

## **Councillor Community Grant Scheme (CCGS) - Councillor Guidance Notes for 2019 / 2020**

Each Ward Councillor has an allocation of £5,000 per annum which he/she can use to support Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisations in the Borough to deliver projects and activities in their ward or across Redditch which will have a positive and beneficial impact in the community and on its residents.

Ward Councillors should have a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of their local areas. By working closely with all VCS groups within their areas they can ensure that any proposed activity or project is addressing those needs and the aims and objectives of the Council.

Councillors may also wish to use their allocation (or part of it) to jointly fund a project or activity with other Councillors within their ward or join another/several Councillors within the borough to support a project or activity that is delivered and positively affects the whole district (this must be declared as part of the application process and the collective amount requested cannot exceed a total of £20,000).

It has been agreed that for 2019 / 2020, £350 be dedicated from each Councillor's allocation to project(s) which deliver on issues around cultural awareness and the promotion of cultural cohesion. The types of projects which might be funded might focus on using educational means, arts, drama, food, sports to bring together people from different backgrounds and cultures in Redditch.

The following step by step process illustrates the main aspects of the scheme and aims to guide Councillors through the process.

### **Step 1 – Councillor Briefing and Training**

- Before any Councillor can begin to allocate funds from their grant pot they must attend a Councillor training session which will explain the principles of the scheme and the process in more detail. These training sessions will be held around April and May 2019.
- Councillors should familiarise themselves with the Councillor Community Grants Scheme Policy, which will be part of this training.

### **Step 2 – Approach and Discussions with VCS Groups**

- Councillors can either approach VCS groups directly to discuss the utilisation of their funding pot or they can wait until they are approached by VCS Groups who would like to propose projects for funding.
- Councillors should gather as much information as possible about the project and the group delivering the project during their discussions to ensure it fits within the required criteria as set out in the Policy. Councillors should then provide the group with the Payment Request Form to fill in, and return to the Councillor, who will sign off the proposal on the Payment Request Form once they are happy with it, and then send it to the Grants Team.

### **Step 3 – Criteria and Considerations for Funding**

- Councillors need to be satisfied that the group they propose to allocate funding are: a voluntarily, non-profit group; is well run with effective management; financial/banking arrangements in place; that they promote equality issues and is open to all; meets all legal requirements; and that all previous grants received from RBC have been spent in accordance with the grant award conditions attached to them.
- It is for each Councillor to consider the financial viability of the group making the application and for the project being proposed. All assurances must be obtained prior to approving the grant funding and submitting the Payment Request Form. The Council need to ensure that public money is allocated appropriately, ensuring the best outcomes for Redditch and Redditch people and with the least risk to the Council.
- Councillors should consult with the Policy for more information about what can or cannot be funded. If in doubt, Councillors can speak to the Grants Team for further clarification.
- Councillors need to ensure that they are clear as to how the funding will be spent and how it would promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the ward/district and its residents. This needs to be conveyed on the Payment Request Form. The application will only be cleared for payment if the rationale is clear and fits within the criteria as set out in the Councillor Community Grant Policy. An unclear or weak rationale may be queried by the Grants Team and may prolong the payment process.
- Councillors will also need to be confident that there is strong evidence of need and that the group have set achievable targets and are taking the right approach to achieve them.
- Councillors should be aware that the Members' Code of Conduct applies to their decisions. No proposal can be put forward where you have a declared interest in the group and/or the proposed project or activity the group have put forward. Each case must be considered individually and early advice should be sought from either the Grants Team or Democratic Services on the nature of any potential interest.
- It will not be possible to propose allocations during the pre-election “Purdah” period.

### **Step 4 – Consideration of Joint Bids (where applicable)**

- Joint bids are welcomed from two or more councillors within the same ward. It is possible for a joint bid to support a project in a particular ward but also attract attendees from a wider geographical area but this must be made clear in the ‘rationale’ provided in the Payment Request Form.
- Joint bids and/or contributions towards district-wide projects are also permitted. Organisations can apply to several or all Councillors within the Borough if the project or activity is delivered district-wide. This must be declared as part of the application process and the collective amount requested cannot exceed a total of £20,000.
- One form should be submitted by a lead councillor detailing the joint bid. Confirmation will be required (either by email or countersignature) by the other councillors showing that they agree to the submission, confirm their financial contribution and confirm the declaration.

### **Step 5 - Submission of the Funding Request Form and payment**

- Councillors will be encouraged to submit forms electronically from their RBC email account (unless by exception and by prior notification), to ensure a clear audit trail and reduce the possibility of misuse and send to [grants.team@redditchbc.gov.uk](mailto:grants.team@redditchbc.gov.uk) . Forms can, if necessary, be submitted by hard copy with a signature/s.
- Forms are NOT accepted directly from an organisation seeking financial support. Should any be received, they will be directed to the local Ward Councillor/s.
- Councillors should not include account details on the submission form. If the payee's details are not contained within the Council's financial system they will be contacted directly by the Grants Team.
- The Grants Team may undertake additional checks on the project and VCS group requesting funding especially if the funding requested is over £3k.
- Councillors will be sent an email once the payment has been authorised and released. This email will also advise Councillors of how much remains in their CCGS fund.
- Any spend by organisations on an event/project prior to authorisation is undertaken at their own risk. Members cannot give categorical assurances that the funding will be provided until the form has been properly authorised.
- Councillors should be mindful that any payment represents a formal decision to spend tax-payer funds. The details will be published on the Council's website and records will be held for public inspection at the Town Hall for 6 years.

### **Step 6 - Publicity**

- Any publicity arising from the CCGS should not be party political and should reference the Council's contribution. Councillors must not 'give the impression' that the payment is from them personally.
- All Ward Councillors must adhere to the rules of 'purdah' during election period other situations where purdah will apply and payment proposals cannot be made during this time.

### **Step 7 – Monitoring**

- The Grants Team will monitor each project using the Monitoring Form. Depending on the amount awarded to the group, this may occur once when the project is completed or at staged intervals to coincide with the release of an agreed part payment of the grant.