

Agenda item 3

For decision – To introduce a discretionary shortlisting stage to Community Grant making rounds.

Author: Hannah Stopford, Community Partnerships and Development Manager

1. Summary

In order to manage future Community Grants more efficiently and fairly, this paper suggests introducing a shortlisting process for future grant rounds.

2. Background

FTC currently hold two rounds each year of a Community Grant Making programme. Grants are received, and scored, by Cllrs on the Grants Committee using a scoring system based on the success criteria and application questions. This year we have also piloted the involvement of an advisory resident's panel to help inform the process. Scores and ranking help the decision making process but do not solely define which applications are successful or not in their applications. The Committee Cllrs meet after they have individually scored and before the public Committee Meeting in order to agree questions to put to the applicants (this gives those who are unable to attend the public meeting an opportunity to answer these questions ahead of time). All decision making takes place in the public meeting, where Cllrs use the scores, the responses to questions, and their discussion to determine whether to fund applications in full, in part, or not at all.

3. Demand

We have seen an increase in the number of applications for each round. The amount of money requested by organisations in the current round more than doubles what is available to be given out. The decision making process is likely to be lengthy and, to many applicants, disappointing. We suggest that in future rounds, the Grants Committee are given authority to undertake a shortlisting exercise, whereby only the applications that score over a certain amount are invited to the next stage e.g. the public Grants Committee meeting. It would make sense for this shortlisting process to be undertaken at the pre-meeting as outlined above. The shortlisting process would only need to be completed in rounds where the applications exceed 20 to 25 depending on complexity of applications and judgement of the Committee.

This is in addition to other improvements that are made to the grants process in each iteration including refinement of questions, clearer expectations around word count and transparency around scoring process and priorities.

4. Engagement, feedback and next steps governance

Cllrs have been consulted prior to the preparation of this paper.

5. Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The FTC Grant Programme is part of the approved work programme and helps to deliver Aim 1 of the Council Plan (Grow Community Wellbeing).

6. Financial and Risk Implications

None

7. Legal/HR implications

None

8. Equalities implications

None

9. Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

None

10. Health & Safety Implications

None

11. Background papers

None

12. Report Sign-Off

Hannah Stopford, Community Partnerships & Development Manager 19/02/26
Peter Wheelhouse, Acting Town Clerk 19/02/26

Recommendation

To agree the introduction of a shortlisting stage to the Grants Committee decision making process for future rounds of the FTC Community Grant fund.