

Division(s):

CABINET– 25 April

Communities Fund

Report by Maggie Scott, Assistant Chief Executive

Introduction

1. In February 2017, Council agreed to set aside £250,000 in 2017/18 for a pilot communities fund as a result of the county council's share of the council tax collection fund surplus being more than forecast.
2. This approach supports the council's commitment to a new way of delivering in communities across Oxfordshire.

Communities Fund Approach

3. Consideration has been given to the most appropriate way to administer the communities fund by devolving decision making to a local level.
4. As the fund is for a 'one off pilot' all funds allocated in year must be spent within the financial year.
5. It is proposed that to keep the scheme simple that the funding is allocated to each of the council's locality areas as follows:

Locality	Amount
Oxford	£50,000
Bicester & Kidlington	£25,000
Banbury	£25,000
Witney, Burford & Carterton	£25,000
Woodstock & Chipping Norton	£25,000
Faringdon & Wantage	£25,000
Abingdon	£25,000
Didcot & Henley	£25,000
Thame, Wheatley & Watlington	£25,000
TOTAL	£250,000

6. The purpose of the £250k communities fund is to provide grants for sustainable community solutions for communities to bid for matched funding schemes or projects to supplement services following changes/reductions.
7. Any proposals for funding will need to demonstrate sustainability and the ability to self-fund in the long term if it is an ongoing project. This will be a key

criterion for assessing all applications. In addition match funding is strongly encouraged, and we will be asking all applicants to demonstrate match funding.

Grant Criteria

8. All proposals will need to demonstrate sustainable community solutions to bid for matched funding schemes or projects to supplement services following changes/reductions.
9. The following are the key criteria used when assessing proposals:
 - The following are the key criteria used when assessing proposals:
 - Ability to self-fund in the long-term, as outlined in the application
 - Clearly defined costs and timescales for implementation
 - Evidence of the need for the project including community buy in
 - Demonstrating the impact of service changes/reductions
 - Engagement, partnership working and collaboration
 - Projects must benefit Oxfordshire communities, be inclusive and provide good value for money.
 - To what extent we can have confidence that the project will have a lasting impact, beyond the funding period.
10. The full list of criteria is contained within the guidance set out in Annex 1 along with the types of organisations that can apply and also the types of projects and organisations that are not eligible to apply for funding.
11. Funding will be awarded on a one-off basis and must be spent within the financial year 2017/18.
12. Successful applicants will be expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the council and signing of the application form at Annex 2 and/or funding agreement will be viewed as acceptance of these requests.
13. Applicants, along with their local county councillor will be notified by e-mail of the decision if they have been unable to attend the locality meeting.
14. Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the county council.

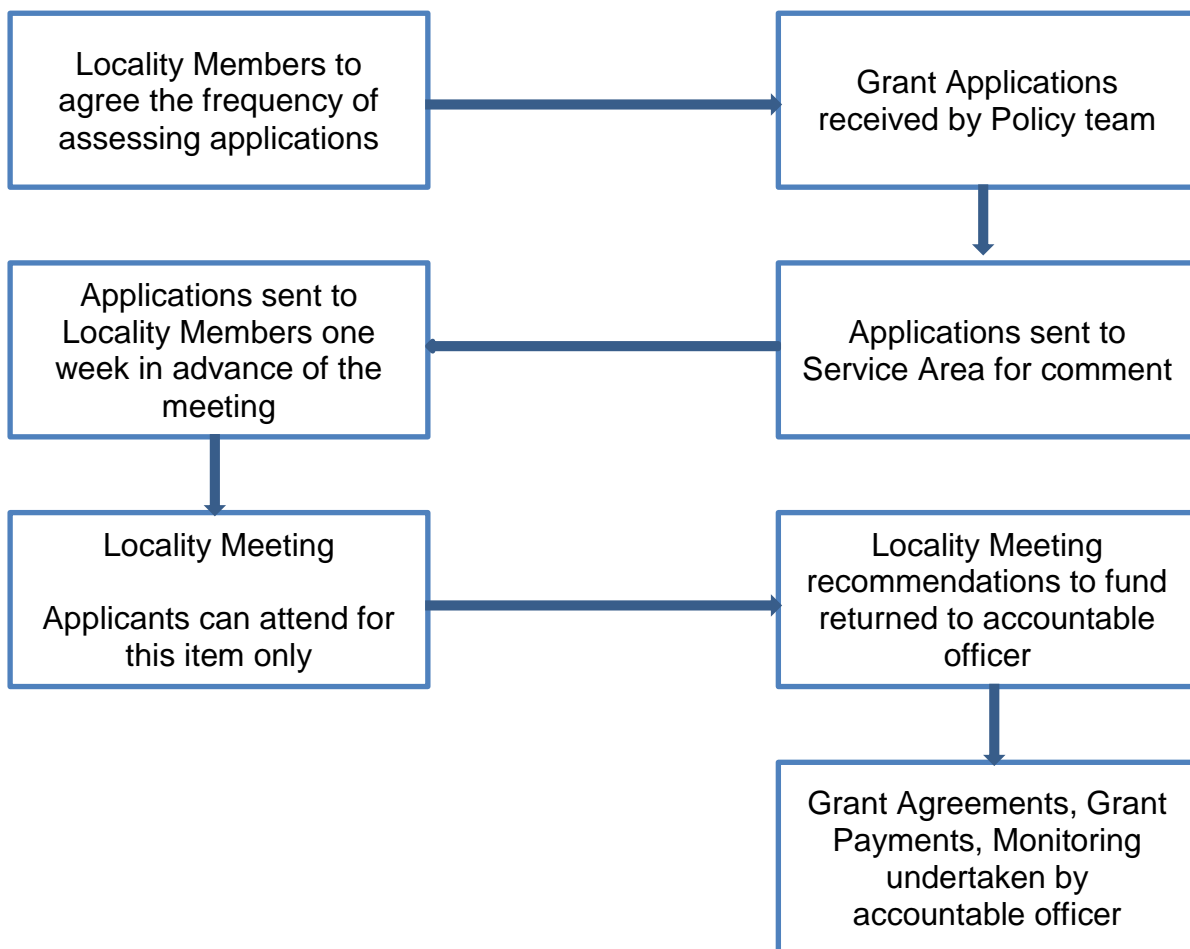
Process

15. Management of the communities fund would be through the Policy Team. Applications would be received into the Policy Team for acknowledgement of receipt, recording and passing to the Locality Lead to summarise as part of the locality meeting papers.
16. The Locality Lead officers will also provide policy support to the chair and local councillors in their role around the grant scheme.

17. To enable councillors to make informed decision policy officers will seek service area comments on suitability/viability of the project. If applicable the service area would also be asked to attend the locality meeting to clarify if there is any uncertainty.
18. All applications received for the locality will be sent to locality members a week in advance of the locality meeting.
19. Councillors will have an opportunity to allocate funds in their area, at the quarterly locality meetings, in July and October 2017 and January 2018.
20. It would be hoped that locality members would work towards developing and agreeing the priorities for the area and the grant making is based on these previously agreed priorities. Members are encouraged to pool resources at the locality level to address local priorities in a sustainable way.
21. An outline of how it is envisaged that the process will work is below:

Member Involvement

Back Office Support



22. To ensure effective and efficient use of officer resources it is proposed that the governance should be kept simple.

23. The communities fund will be the first item on a locality meeting agenda allowing for applicants and/or interested parties to participate in this part of the meeting should they choose to. Locality members will then get a chance to discuss and agree which applications they want to fund. It is hoped that consensus would be reached and if not then it would go to a vote.
24. The responsible officer would then put into effect the recommendations of the locality allowing for lawfulness.
25. This will reduce the amount of time in the process and to increase the speed at which applicants are informed and paid grant monies.
26. It is proposed to amend the terms of reference for the locality meetings to take into consideration the communities fund grant scheme. The proposed changes to the terms of reference are shown in Annex 3.

Financial and Staff Implications

27. The £250,000 communities fund is 'one off' funding which must be spent in the financial year 2017/18.
28. The £250,000 will be accounted for separately and reported via the Financial Monitoring and Business Strategy delivery report.
29. The grant scheme will be managed by Sarah Jelley in accordance with the financial regulations.

Equalities Implications

30. Councillors will need to be mindful of equalities in determining how the funding should be allocated.

RECOMMENDATION

31. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the Grant Guidance, Grant Application and Locality Meeting Terms of Reference**

MAGGIE SCOTT
Assistant Chief Executive

Background papers: None
Annexes: Annex 1 Grant Guidance
Annex 2: Grant Application
Annex 3: Locality Meeting Terms of Reference

Contact Officer: Sarah Jelley, sarah.jelley@oxfordshire.gov.uk, 07554 103437
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