
TITLE: Facilities Improvement Grant

Committee: Commercial Services Committee

Date: Tuesday 3rd March 2015.

Author: Julie Cornwell, Partnerships Officer.

[P198]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 This report sets out the proposed application process for the new 'Facilities Improvement Grant' fund, to replace the 'S106 Small Villages Grant' fund.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Members are requested to:

- i) Approve the 'Facilities Improvement Grant' fund application process to be aligned to the S106 application process.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Following a paper setting out the imminent closure of the 'Small Villages Grant' scheme, Community & Environment Committee resolved on 8th May 2014, to task Finance and Governance Committee to identify suitable funds to set up a new capital grant fund from 2015.

3.2 On 25th September 2014, Finance and Governance Committee resolved "that the Committee supports the allocation of £45,000 in the Council's Budget from 2015/16 onwards for a 'Community Capital Grant Fund', to be presented to full Council in February 2015".

3.3 The Council's draft revenue budget was presented at Finance and Governance Committee on 29th January 2015, where it was approved subject to amendment.

3.4 The recommendation set out in this paper is subject to Full Council approval of the budget on 26th February 2015.

4.0 OPTIONS/ISSUES

4.1 Facilities Improvement Grant Scheme Criteria

The aim of the 'Facilities Improvement Grant' scheme (previously referred to as the Capital Grant Fund) is to help communities to develop and improve village halls, community centres, sport and leisure centres, play facilities and public open spaces, protecting and enhancing the quality of life for residents within East Cambridgeshire.

4.2 The main principles of the 'Facilities Improvement Grant' fund were set out in the Committee report presented on 8th May 2014. One change was requested: that the minimum level of match funding required to be eligible for a grant be raised from 10% to 15%. This has been accommodated and projects with less than 15% match funding will be refused.

4.3 Therefore the 'Facilities Improvement Grant' principles are as follows:

- The scheme is open to all community based organisations that operate on a not-for-profit basis in East Cambridgeshire.
- Awards of up to a maximum of £10,000 are available. A minimum of 15% match funding must be provided by the applicant organisation or other grant provider.
- Parishes would only eligible to apply for this grant which either have no Section 106 (S106) allocation or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts or which do not have sufficient CIL or S106 to meet the full costs of a project.

4.4 Application Process

Recognising the recent changes to the allocation of S106 grants approved by Members on 8th July 2014, to reduce the bureaucracy surrounding the process, it is proposed that a similar assessment procedure is adopted for the allocation of 'Facilities Improvement Grant' funds. This would involve an officer assessing a proposed project against a set of criteria and presenting this to another officer for approval. The focus of the assessment would be on the following:

- The eligibility of the organisation and project for 'Facilities Improvement Grant' funding.
- Ownership of the asset and whether consent is in place for any works.
- Endorsement of the local Parish Council.
- Evidence of need for the project (e.g. supported by the findings of ECDCs Play Audit and Strategy, identified as a priority in a Parish Plan, community consultation).
- An increase in usage of the asset as a result of awarding the funding (i.e. a greater number of people will use the facility).

- A broader usage of the asset as a result of awarding the funding (e.g. use by disabled people, older or younger people who may not have had access previously).
- That a minimum of 15% match funding is in place.
- That a complete funding package is in place with the offer of a 'Facilities Improvement Grant'.
- That there is financial sustainability for the asset into the future.

As with a S106 grant, officers would aim to let applicants know the decision within 3 weeks of receipt of all of the necessary information required to make the assessment, by a formal grant offer letter.

4.5 Reporting to Committee

It is proposed that Members will be informed about 'Facilities Improvement Grant' approvals at Commercial Services Committee on a 6 monthly cycle forming part of a joint report that would also cover S106 projects. The next date for reporting would be September 2015.

5.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The proposed application process will ensure that the 'Facilities Improvement Grant' fund is awarded consistently, is aligned to the S106 grant application process and that resources are allocated fairly and appropriately.
- 5.2 Update reports taken to future Committee meetings will provide insight for Members on where 'Facilities Improvement Grant' funding is being spent within communities.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Revenue funding of £45,000 per annum is required to meet the current level of demand for community facility/open space grants. This is accounted for within the Council's revenue budget from 2015-16 onwards.
- 6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) was completed for previous Committee reports setting out the options and risks of ceasing grant funding when the S106 'Small Villages Grant' fund ran out. A further INRA is not required.

7.0 APPENDICES

- 7.1 None

Background Documents

The Future of Grant
Funding for Small Villages
– Community &
Environment Committee
report & appendices –
08/05/14

Location

FF115

Contact Officer

Julie Cornwell
Partnerships Officer
(01353) 616352
E-mail:
Julie.cornwell@eastcambs.gov.uk

East Cambs Capital Grant
Fund – Finance and
Governance report &
appendices – 25/09/14