

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

**Report of the Portfolio Holder Environmental Health and Community Partnerships**

**Councillor and Community Grant Funding Proposals**

**Exempt Information**

None

**Purpose**

1. To outline proposals for a revised Councillor grant scheme
2. To outline proposals to contract with The Community Foundation of Staffordshire to manage the council's Community Grants and Councillor Grants schemes from April 2024 to 31 March 2025 whilst the current Grants and Funding Officer is on secondment.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve an increase to the Councillor Grant fund budget (GS1002 34537) from £9000 to £30,000 from 1 April 2024 by:
  - Retaining the current £9000 Councillor Grant GS1002 34537
  - Permanent virement of £15,000 Environmental Grant GX180134537 to GS1002 34537 Councillor grants from 1 April 2024
  - Permanent virement of £3000 Festive grant fund GY1603 34537 to GS1002 34537 Councillor Grants from 1 April 2024
  - Permanent virement of £3000 from the Community Grants budget GS1002 31551 which will reduce this budget to £15,590 to GS1002 34537 Councillor Grants, recognising that retained funding will be available as per recommendation 2
2. Approve the retention of any underspend of Councillor environmental grant, Councillor Grant, Community Grant funding and Councillor Special Project Fund 2023/24 (where total in each budget line is above £5000) to be ringfenced in a retained budget for additional community grant/match funding for any emerging theme projects, e.g., Cost-of living crisis. This fund to be retained for up to 5 years (April 2029).
3. Approve the retention of any underspend on the Councillor and Community grant funds from 2024/25 (where it exceeds £5000) be retained for up to 5 years as per recommendation 2
4. Decommission the Councillor Special Project Grant Scheme with effect from 31 March 2024, but retain the budget (PM1685 - £5,318) as detailed in recommendation 2. This budget code will be retained and any future underspend as per recommendation 2 and 3 will be vired to this retained budget for up to 5 years.

5. Approve delegation to the Portfolio Holder Environmental Health and Community Partnerships/AD Partnerships/AD Environment, Culture and Wellbeing to manage the retained funds
6. Approve the updated criteria for Councillor grant funding attached as Appendix 1.
7. Consider and approve management of Councillor grants and Community grants through Staffordshire Foundation with continued reporting to the Grants and Nominations Committee from 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025 whilst the current Grants and Funding Officer is on secondment ,enabling further review of Tamworth Borough Council grant funding and support for the voluntary sector
8. Delegate approval to the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health and Community Partnerships and AD Partnerships to consider options for community grant funding going forward for future Cabinet consideration.

## **Executive Summary**

The council recognise and value the work of voluntary, charitable and community groups in Tamworth and have various grants which community groups can apply for to support their ongoing work, or specific projects in the town to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

The community grants are well supported by community groups and processed through the Nominations and Grants committee.

The three separate Councillor ward grant schemes and a special project fund do not have a cohesive approach to supporting our communities and are difficult to administer. These have been reviewed with the intention to combine into one meaningful and clear grant pot.

The voluntary and community grant schemes currently administered and monitored by the Partnerships team are as follows:

1. **The Community Grant Scheme** (£18,590 per annum) is delivered in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder and Partnership Grants and Funding officer with consideration and approval of applications through the Nominations and Grants Committee. This scheme runs very successfully with a good number of applications to each funding round.
2. **Festive Grant Scheme** (£3000 per annum) This scheme has been running since November 2017. Ward Councillors are allocated £100 each to award to a project that assists community and voluntary sector organisations to support the community at Christmas. Councillors are encouraged to link in with community groups in their Wards and request that they make an application for a grant. Councillors are able to pool their £100 grant to make a larger award to eligible groups. This grant scheme has been more difficult to manage as sometimes it is a struggle to get groups to apply for this smaller amount of funding.
3. **Councillor Community Grants** (£9000 per annum) this scheme was approved by Cabinet in November 2021 for £300 per councillor to fund Ward specific projects. Councillors can combine their fund to award a larger amount to eligible organisations. Like the Festive Grant Scheme Councillors are encouraged to link with community groups in their ward and nominate a group to receive the funding. The group complete the application and the councillor supports the application. Applications to this scheme can be slow to come in even though the grant is widely promoted to voluntary sector organisations.

4. **Environmental grants** were established in April 2022 to provide each member with £500 per annum (budget £15,000) to use to improve the environment in their wards for the benefit of their constituents. This grant was approved to enable small works on public space (excluding Housing Revenue Account land) to be undertaken that will enhance the environment in the area most relevant to them, allowing pooling with other ward members as necessary or to enhance proposals under existing planned revenue spend in conjunction with the AD Environment, Culture and Wellbeing

The grant was approved to be pooled with other ward Councillors and can be rolled over for up to four financial years to enable larger improvements with applications assessed through Streetscene to ensure any relevant short- or long-term maintenance or service can complement the proposal and by met by existing resources within the Streetscene services and further that it meets the Councils aims.

Take-up of this grant has been poor with only one application to date being submitted.

5. **Councillor Special Project Grant** was introduced in November 2021, established through an underspend of the Community grants during Covid when lockdowns prevented community groups from delivering community projects. The grant was designed to allow Councillors to bid for larger community projects over £5,000. Councillors can only apply for this grant annually, currently there is only enough funding in this scheme to award 1 special project of £5000.

At this point in time we have received no applications to the fund.

## **Grant Proposals**

It is proposed that the Councillor Community Grant, Festive Grant and Environmental Grant is combined into one Councillor Grant Fund to include all relevant criteria covering all grants.

Councillor grants will be for a minimum of £250 and grants which are promoted for environmental improvements will require a robust and informed future maintenance plan.

In addition, the Community Grant Scheme will be reduced by £3,000 per year to £15,590.

Each Ward Councillor will, therefore, be granted **£1000** per annum effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 (which can be combined with other Ward Councillors) to distribute grants for the benefit of their constituents.

Grant criteria is attached as Appendix 1 and Application form is attached as Appendix 2. The grants will allow for Councillors to work with community groups year-round to address community challenges, environmental issues, or festive assistance.

It is further proposed that the Councillor Special Project fund be de-commissioned from 31 March 2024 with the underspend retained and that any underspend on the Environmental Grant budget in 2023/24 also be retained if it is in excess of £5000 for up to 5 years.

This retained fund will allow for Councillor consideration for larger grants or projects determined in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Community Partnerships/AD Partnerships/ AD Environment, Culture and Wellbeing pending review of wider options for community grant funding. All retained funds will be reported to Nominations and Grants Committee on an annual basis.

## **Staffordshire Foundation**

Management of all the grant scheme is currently undertaken by the Partnership Grants and Funding Officer. The current officer has taken up a secondment for 2 days per week as the

Community Partnership Manager until March 2025 to ensure the Council meets its commitments under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and wider health inequalities/wellbeing work.

It is proposed that some of the vacant staffing hours budget will be used to commission Staffordshire Community Foundation to deliver the Council’s grant schemes to achieve wider promotion of grants available and also to further support opportunities for the voluntary sector in conjunction with the wider range of grants administered by the Foundation. This proposal is a pilot until March 2025.

The [Staffordshire Community Foundation](https://staffordshire.foundation/)<sup>1</sup> have an excellent track record of delivering grant schemes across Staffordshire and have been established since 2001. They currently manage Lichfield District Council and Stafford Borough Council grant schemes.

They will have a dedicated Tamworth grant page on their website that will link to Tamworth Council website. They will actively promote the grant scheme through social media, community forums and other promotional avenues. The Foundation will actively promote our grant schemes to voluntary organisations who are currently registered on their database.

Where groups are not on social media or digitally disadvantaged, the Foundation are able to use existing networks to promote face to face and forward paper application forms and information. Grants will also be promoted through our key anchor organisations including Support Staffordshire and Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) and the Voluntary Sector Forum/community events.

The Staffordshire Foundation have recently updated their current grants system, which will enable them to run real time grant reports, which will provide the Council with evidence of grant impact. Community groups will also benefit from the support of Staffordshire Community Foundation and access additional funding opportunities that they currently manage and promote. This includes an independent [We Love Tamworth](#) community scheme which will be re-launched and provide wider opportunity for local groups to apply for funding.

It is proposed that the Partnership Officer Grants and Funding will contract manage the work of Staffordshire Community Foundation, and also support the AD Partnerships and Partnership Manager to review the Council’s future approach to grants and funding.

The Partnership Grants and Funding Officer will continue to deliver support to community and voluntary sector organisations, alongside the other roles and responsibilities outlined in the Partnership Officer Grants and Funding job role description.

It is proposed that the Councillor Grants are approved by the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director Partnerships in consultation with the AD Environment, Culture and Wellbeing and an update on Councillor Grants awarded is provided to the Nominations and Grants committee on a quarterly basis. The table below provides proposed quarterly committee dates for 2024-25

**Table 1 Provisional Nominations and Grants Committee Dates 2024-25**

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Grants Committee Date	19 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2024	20 <sup>th</sup> November 2024	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2025

The updated grant criteria for Councillor Grants is attached at Appendix 1 and a draft application is attached at Appendix 2 .

**Options Considered**

<sup>1</sup> <https://staffordshire.foundation/>

No changes	The range of grants currently in operation provides some confusion for Councillors and is very resource intensive to manage. This option is not proposed
Create a single Councillor grant pot and trial administration of grant funding by Staffordshire Foundation	Preferred option during secondment of Grants and Funding Officer
Continue to manage by the Council	This option would require the temporary employment of a part time officer and would not provide some identified savings or allow a pilot with Staffordshire Foundation to assist the voluntary sector identify and apply for a wider pool of grant funding
Explore options for wider funding initiatives	This is recommended for consideration during 2024/25 to explore options for community grant funding. This may include social crowd funding, but will form part of budget review

### Resource Implications

There will be a cost saving to Tamworth Borough Council through commissioning the Staffordshire Community Foundation to deliver the Council's Community Grant Scheme and Councillor Grant Scheme for the period of officer secondment.

The savings at this current time are detailed below:

**Table 2 Financial Costings**

Current Staffing Budget Available	£
Staffordshire Community Foundation Costs to deliver TBC Grants Schemes 2024/25	£3,374.16
Available staffing budget available 2024/25	£23,715.60
Savings	£20,341.44

Management of the grants will enable the Partnerships team to resource monitoring of the grant administration, assist in further grant reviews, produce reports and manage other pressures through the management of the UK SPF and health inequalities funding.

### Legal/Risk Implications

There are no legal implications as result of this report.

RISK	MITIGATION
Staffordshire Foundation unable to support administration of the grants	The commission will have a robust MOU and agreement which will be monitored monthly. Reports will be forwarded for scrutiny by the Nominations and Grants Committee
Lack of engagement from Councillors/Community	Working with the Staffordshire Foundation and Council teams there will be a communications plan, monitoring and guidance
Failure of process	No grants will be accepted without appropriate paperwork and applications completed and approved

Lack of engagement due to lack of digital presence/social media	A range of leaflets/posters and application forms will be made available and promoted by Staffordshire Community Foundation for Councillors and Community Groups
Failure to understand group status/criteria	All grants will be awarded on the basis that groups will have a constitution and against criteria

### **Equalities Implications**

The approach has been considered in line with the Tamworth Borough Council Making Equality Real in Tamworth (MERIT) and supports the work of groups working with the most vulnerable in our communities.

### **Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)**

Grants awarded will have measurable deliverables linked clearly to the contribution to the Corporate priorities :

- engage with our residents to promote community involvement and civic pride
- help develop and safeguard our environment and open spaces
- help build resilient communities
- utilise Council resources effectively

The further review of grant schemes will give options for ongoing sustainability.

### **Report Author**

Jo Sands Assistant Director Partnerships  
 Karen Clancy/Steph Ivey – Community Partnerships Manager

### **List of Background Papers**

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Councillor grant criteria  
 Appendix 2 – Councillor grant application