

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 7 September 2020

Title: Community Grants Scheme – Round 1

Report of: Ben Hook, Head of Service – Acquisitions, Transformation, and Regeneration

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dixon

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To present and recommend approval of Community Grant applications for Round 1

Decision Type: Non-Key

Officer Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the community grants detailed within Appendix A as recommended by the Grants Panel be approved, subject to specific conditions relating to each application;
- 2) the amended Terms of Reference for the Community Grants Panel, as attached at Appendix B be approved; and
- 3) all Members be requested to promote the small grants scheme within their wards.

Introduction

1. The Council's Community Grants Scheme (CGS) makes provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that meet the grants criteria of Rother District Council (RDC) CGS, as agreed by Cabinet on 1 December 2008 (CB08/115).

Community Grants

2. The Panel has delegated authority to award grants up to £500. The Panel has used its delegated authority to approve £500 to Strive Café for the renovation of a room to be used at the café. In addition, £15,000 is allocated to the HAIRE project for year 2 (Minute CB19/41 refers). This leaves a total of £114,500. The Panel meets to consider two rounds of grants, in July (Round 1) and February (Round 2).

3. Round 1 of the Rother CGS for 2020/21 closed on 15 July 2020. A total of six applications were received. Two applications did not meet the CGS criteria, we are working with these applicants and encourage them to seek advice from Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) before a new application is submitted. The Panel met on 27 July 2020 and have recommended awards for four applications.
4. Cabinet is asked to consider the following applications for funding from the Council's CGS as set out in table 1 (Each application is summarised in Appendix A):

Applicant	Amount requested	Amount recommended
1. Bexhill Environmental Group	£1,500	£1,500
2. Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall	£1,234	£1,234
3. Little Common Football Club	£20,000	£20,000
4. Ticehurst Parish Council	£1,800	£1,800
Total:	£24,534	£24,534

Table 1: Grants Panel recommendations

5. Should Cabinet agree with the Panel's recommendation to award the applications as set out above, this will result in a maximum of £24,534 being awarded in Round 1, leaving £89,966 for Round 2 and other small grants for the remainder of the financial year 2020/21.
6. Members are reminded that conditions are applied when awarding the grants which include full funding is obtained in advance of any Rother payments being made and that RDC is acknowledged in any publicity and promotional material associated with these projects. Other specific conditions will also be applied to grants as appropriate.

Community Grant Scheme: Round 2

7. Round 2 of the Community Grants Scheme (applications above £500) will open for applications on 1 October 2020 and close on 15 January 2021. An online form will be available for applicants, with paper applications no longer accepted. Members are asked to encourage groups within their Wards to seek advice from RVA prior to starting the application process.
8. Members of the Panel have agreed that it should be mandatory for all grant applications to have the written support of at least one ward members from the relevant area. They have requested a minor update to the Panel's Term of Reference, attached at Appendix B, to reflect this change.
9. Members are reminded that small grant applications (up to £500) are accepted all year round. Applicants are encouraged to make applications through the on-line application process. Again, support and advice can be accessed through RVA.

10. Further information is available via the Community Grants section of the Council’s website: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-funding/community-grants-scheme/>

Conclusion

11. Members are requested to consider the applications attached at Appendix A and be mindful of the clear benefits these offer to their communities. The Community Grants Scheme offers a robust assessment process that benefits communities applying for grants and secures considerable additional value for money benefits for the Council.

Implications

Financial Implications

12. The assessment and monitoring system for community grants will mitigate the financial and reputation risks associated with handing over grant finance. The Council attaches specific conditions to grant applications to mitigate risk.

Risk Implications

13. We are often at the hands of voluntary groups to the amount of time, effort and other financial support they can commit to their projects. This is mitigated by the good working relationships that exist across the district, and the support provided by RVA.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	A	Community Grants - Round 1 Financial Year: 2020/21	
	B	Community Grants Panel Terms of Reference	
Relevant Previous Minutes:	N/A		
Background Papers:	N/A		
Reference Documents:	N/A		

COMMUNITY GRANTS – ROUND 1, FINANCIAL YEAR: 2020/21

1. Bexhill Environmental Group (BEG)

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Bexhill Environmental Group is an independent constituted group run entirely by volunteers working to protect and improve the Bexhill environment and promote a sustainable green future.

The group wishes to plant approximately 520 trees and underplanting with a wildflower mix on 0.5 hectares on Bexhill Down to the north east of Down Road. Grid ref: TQ736083.

The trees will be native British trees apart from 23 Japanese cherry trees which will be planted around a seating area at one end of the designated area. The trees will be planted at random 3 metres apart to give a natural effect. An underplanting of wildflower mix will also be introduced. A path will be mown through the meadow to provide a route for walkers.

Benefits

Beneficiaries of this project will be the residents of Rother, particularly local people in Bexhill as well as visitors to the area. The Future Thinkers, the STEM club, part of the RVA TeamUP Communities project, have expressed a specific interest in being part of this project.

Bexhill Academy and St Richard's Catholic School have also shown an interest in assisting with the planting programme and incorporating the project and its outcomes into their curriculums. It is hoped that King Offa Way Primary Academy will also become involved.

In addition, the project will contribute to Rother's Environmental Strategy, when adopted.

Other Funding Sources

Hastings Direct is contributing £3,250 and an application for funding for £878 has been submitted to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

Project Sustainability

It is envisaged 10% loss of trees within the first year and 1% per annum thereafter; this has been included within the project budget. The site will be included in the BEG events calendar where members carry out regular work parties to check for health and maintenance purposes. Dead trees will be removed and replaced where feasible. It is understood this area is currently mown by RDC twice yearly but with the underplanting of wildflowers it will only be necessary to do this once a year.

Support for the Project

The application has written support from Ward Member Cllr Richard Thomas. Support has also been received from Cllr Polly Gray and Cllr Doug Oliver. Letters of support have been received from Bexhill Academy, St Richard's Catholic School, and Future Thinkers and the STEM Club for children and young people in Bexhill and Sidley through RVA.

Panel Comments and Recommendation:

The Panel noted that it was encouraging that schools are involved, and a financial contribution has been received from Hastings Direct.

The Panel recommend a full award of £1,500 subject to the usual and following additional conditions:

- a) Evidence of planting mix agreed with RDC Neighbourhood Services who manage the site on behalf of De La Warr Estates
- b) Evidence of all funding received is provided

2. Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall is a registered charity. The applicant will use the grant towards replacing the existing tables, which are approximately 20 years old and damaged, with new foldable, stackable tables and a large trolley for storage.

Benefits

The purchase of the new furniture will benefit all the village hall users including the lunch, art, gardening clubs and other individuals and groups who use the facility.

Other Funding Sources

The applicant is contributing £668.00 towards the project, matched by Ewhurst Parish Council.

Support for the Project

The application is supported by Ward Member Cllr Tony Ganly and the Parish Clerk Michelle Rumble. Letters of support have been received from the Staplecross and Ewhurst Green WI and the Staplecross Lunch Club.

Panel Comments and Recommendation:

The Panel recommend a full award of £1,234 subject to the usual grant conditions.

3. Little Common Football Club

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Little Common Football Club is a voluntary non-profit club serving the local community for the past 54 years. It is the club's aspiration to develop its facilities to the required standard to be able to compete at the highest possible level.

The club wishes to use the grant to help fund the ground grading improvements required by the Football Association at its home ground (on the main pitch) at Little Common Recreation Ground, along with the purchase of a mower and line marking equipment for ground maintenance.

This will allow the club to return to its hometown following a temporary arrangement for the last three seasons to ground share with Eastbourne United AFC.

In November 2019 Cabinet agreed in principle to permanently enclose Pitch 4, land disposal and 8-year lease to Little Common Football club (Minute CB19/61 refers).

A planning application was submitted in February 2020 to carry out the necessary works to include: enclosure of the pitch with a V-mesh fencing and gates (for public access); replacement of pitch side barrier; installation of a 50 seat and 75 standing spectator stands; extension of tarmac path to enable hard standing on three sides of the pitch, including replacement of a damaged section of path; replacement of old and dangerous dugouts; The planning decision is pending.

Benefits

Little Common Football Club and its members will be the main beneficiaries with its 70 adults (X1, 2nd X1 and Veterans) and 200 youth members (under 6 – under 18). The youth element will benefit from better facilities when they reach senior level. It is hoped that in the future a girls/women's section will be formed.

The facilities will benefit a large population of the local community and range of groups, including community use for local schools and local leagues with its strong links with Bexhill Academy & St Richard's.

The project will provide a football facility in the Rother district which meets the ground grading requirements. In addition, this will aid the sustainability of Little Common Sports Pavilion.

Other Funding Sources

The applicant is contributing £10,400 towards the project. The Football Foundation – Football Stadia Improvement Fund has been approached for funding of £71,030.

Project Sustainability

The club will establish an annual maintenance and repairs programme completing works as necessary. A 'sinking fund' will be set up for the club to pay into each year and this will be used to replace equipment as required.

Support for the Project

The application has been signed by Ward Members Cllr Sarah Errington and Cllr Kathy Harmer. However, no written support has been provided due to a conflict of interest as both Ward Members sit on the Planning Committee. Support has been received from Bexhill Academy, St Peter and St Paul's Primary school, Little Common Sports Pavilion, along with support comments from the local community.

Panel Comments and Recommendation:

The Panel noted that no other suitable football facilities exist in the Rother District with the club's members having to travel out of the district to play home games. The project will benefit the whole of the Little Common Community and aid the sustainability of a long serving club in Bexhill.

The Panel recommend a full award of £20,000, subject to the usual and following additional conditions:

- a) Grant of planning application of pitch 4 RR/2020/296/P.
- b) Comments on application received by Ward Members Cllr Sarah Errington and Cllr Kathy Harmer following determination of planning application
- c) Lease of pitch 4 for 8-year term is provided.
- d) All evidence of funding received is provided.

4. Ticehurst Parish Council

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Ticehurst Parish Council plan to create a 'Petanque pitch' at Ticehurst Recreation Ground on a grassed disused area for Ticehurst residents and visitors.

Benefits

Organisations benefiting will include: Know Dementia; The Youth Club; Probus Club; The Youth Club; Parish Council, Primary schools (2), League members and many families who want to use the facilities.

In addition, the project has been identified in the Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan 2019 supporting local sporting facilities.

Other Funding Sources

The applicant is contributing 50% of the project costs.

Project Sustainability

The pitch is extremely low maintenance and the Ticehurst Petanque Club has committed to voluntarily maintaining it.

Support for the Project

The application is supported by Ward Member Cllr Graham Browne and the Parish Clerk Francesca Nowne. Letters of support have been received from organisations and members of the community who wish to use the facility.

Panel Comments and Recommendation:

The Panel recommend a full award of £1,800 subject to the usual conditions.



Community Grants Scheme Panel

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

from September 2020

1. Purpose

The RDC Cabinet requires a pre-assessment and recommendation on acceptance to be carried out on applications to the Council's Community Grants Scheme (CGS). The CGS Panel is assigned to undertake this task, ensuring alignment of each application with the agreed guidance criteria.

The CGS Panel will conduct its business in an inclusive, informed and focussed manner, enabling Cabinet to make timely, efficient, robust and clear decisions regarding the use of Community Grant funds.

2. Powers and duties

The Panel has delegated authority to:

- Promote the CGS to eligible applicants by way of Ward Members and member organisations;
- Receive and consider applications to the CGS;
- Make recommendations for approval or rejection of applications to Cabinet
- Reject incomplete applications;
- Approve small grants of up to £500 within a total annual budget allocation of £5,000;
- Promote activities for small grants via Members Bulletin; RALC Meetings etc and circulation of information (application forms and guidance details) directly to Members; and
- Seek expertise and advice from other relevant RDC officers and external partners, when required.

The Panel is required to:

- Have regard to getting best value from the determined budget and fair, equitable distribution of funding based upon the guidance criteria;
- Have regard to areas of need and hardship within the district; and
- Maximise external funding.

3. Membership

Panel Membership is comprised of:

- 2 Members of the Cabinet appointed by the Leader;
- The Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
- A representative from RVA;
- A representative from AirS;
- The Chairman or appointed deputy from RALC; and
- 2 RDC officers appointed by Executive Directors, to include 1 officer from Finance.

4. Chairmanship

- The Panel will elect a Chairman annually at its first meeting of the Panel at the start of each financial year.
- The role of the Chairman is to oversee the conduct of the meetings and to account to Cabinet at meetings where CGS applications are considered.
- Where the appointed Chairman is unable to attend a meeting, he/she will be authorised to appoint his or her own deputy.

5. Meetings

- The Panel will meet twice a year to consider applications to the Scheme and will also conduct its business by email. The meetings will be quorate when 5 members are present (or at least 3 out of 5 are Panel members and not Council officers) or respond to email correspondence, including the Chairman (or appointed deputy).
- Decisions of the Panel shall be based on majority and consensus with all members having an equal voice.
- Grant applications should have the written support of at least one Ward Member from the relevant area.
- The Panel is empowered to call applicants to interview. It is a requirement of the Scheme that applicants inform the relevant RDC Members and Town and/or Parish Councils of their application prior to submission.
- Additional ad-hoc meetings may be held when the need arises. These will be organised at the discretion of the Chairman.

6. Administration

RDC will provide administrative cover to undertake the business of the Panel, including:

- Meeting papers, notices and minutes;
- Correspondence with applicants;
- Record keeping and reporting; and
- Generate generic promotional material.

7. Declaration of Interest

- Panel members with a pecuniary or personal interest in an application must declare their interest at the first opportunity and withdraw from any consideration of the application. The nature of the interest will be recorded on reports and minutes.

8. Reporting and Review

- The Panel will submit twice yearly reports to Cabinet, containing an assessment of applications received and making recommendations regarding funding. The reports will contain sufficient financial information to assist decision making. Annually, the Panel will review the overall working of the Scheme and propose any relevant changes to Cabinet.

Glossary:

AirS: Action in Rural Sussex

CGS: Community Grants Scheme

RALC: Rother Association of Local Councils

RDC: Rother District Council

RVA: Rother Voluntary Action

OSC: Overview and Scrutiny Committee