



REPORT TITLE: Elected Member Community Grant Scheme Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme

Cabinet Date	21 st July 2021
Cabinet Member	Cllr Lynden Stowe Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	This report will seek to establish a four-year grant scheme running to 31 January 2025, where Councillors are each allocated £40,000 in total to spend within their division across this period.
Recommendations	That the Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health to authorise the allocation of the grants in accordance with the criteria and financial regulations in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member – Finance and Change
Reasons for recommendations	<p>To provide a light touch community initiative grant programme that is accessible to all voluntary and community groups to help communities recover, rebuild and protect themselves from the impacts of Covid19.</p> <p>There is an existing robust process that was adopted for the Growing Our Communities Grant programme from 2018 – 2021 which will be adopted to ensure compliance with accounting instructions and governance requirements.</p>
Resource Implications	<p><i>The total funding proposed is £2.12 million over 4 years with the available funding sources being</i></p> <p>£530k from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (Including £5,000 per elected member as agreed at full Council on 17 February 2021) £1,060k from unringfenced Covid monies (£1.06m) £530k from general fund reserves (£0.53m)</p>

Background Documents	Member grant scheme conditions Growing Our Communities Fund - Gloucestershire County Council
Statutory Authority	Gloucestershire County Council
Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	Diana Billingham Telephone: 01452 328609 Email: Diana.Billingham@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Timeline	<p>July 2021 – launch Year 1 of Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme supported with extensive communications plan and guidance for Councillors</p> <p>December 2021 – Review and analyse distribution of grants allocations to ensure there are no barriers to accessing grants and improve communications and engagement</p> <p>March 2022 – Review and evaluate distribution of grants awarded. Update Communications strategy to include projects supported to encourage other applicants</p>

Background

- 1.1 Gloucestershire County Council has implemented three Councillor-led grant schemes since 2014 – Active Together, the Children’s Activity Fund and Growing our Communities. Over 1500 small grants have been awarded to community groups across the county. This shift towards smaller funding pots for local groups has led to new ways of working collaboratively with communities in terms of grant provision and has enabled Gloucestershire County Council to broker new, improved and trusted relationships with the Voluntary and Community Sector. This has now become firmly embedded in the ways the Council operates and they have expanded into other thematic areas. An engaged grant making approach with applicants and councillors who are empowered to make a difference in their communities leads to a greater sense of ownership.
- 1.2 The purpose of the grants programme is to invest in local community groups which are vital to the county’s recovery from the pandemic as we support our communities to “Build Back Better”. It will give light touch funding to community initiatives that:
 - Help communities to recover, rebuild and protect themselves from the impacts of Covid-19
 - Promote and encourage community health and wellbeing
 - Improve digital inclusion
 - Promote nature and/or the environment
 - Promote healthy lifestyles
 - Encourage safer neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 The scheme will be called the Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme
- 1.4 Each Councillor will have £40,000 to spend in their division over 4 years from July 2021 until 31 January 2025. Potential applicants will be signposted to their local County Councillor prior to submitting a Grant application as all applications must be supported by the local Member.
- 1.5 The scheme will afford Councillors the flexibility to award their entire £40,000 allocation to one project or across several in their division. There will be no lower limit. Councillors may also submit joint bids for projects that cross divisional boundaries. While accountability for the final decision will rest with the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change), the criteria for the scheme are deliberately broad in order to provide the maximum flexibility to community groups and Councillors in developing and supporting proposals. The expectation is that Councillor supported bids will be approved wherever it would be lawful to do so. Where a bid cannot be supported there will be full engagement with the Councillor before an application is refused.
- 1.6 The following groups will be eligible to apply:
 - Community or voluntary groups
 - Registered Charities
 - Community Interest Companies

- Town and Parish Councils
- Sports groups and associations
- Schools and Academies
- Religious Groups where the application demonstrates that the project will bring wider community benefit and the primary purpose of the activity is not religious
- Patient led support groups
- Organisations located outside of Gloucestershire where the application demonstrates that the funding will primarily directly benefit a Gloucestershire community.

Options

2.1 Option 1 – Allocate £2.12 million to a Councillor led grant scheme to invest in local community groups to ‘Build back better’ administered by staff in the Prevention Wellbeing and Communities team

2.2 Option 2 – Cabinet do not approve the creation of a Councillor led grant scheme

Risks

1.1 There is a risk that the fund will not be used equitably across all electoral division. This will be mitigated by a robust communications plan and working actively with the voluntary and community sector networks and with Councillors.

1.2 There is a risk that the groups that most need support are unable to access the grant process. To mitigate this, officers will collaborate with colleagues from the District Councils, Town and Parish Councils and Voluntary sector infrastructure agencies to support community groups with the application process.

Financial implications

- The total grant budget of £2.12m will be funded as follows:
 £530k from Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) (Including £5,000 per elected member as agreed at full Council on 17 February 2021
 £1,060k from unringfenced Covid monies (£1.06m)
 £530k from general fund reserves (£0.53m)

Climate change implications

- The grants programme will actively encourage green infrastructure, environmental and active travel projects which will contribute positively to reducing the carbon footprint.

Equality implications

- The fund has the potential to impact positively on under represented groups and those more adversely affected by the impacts of Covid19. The main aim of the programme is to reduce health inequalities and level up opportunities. The fund will be proactively promoted in a range of ways including via county councillors, staff, GCC's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Next Door), media contacts, community champions and groups, district councils and other public sector partners, town and parish councils.

Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes

Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment in order to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

- None identified

Social value implications

- The grants programme will enable communities to act for themselves, be innovative and create the right conditions for building resilience and developing aspiration. An engaged grant making process allows for flexibility to ensure the greatest impact and to encourage sustainability.

Consultation feedback

- Engagement has taken place with senior officers and lead Cabinet Members.

Officer recommendations

- That the Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health to authorise the allocation of the grants in accordance with the criteria and financial regulations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change.

Performance Management/Follow-up

A review meeting will take place every six months between the officers responsible for overseeing the scheme and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change.

Feedback from County Councillors will be monitored and fed into the review.