



Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme: Recommendations for Funding

Cllr Hannah Golding, Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement

Report to:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	09/03/2021
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	Yes
Appendix 1:	Community and Voluntary Sector Programme Grants – Guide for Applicants and Criteria
Appendix 2:	Summary of applications and recommendations
Appendix 3:	Applications recommended for funding by theme
Papers relied on:	Community and Voluntary Sector Programme Grants applications and supporting documentation
	Community and Voluntary Sector Programme Grants – Guide for Applicants and Criteria

Foreword - Cllr Hannah Golding, Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement

The Community and Voluntary Sector grant scheme provides an important opportunity for the council to support local organisations to deliver services and programmes that are valued by our residents and that help address council priorities. The portfolio of grants recommended for funding in this report covers a wide range of activity that will benefit people from all communities. They will also help with the borough's economic and community recovery from the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our residents. These programmes complement the council's own services and will help foster strong partnership working in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.

This grant scheme demonstrates our continued commitment to investing in the community and voluntary sector to better support our communities and address their needs. I am therefore please to support the recommendations outlined in this report and I look forward to hearing about the great results and benefits these projects will achieve.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- **To award each of the recommended programme grants as set out in Appendix 2, subject to the usual grant terms and conditions**
- **To approve the extension for a further year of all strategic grants with the exception of the Anvil Trust;**
- **To give 90 days' notice of the council's intention to reduce its grant to the Anvil Trust in accordance with the agreement between the parties dated 10 May 2017;**
- **The delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Partnerships, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement and the Executive Director of Corporate Services, authority to determine the level of grant to be awarded in 2021/22 subject to evaluation of the Trust's revised business plan.**
- **If by the time of Cabinet meeting, the council has not gained full assurance from the Business Plan to delegate to the Executive Director of Borough Development, in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services, agreement of a satisfactory business plan before allocation of further funding in 2021/22.**

Background, corporate objectives and priorities

The new Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) grant scheme was introduced in 2015/16, as approved by Cabinet in October 2014 (KD 891/PF). The CVS grant scheme aims to provide financial support to local community and voluntary sector organisations to deliver activities and services that are valued by residents, that complement council services, and that address council priorities.

Under the CVS grant scheme, there are two strands of funding open to organisations:

- **Strategic Grants** – these are only provided where the organisation’s activities are recognised as specialist and deemed integral to delivering and supporting the Council Plan priorities. They:
 - provide core funding to an organisation and will not be targeted at specific programmes of work
 - are for a minimum of £20,000 per annum, with no maximum limit
 - are awarded for up to five years

- **Programme Grants** – these are focused on specific, relevant and local activities that add demonstrable value and benefit the borough’s communities. They:
 - fund specific programmes rather than a whole organisation
 - are for a maximum of £20,000 per annum, with no minimum limit
 - are awarded for a period of one to three years

Through the CVS scheme, the council currently supports 11 organisations with strategic grants. All grant agreements were due to terminate in March 2020 but were extended for a year until March 2021 (with the exception of the Anvil Trust – March 2022 and Basingstoke Consortium and Young People’s Independent Counselling Service – March 2023). There is also a strategic grant allocation of £20,000 to support the delivery of community-focused arts activities particularly in rural areas of the borough.

It is intended to complete a full review of grant funding arrangements in 2021/22, aligning provision of funding to a new Communities Strategy and a realignment to the Council Plan Priorities. It has been necessary therefore to propose that existing strategic grants should be maintained in 2021/22 on the same levels of funding as per 2019/20 and 2020/21, with the exception of the Anvil Trust which is subject to a renegotiation of grant funding for 2021/22.

Following the first round of programme grant funding covering the period 2015/16 to 2017/18, a second round of applications was launched to provide a further three year of funding covering the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. Under this second round, 16 applications were awarded to 13 organisations with funding totalling £241,055 in 2020/21.

To continue to provide support to the local community and voluntary sector while the grants review is taking place, a third round of programme grant funding was open for applications in December 2020 providing funding for a period of 12 months from April 2021 to March 2022.

The Community and Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme supports the delivery of each of the Council Plan priorities – strengthening communities, protecting and enhancing our communities, improving safety and planning for the future.

The funding proposals in this report more directly support social and economic resilience in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will deliver positive outcomes in one of more of the following priorities:

- promoting community cohesion and inclusion
- promoting community resilience
- young people can maximise their potential
- people who face barriers to employment move closer to the job market
- promoting mental and physical wellbeing

The overall coordination and monitoring of CVS grant funding has been transferred from the Corporate Services Directorate (Policy and Performance) to Borough Development and Implementation.

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme

Main considerations

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of applications received through the latest round of the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) Programme Grant Scheme.
- 1.2 It outlines the level of funding the Portfolio holder recommends to be awarded to a number of these organisations and highlights any funding considerations.
- 1.3 It described the proposed approach to strategic grant funding with the proposal to extend existing grant arrangements for a further year while a complete review of grant funding is being carried out in 2021/22.
- 1.4 It outlines the approach to funding for the Anvil Trust in 2021/22 and the proposed renegotiation of existing grant arrangements.

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 A new round of programme grant funding was open for applications on 14 December 2020 with a closing deadline of 14 January 2021. A total of 34 applications were received. They were assessed and scored against the criteria set out in the Guide for Applicants (see appendix 1).
- 2.2 Following assessment and evaluation of the applications received for programme grant funding, it is proposed that funding is allocated according to the recommendations shown in Appendix 2, taking into account the information and observations set out in this report and the budget of £200,000 available for programme funding.

- 2.3 To enable the strategic grant recipients listed in the table below to continue their operations and service delivery in 2021/22 and to reflect the significant pressures they are facing due to the impact of COVID-19 on income generation or increase in demand, it is proposed to extend current levels of funding for a further year while the grants review is carried out and new arrangements come into force in 2022/23. Engagement with strategic grant recipients is currently taking place to review their plans and how they will support economic and community recovery, and to finalise grant monitoring requirements for 2021/22.

	2021/22
Basingstoke Citizens Advice	£169,780
Basingstoke Consortium	£38,000
Basingstoke Voluntary Action	£111,960
Basingstoke Gym Club	£28,000
Hampshire Cultural Trust	£183,599
Proteus Theatre Company	£79,790
Shopmobility	£22,950
Tadley Citizens Advice	£47,500
Whitchurch Silk Mill	£21,803
Young People's Independent Counselling	£36,000
Art in the Community	£20,000
Total	£759,382

- 2.4 On-going engagement is taking place with the Anvil Trust with the aim to renegotiate grant funding levels for 2021/22. In 2020/21, the Anvil Trust received a grant of £790,924 and was due to be awarded a further £790,924 in 2021/22. For more information, see section 10 in this report.
- 2.5 A new councillor grant scheme will be launched in June 2021, subject to elections taking place in May. Each ward councillor will be allocated £2,000 to support community and voluntary sector organisations within their wards with a maximum grant of up to £1,000 per project. A total of £108,000 has been ring-fenced to support this new grant scheme.
- 2.6 A complete review of all CVS grant funding, led by the Economy and Culture Manager and Interim Community Wellbeing Manager, will be carried out in 2021/22 with the aim to implement a new strategic approach to grant funding and new grant arrangements from 2022/23 onwards. The review will be carried out alongside the development of a new Communities Strategy to ensure alignment and more targeted use of grant funding.

3 Key issues for consideration

Previous CVS programme grant funding

- 3.1 The last round of CVS programme grant funding was awarded in 2018. 13 organisations received a total of £687,700 across the three-year funding period. All of these grants come to end by 31 March 2021.

4 New Programme Grant funding

- 4.1 A new round of programme grants was launched in December 2020 for projects running between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. This funding opportunity was promoted widely, and application materials were made available on the council website and in hard copy on request. In response to learning from the previous round this included a comprehensive 'Guide for Applicants', incorporating guidance on completing a good application and detailed explanations of how applications would be scored and evaluated.
- 4.2 Following the adoption of a new council plan, the priorities for funding for programme grant funding were updated. Applicants were advised that programmes should support the council plan priorities and asked to demonstrate how programmes met one or more of the following priority themes:
1. promoting community cohesion and inclusion
 2. promoting community resilience
 3. young people can maximise their potential
 4. people who face barriers to employment move closer to the job market
 5. promoting mental and physical wellbeing
- 4.3 In addition, applicants were advised that the council was particularly seeking projects that would support social and economic recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.4 Previously funded organisations could re-apply but only if the new programme met the requirements set out in the guidance and was developed in response to learning from previously funded activity or was a new activity. Applicants could only submit one application.
- 4.5 The budget available for programme grant funding was set at £200,000.

5 Applications received

- 5.1 A total of 33 applications were received by the 14 January deadline with a total funding request of £498,003, which is significantly over the budget allocation of £200,000. One application was received after the deadline and was therefore not considered. Of these, 9 organisations had received funding through the previous programme grant scheme (which runs until 31 March 2021).
- 5.2 A full summary of all applications received is included in Appendix 2, providing details of the organisation, project, funding requested, funding recommended following assessment and moderation and explanatory comments about those recommendations.

6 Programme grants assessment and evaluation process

- 6.1 In line with the published guidance, all applications were individually evaluated by three people from the council's Economy and Culture Team who then collectively moderated the scores.

- 6.2 Following the initial assessment, internal service teams and external partners were asked to provide feedback on those applications which fell within their remit of technical expertise. These observations helped to provide additional context on the local landscape and views on organisational capacity and programme viability in order to identify potential duplication and help determine levels of risk. It also ensured consideration was given to alignment with delivery of council strategies.
- 6.3 Final scores were determined at the end of the moderation process. Of the 33 applications assessed, 18 were deemed ineligible as they did not reach the minimum scoring threshold of above 50, scored a zero on any question or scored one for more than one question or were deemed not suitable under this scheme (shown in orange in Appendix 2).

7 Observation on applications received and programme grant funding recommendations

- 7.1 Projects were considered by theme and beneficiaries to ensure that a balanced portfolio was achieved in terms of delivery and financial allocations.
- 7.2 Nine organisations being recommended for funding received funding through the previous round of programme grant funding. Some requested funding for new projects while others requested funding to rebuild their capacity post COVID. These groups were able to demonstrate that their ability to deliver their core services had been significantly impacted by the pandemic while the need for these same services had grown. It was felt that they had satisfactorily demonstrated that resumption of these services would support social and economic recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 7.3 Following moderation, the available budget was allocated according to the final scores. Those recommended for funding are shown in green in Appendix 2 and are ranked from highest to lowest scores.
- 7.4 The budget provided by each organisation was reviewed, focussing on the direct costs to the organisation of delivering the specific projects. Applicants were advised to submit full cost recovery budgets however, the amount included for staff and management costs and other overheads was felt to be too high in some cases and very little match funding was put forward across the applications received. It is therefore recommended that the amount of funding given is less than that requested for all but one applicant. (The amount requested against the amount recommended is shown in Appendix 2)
- 7.5 It is recommended to award up to 15 grants, to 15 organisations, subject to the financial considerations discussed below and the conditions detailed above.
- 7.6 It is noted that grant recommendations come to a total of £199,865 leaving a small unallocated amount of £135.

8 Observations for future funding rounds

- 8.1 It is noted that sustainability of organisations and projects remains challenging, particularly given the increasing pressures on the voluntary

sector and lack of other funding sources, especially those which contribute towards core operating costs. This will have contributed to the requests for continuation funding and will need to be considered with regard to future exit strategies. This context will be kept under review so that future recommendations regarding the CVS programme respond to identified challenges to ensure that council funding continues to achieve the best possible outcomes.

8.2 It is noted that many applicants did not include any match-funding within their budgets, either from external or internal sources, and expected a 100% funding for their programme. Future grant arrangement will need to consider the need for applicants to source and provide match-funding, as is standard practice for most grant schemes.

8.3 It is noted that a number of the applications received lacked detail on the benefits of delivery and the outcomes to be achieved and therefore scored poorly against the grant criteria. Officers propose to work with Basingstoke Voluntary Action, which receives strategic grant funding from the council to support the community sector, to ensure that bid writing skills are promoted. Grant Officers will also provide advice to other officers who support community groups making funding applications and applicants will be encouraged more strongly to meet with Grants Officers before completing their application forms.

9 Strategic grant funding

9.1 Strategic grant funding provides core funding to local organisations whose activities are recognised as specialist and deemed integral to delivering and supporting the Council Plan priorities.

9.2 All strategic grant recipients have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic either because they have not been able to operate as they normally would and therefore generate income to ensure their financial sustainability, have seen a sharp increase in demand for their services or had to adapt their provision to respond to community needs.

9.3 Despite the challenging times they have been facing, these organisations have responded to the crisis with agility and flexibility, adapted their operating models and sought innovative ways to enable them to continue operating and delivering valuable services and activities to local residents.

9.4 It is recognised that changing or reducing current funding arrangements would have an adverse impact on these organisations and in some instances jeopardise their sustainability and survival. To this end, it is proposed that current funding levels should be extended for a further year in 2021/22 and that future grant funding arrangements should be reviewed as part of the grants review to be carried out in 2021/22.

10 Anvil Trust

10.1 Basingstoke and Deane has a strong reputation for arts and culture with a number of organisations and individuals working to achieve a vibrant range of activities across the borough. The council is also a major funder and ranks

fourth for investment in arts and culture per head of population out of all district councils.

- 10.2 The Anvil Trust, trading as Anvil Arts, operates the Anvil and Haymarket theatre, two council-owned buildings. It holds two leases with the council – the lease for the Anvil runs until 2034 while the lease for the Haymarket will expire in 2022. The Anvil concert hall is a 1,400-seat venue with the smaller Forge studio seating up to 80 people. The Haymarket is a grade II listed building, seating up to 400 people.
- 10.3 The council entered into a five-year agreement with the Trust in May 2017 for a total of over £4m (£850,456 in 2017/18 followed by £790,924 each year between 2018/19 and 2021/22). Under the current lease arrangements, the council is also responsible for all structural and external repair and maintenance, whilst the Trust is responsible for all internal repairs and maintenance.
- 10.4 In 2020/21 the grant to the Anvil Trust equates to 45% of the council's total budget of strategic and programme grants to community and voluntary organisations, and 74% of all grants to organisations in the arts and culture sector. Given the requirement for the council to achieve savings in 2021/22 and achieve value for money, close consideration has been given to the agreement with the Trust.
- 10.5 The Anvil concert hall has made an important contribution to tackling COVID by agreeing to allow the NHS to use it as a testing centre. The Trust has contributed to council-organised activities such as a summer pantomime and an Elf on the Shelf event in the town centre. However, for reasons completely outside of the Trust's control, the buildings have not been used for performances or other activities since March 2020. The Council has not considered any reduction in grant in the current year and will pay £790,924. Comparative information on grant funding is set out in paragraph 1.11.
- 10.6 The Trust intends to have a full programme in 2021/22 when the venues are allowed to reopen, but this will depend on the viability of performances for promoters based on restrictions on capacity and the level of customer demand.
- 10.7 It is essential that the council is assured that the grant provides value for money. Cabinet Members and officers have had a close dialogue with the Trust since last spring concerning its future direction. The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Partnerships wrote to the Trust in May 2020 and in June 2020. Cabinet Members then met the Trust in July 2020. The Trust had commenced a strategic review to set a vision for the organisation and its activities. It also instigated a review of its governance. Members emphasised that it was essential for these to be accompanied by up to date Business Plan which included detailed financial projections and demonstrated how the Trust could meet its obligations. The council also wished to see greater self-reliance so that the Anvil Trust, learning from the experience of other organisations in the arts & culture sector, is able to generate new sources of funding, for example through applications to trusts and other benefactors, sponsorship and public appeals.

- 10.8 The importance and urgency of a Business Plan was reiterated at a further meeting in November 2020.
- 10.9 The Trust submitted a draft Business Plan on 29 January 2021. The council is seeking independent advice on the draft business plan. Cabinet is therefore asked to delegate authority to determine to the level of grant to be awarded in 2021/22 to the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Partnerships, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement and the Executive Director of Corporate Services.
- 10.10 In line with the 2021/22 Budget approved by Council on 25 February, the maximum grant award will be £395,462 if the council is assured that the business plan is robust and demonstrates the financial sustainability of the organisation.
- 10.11 Although less than planned previously, the council will, depending on the amount of grant awarded, contribute up to 74% of external funding received by the Anvil Trust in 2021/22, and up to 79% over two years. The table below shows the respective grants from Basingstoke & Deane BC, Arts Council England and Hampshire County Council.

	2020/21	2021/22	Total
Basingstoke & Deane BC	£790,924	£395,462 (maximum)	£1,186,386 (max)
Arts Council England	£138,948	£138,948	£277,896
Hampshire County Council	£30,000	nil	£30,000
Total	£959,872	£534,410 (max)	£1,494,282 (max)
BDBC % of grant funding	82%	up to 74%	up to 79%

Note: excludes funding received from the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund

11 Options Analysis

Programme grant funding

Option	Comments
To fund the full amount requested to organisations meeting the minimum score up to the £200,000 available budget limit	<p>This option would mean funding a smaller number of organisations and therefore reduce the overall benefits for local residents.</p> <p>This option does not take into consideration the balance between the amount of funding requested and the proposed activities, expected outcomes by applicants and eligibility of costs.</p>
To provide funding below the requested amount by some organisations	<p>This option enables more organisations receiving grant funding and therefore benefitting a larger number of residents.</p> <p>This option is based on the analysis of the budgets submitted by applicants and adjustments made to balance funding requirements versus levels and types of activities proposed, expected outcomes and eligibility of some costs.</p>

The preferred option is to provide funding below the amounts requested by applicants to enable a higher number of local community and voluntary sector organisations to benefit from council funding and to deliver services and activities to a higher number of residents.

Strategic grant funding

Option	Comments
To review existing funding arrangements	<p>The postponement of the grant review to 2021/22 means that the rationale for new grant funding arrangements has not been established as yet.</p> <p>A reduction in grant funding at short notice could unsettle grant recipients and impact their resilience and sustainability.</p>
To maintain existing levels of funding for a further year	<p>This option provides some certainty to grant recipients as to funding arrangements for 2021/22 and enables them to plan effectively and continue operating in difficult and challenging times.</p> <p>The extension will allow for longer lead time for effective engagement with recipients as part of the grants review.</p>

The preferred option is to maintain existing levels of funding for 2021/22 to continue to provide core funding to strategic organisations and help their resilience and sustainability.

Corporate implications

12 Legal implications

- 12.1 The provision of grant funding to third parties is a discretionary function and the council must have a statutory power upon which to exercise that discretion. The Localism Act 2011 introduces a power of general competence; providing local authorities with the power to do anything that individuals may generally do. It includes the power for the council to make grant payments to third parties. In exercising its discretion, the council must consider all relevant factors, including information provided with the grant application. In determining whether to agree to award grant funding to a third party the council must also consider, amongst other things, whether the application meets the criteria for funding, value for money of the proposed work or services to be undertaken, and the benefits of the proposal to the local area.
- 12.2 All successful applicants are required to complete a Funding Agreement to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the CVS grant scheme.

13 Financial implications

- 13.1 Subject to Council approval on 25 February 2021, there are a number of funding streams for the provision of grants which are as follows:
- i. a revenue budget of £0.20M in 2021/22 available for providing programme grants;
 - ii. a revenue budget of £1.15M in 2021/22 available for providing strategic grants; and
 - iii. a revenue budget of £0.10M for a new councillor grant scheme
- 13.2 This report proposes that for 2021/22 the £0.20M for programme grants is provided in full to the organisations listed in Appendix 2 and £1.15M is awarded in full for strategic grants. It is also expected that the councillor grant allocation of £0.10M will be spent in full in 2021/22. All budgets are included in the MTFs so there are no further financial implications from what is being recommended.

14 Risk management

- 14.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the council's risk management process and has identified no significant (Red or Amber) residual risks that cannot be fully minimised by existing or planned controls or additional procedures.

Anvil Trust

- 14.2 The council will seek to work closely with the Trust to understand its financial position during 2021 and during the lifetime of the Business Plan. As the owner of the Anvil Theatre and the Haymarket, the council will evaluate scenarios if the Trust is unable to meet its obligations under the lease or becomes financial sustainable, for example if it is not able to generate alternative sources of income.

15 Equalities

- 15.1 No significant change has been introduced to the grant award scheme. When considering the Public Sector Equality Duty and the impact of the proposals on the protected characteristics groups (Equality Act 2010), it can be concluded that the scheme continues to be positive for all groups and no issues have been identified with the recommendations in this report at this stage. The programmes delivered by the proposed grant recipients would promote equality for a wide range of groups.

16 Consultation and communication

- 16.1 There was engagement with officers across relevant service teams concerning the refinement of the new scheme prior to its launch. Officers from across the council were also involved in the evaluation process, providing technical expertise and input as part of the moderation.

- 16.2 Information on the new grant scheme was publicised using the council's communications channels including a press release, website, social media, digital newsletters and stakeholder updates.
- 16.3 A communications plan will be developed following a final decision on grant allocations and regular updates on the progress of projects funded will be shared through the council's communication channels.

17 Climate change

- 17.1 This report covers a range of programmes and organisations which are expected to have varying carbon impacts, should they be awarded grant funding. Projects receiving programme grant funding are expected to have minor impacts overall. Some will result in lower carbon emissions, for example as a result of moving to online support. Others will have a negative carbon impact by resulting in additional emissions, for example, providing community taxi services to elderly residents to be able to attend, for example, health visits.
- 17.2 However, in all cases, impacts are sought to be minimised/mitigated by the presence of environmental policies for applicants. Where these are not present the council will seek to support organisations develop these in the future to help understand how to reduce emissions from their activities moving forward.
- 17.3 Further consideration will also be given how tackling climate change can be incorporated in grant application processes of the Council moving forward.

18 HR

- 18.1 The overall coordination and monitoring of grant funding, including the CVS scheme, councillor grants and the Local Infrastructure Fund has transferred from Corporate Services (Policy and Performance) to Borough Development (Economy and Culture).
- 18.2 The evaluation and assessment of programme grants applications was carried out by existing members of the Economy and Culture Team.
- 18.3 To ensure there is enough capacity within Borough Development and Implementation to manage the implementation and monitoring of grant funding, a grants officer post is being recruited to on a fixed-term contract basis until March 2022.

Conclusion

19 Summary and reason for the decision

- 19.1 This report outlines the approach to Community and Voluntary Sector programme and strategic grant funding for 2021/22 while a complete grants review is being carried out, that will lead to new grant arrangements from 2022/23 onwards.

- 19.2 It sets out a one-year extension of current strategic grant funding to all existing recipients with the exception of the Anvil Trust, which is subject to a renegotiation of funding levels in 2021/22.
- 19.3 It describes the process for the assessment of programme grant applications and the proposed funding recommendations for 2021/22. It is noted that the proposed awards would provide positive outcomes to a range of vulnerable residents and achieve a balanced portfolio across the five priority grant themes while supporting social and economic recovery in response to COVID-19. In line with the criteria, these will help to build communities where people thrive and feel they belong, and support groups to become more resilient by delivering sustainable activities that meet identified local needs.

20 The options considered and rejected

- 20.1 For programme grants: to fund the full amount requested to organisations meeting the minimum score up to the £200,000 available budget limit
- 20.2 For strategic grants: to review existing funding arrangements with the exception of the Anvil Trust

Date: 09 March 2021
Decision taken by: Cabinet

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Confidentiality	It is considered that information contained within this report (and appendices) do not contain exempt information under the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and therefore can be made public.