

Agenda item 3

For Decision – Grants: Next steps and proposals

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Summary

On 5 August 2020 councillors agreed at the Town Matters Committee that we would work with Public Square, a project managed by the Democratic Society, to initiate a co design of a new grants process for Frome.

The recommendations below reflect this work.

Background

A small working group was brought together to design a longer session with a wider group of stakeholders, who met on the 16 November 2020.

The group considered: what has worked well with FTC grants in the past, what could work better and touched on how the funding could be split into more than one funding stream to meet the needs of local groups and organisations. The feedback from the session was collated and bounced back to the group which has broad consensus on the following:

Short term v long term v emergency pots

- There is a need for long-term/continuous funding rather than having to apply each year, and for flexibility in how funding can be used by an organisation. Also, to have smaller project funding available which is able to be responsive and if possible rolling over the course of the year.
- Important to have a straightforward process for smaller amounts.
- Receiving *some* funding is really helpful for being able to access other funders.

Criteria

- Immediate priorities are Community priorities - (eg Physical, Mental and Emotional Health, Environmental and Economic)
- Funding should focus on a return to normal rather than just Covid response and align with FTC priorities

Deciding how to measure

- An application process must take into consideration; Scaling, Impact, Accountability, Budget and ideally enable an overview of Cost benefit

Who chooses?

- Councillors should be involved in assessing applications once they have been assessed initially by a member of FTC staff. Residents / community members could be included in the panel.
- There should be more transparency over decision making with feedback to the public.

Support for organisations

- FTC's Training and support for organisations could be further extended and would provide wrap around support: It could avoid duplication, linking up various projects with each other, offer mentoring, provide help with application form and pre-assessment feedback.

The application process should:

- Use straightforward with simple language
- Be well-advertised – social media, easy to find on website
- Have clear expectations around reporting back

The group recommend that FTC open up a grant round now, using the remaining funding available in 20/21 of £60k, to replace the previous Community grants. With a maximum bid of £3k a minimum of 20 projects could be funded. This would enable the co design group to agree, with the Grants Advisory Group made up of 11 councillors, an application and selection process to be used as a prototype for a similar grant round in the future.

The Community Grants Scheme will have an emphasis on applications which:

- Improve Physical, Mental, Emotional Health, and Environmental and Economic outcomes.
- Directly impact Frome residents.
- Can demonstrate significant positive impact.

1. Applicants will apply using a simple application form
2. The form will be online but also available as a word document.
3. Support will be available from FTC for those who need it, for instance to make their application, attend the panel meeting or demonstrate the impact on Frome after completion of the grant.
4. Applications will be reviewed by an FTC staff member before being passed to a panel of Cllrs. A team of residents could also sit on this panel. The format for this is to be further defined, designed and agreed.
5. Applicants will be invited to attend the panel meeting in order to answer questions
6. There will be a rolling grant window where applications are assessed each month.
7. Applications can be up to £3k
8. Organisations can apply for one community grant per year
9. Applicants can submit a short film to accompany their application if they choose to.

This grant round will run until March 2021 or until the funding has been allocated.

Large and or multiyear grants in 2021

The group propose to bring together a working group comprising interested members of the Grants Co design group to agree an application and assessment process for large grants, this might include a decision to fund organisations for more than one year successively, or to fund organisations once every x no of years with a larger grant available.

There will be an opportunity here for the group to better understand and discuss some of the questions which remain unresolved from the first co design event. These include: how the 21/22 funding can be divided between the two grant processes, the extent to which residents

are involved in setting the priorities and how to assess and expect groups to demonstrate positive impact.

Recommendations

1. Delegate authority to Kate Hellard, in conjunction with the grants co design group and the wider Grants Advisory Group, to draft and agree an application form and selection process for the Community Grants to open in January 2021
2. The grants co design group to continue to meet to design and define a large / multiyear grants process.
3. Bring the proposed large grant allocation, process and reflections on Community Grants pilot back to Town Matters for approval in February ahead of the new financial year.