

Redditch Borough Council

Policy for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Redditch Borough Council supports Voluntary and Community Sector organisations because we believe that a vibrant Third Sector is vital to our community.
- 1.2. Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to incur expenditure which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. The direct benefit accruing must also be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.
- 1.3. There is further power to make grants to voluntary organisations providing recreational facilities under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy only applies to the allocation of grants to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. It does not apply to any other means of financial support from the Council that may be available under other schemes.
- 2.2 Information contained within this document applies to grant funding from Redditch Borough Council to voluntary and community sector organisations through the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

3. Purpose of Grant Funding

- 3.1. Redditch Borough Council is committed to supporting Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to help them deliver projects and activities which have a positive and beneficial impact on the local community and its residents.
- 3.2. The Councillor Community Grant Scheme will make financial contributions to support certain voluntary and community sector groups in Redditch that actively assist the community to enjoy a better quality of life.
- 3.3. Funding will only be provided where it is demonstrated that a defined and positive impact will be made. Organisations must demonstrate an outcome focussed approach and that their project and/or activity will clearly support one or more of the Council's Strategic Purposes which are:
 - Help me to find somewhere to live in my locality.
 - Provide good things for me to do, see and visit.
 - Keep my place safe and looking good.
 - Help me run a successful business.
 - Help me to be financially independent.
 - Help me to live my life independently.

- 3.4. Each year, the Executive Committee can stipulate that a portion of each Councillors funding pot be spent in a certain way or using a particular criteria.
- 3.5. The Councillor Community Grant Scheme enables Councillors to support the allocation of these funds to the Voluntary Community Sector to facilitate positive and creative projects and activities for the benefit of the people of Redditch within their respective wards and/or district wide. At the same time it enables them to become even more closely involved in their communities and to have a better understanding of their needs and priorities. Each Councillor will have an allocation of £5,000 to support qualifying projects

4. Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply for a grant, an organisation must be able to prove to that:

- it is voluntary, non-profit making and operated with no undue restrictions or limitations on membership;
- they have a clear legal identity - they must have a democratic structure and can demonstrate effective management of the organisation's business;
- it has a bank account in the name of the organisation that requires the authorisation of at least two people who are unrelated to each other and who don't live in the same household to make payments or withdrawals of any kind from the account;
- it operates in the Borough of Redditch on behalf of Borough residents;
- it actively promotes equality issues within its structure and operations;
- it meets all legal requirements; and
- all previous grants received from Redditch Borough Council have been spent in accordance with the grant award conditions attached to them.

5. What will and will not be funded by a grant

- Grant applications will only be considered for projects and activities that will be undertaken in the Borough of Redditch, and/or will be for the direct benefit of its residents.
- Grants may be given to fund core costs of VCS groups, direct delivery of projects/activities and revenue or capital projects (excluding structural purchases i.e. building or building works).
- The Council encourages joint/partnership applications from more than one voluntary sector organisation.
- Organisations can apply to more than one Ward Councillor for grant funding contributions towards their project e.g. one or more Councillor within the ward for which the project will be delivered or to several or all Councillor within the borough if the project or activity is delivered district-wide. This must be declared as part of the application and the collective amount requested cannot exceed a total of £20,000.
- Grants will not be awarded to any organisation if it is deemed to be a political party, has the nature of a political party, or is engaged in campaigning for a political purpose or cause.
- Funds will not be provided for the furtherance or propagation of a faith promoted by any organisation which is, or is deemed by the Council to be, of a religious nature. This does not exclude applications from faith-based groups who want to deliver community based projects.

- Grants cannot be used for retrospective funding; that is to replace money that has already been spent, or to cover items or services that have already been bought.
- No ongoing commitment should be given to the funding of salary costs or the project. This is a one off payment.

Any grant awarded must only be used for the approved purpose, i.e. applicants must be able to demonstrate how the funding will be spent as outlined in their grant application and they will have to retain evidence of actual expenditure

6. Risk considerations in grant giving

6.1. The Council has a clear duty to ensure that best use is made of its resources. Risk is considered in this process in relation to failure to achieve best use of Council resources, it does not consider risk assessment of, for example, items related to health and safety.

6.2. The Council does understand however that the creativity and innovation of the voluntary sector can carry risks for non-delivery, for example where a new idea does not work out as intended but will use the general principle of requiring a lower level of risk the higher the amount of funding provided. Maximum levels of funding will only be provided where the risk of non-delivery is very low.

6.3. In order to achieve an appropriate balance between managing risk and supporting innovative ideas or new organisations, a grant limit of £3,000 will apply to:

- organisations that have been in existence for less than one year;
- organisations that do not have audited accounts;

6.4. Any project or activity proposals above this amount (£3,000 - £20,000) will require the group or organisation to:

- have a good track record of delivery;
- be in receipt of a range of funding streams; and
- be registered with either the Charity Commission or Companies House, or other appropriate government regulator.

Evidence of all the above will be provided to the Ward Councillor/s and the Grants Team.

6.5. Payment schedules will also support the monitoring of accountability for use of public money whilst appreciating the possible cash-flow issues that may be experienced by voluntary and community sector organisations. The general principle will be that a payment schedule of frequent monitoring and instalments is agreed with Grants Team staff. General guidelines for payment schedules are:

- Grants of £3,000 or less will be paid in full in advance of the project being delivered. Payment will be made to successful applicants within 1 month of approval with monitoring information required once the project or activity is successfully delivered;
- Grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 will normally be paid in a minimum of two equal instalments. The timings of and the number of instalments will be agreed by the group/organisation and the Grants Team at the start of the project and all subject to satisfactory monitoring.

7. Grant Conditions

- 7.1. Information on the conditions that will apply to a grant will be made available to all applicants before they apply. Monitoring information will be required on all grants (see section 9).
- 7.2. All grant offers will be subject to the grant recipient accepting the grant conditions. A full set of grant conditions and monitoring requirements will be agreed with grant recipients before the final grant award is made. No changes will be made after this time.
- 7.3. Monitoring will be signed off by Grants Officer before each payment is due, with any concerns being discussed with the Head of Community Services.
- 7.4. VCS Groups will not be able to carry any unspent funding into the following financial year. All funding should be spent with the year the grant is awarded.
- 7.5. Any funding which Councillors have not allocated will be returned to the Council budget at the end of the financial year.
- 7.6. The Head of Community Services will have delegated authority for final approval of all applications received in the scheme. Their decision is final and not subject to any appeal process.
- 7.7. No proposals for allocation of funding will be possible during the pre-election "Purdah" period.

8. The Process

- 8.1 The budget for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme will be set prior to November by the Executive Committee for projects commencing after the 1st April of the following year.
- 8.2 Opportunities for grant funding will be openly advertised using a range of options. To ensure objective assessment of all Councillor Community Grant Scheme grant applications, the following processes will apply:
 - VCS Groups will approach the relevant Ward Councillor representing the area where the activity or project will take place and/or Councillor/s for district wide projects and discuss their funding proposal. Once the Ward Councillor is happy to endorse the proposal VCS Groups will complete and submit a short payment request fund which will be processed by the Grants Team.
 - All ward Councillors will receive appropriate training in grant assessment, and will be supported by the Grants Team throughout the process. Training will also ensure that all ward Councillors are up to date with current trends and policies within the grant giving arena that affect the VCS.
 - The Council will not award any grant to an organisation whose application has not gone through this process.
 - If the proposed project or activity targets vulnerable adults or children the Council will require that the group delivering the project or activity has an appropriate safeguarding policy in place. Further information of the minimum requirements of this policy is detailed in the grant conditions section of the Councillor Community Grant Acceptance Form.
 - If for any reason the project does not go ahead the recipient of the funding must contact the relevant Members and/or the Grants Team to discuss alternative

proposal for the use of funding and ensure that any allocation is returned to the Council.

- The Members Code of Conduct applies to the implementation of the scheme. Members must declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) or Other Disclosable Interest (ODI) in the proposal. No proposal can be put forward in which the Member has a DPI or ODI which would usually require a Member to withdraw from a meeting.
- In the year of a Council election no commitments, payments or related publicity may be undertaken once the Notice of Election has been published until after the date of the election.

9. Monitoring

- 9.1. All grant funded projects will be monitored with applicants obliged to submit details of how the project is progressing.
- 9.2. Monitoring requirements that will apply to a grant will be commensurate with the amount of money awarded, and will be agreed by the Grants Team with the funded organisation before final confirmation of a grant award is made.
- 9.3. Receipts and other monitoring information may be requested by the Council as proof of spend within six months of the grant being received by the organisation.
- 9.4. Regular monitoring of the project will enable the Council to make sure that the outcomes and effectiveness of the funding as well as the funding expenditure are all consistent with the original funding proposal.
- 9.5. The Council reserve the right to withhold future payments and reject any further applications if they are dissatisfied with how grants funds have been used.

10. Joint Proposals

- 10.1 Councillors may agree to jointly fund an application or proposal with other Councillor/s from within the same ward area to maximise grant funding and the benefit to the local community they serve - formal confirmation will be required from all Councillors involved in any joint proposals.
- 10.2 Councillors may also agree to jointly fund (or contribute to) a proposal with other Councillor/s for projects and activities e.g. district wide projects. Again, formal confirmation will be required from all Councillors involved in any joint proposals, the organisation must declare its funding request and to which Councillors it has applied for funding. This must be declared as part of the application process and the collective amount requested cannot exceed a total of £20,000.