be able to carry forward any underspend from their budget into the following financial year. This accounts for the period of time lost in the run up to elections and training for new Members regarding spending the fund. Members are required to discuss options for spend before budget is carried over into the following financial year.
- 7.6 Members should make sure that the funded projects and activities are delivered as agreed. Where that is not the case, the Member, together

with the Community Capacity Manager will be responsible for resolving disputes and taking action, including withdrawal of funding where appropriate.

- 7.7 If a grant has been used for the purpose that it was not originally intended, or has not been spent within the given time period then the Community Capacity Manager will follow the Corporate Debt Policy to recover the funds from the community group, alongside the Member who awarded the funds.