

Title of Report	FOCUS GRANTS - ANNUAL REPORT	
Presented by	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	Total grant budget in 2019-20 was £17,300, in 2020-21 it was £16,500 and for 2021/22 it is £18,000.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	Service level agreements with Citizens Advice and Age UK are prepared by the council's legal team given the level of funding provided to these two organisations	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	One part time member of staff is allocated to review the applications, gather further evidence (if required) and monitor the projects.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	Update members on the grants administered by Community Focus Team. This report covers April 2019 to March 2021	
Recommendations	TO PROVIDE COMMENTS ON THE GRANTS AWARDED SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PROJECTS, THE OUTCOMES AND THE CHANGES TO THE REGULAR GRANTS.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Community Focus provides a summary update on the grants scheme to Community Scrutiny on a biannual basis. The Community Focus team administer various grants. The regular grants are Small Grants Scheme, Green Grants, Coalville Special Expenses Community Chest grant fund and Green Shoots.
- 1.2 In the 2020-21 budget, an additional grant fund was provided to support the VE Day 75 celebrations, however due to COVID and the suspension of grant schemes generally, these funds were returned to the general fund.
- 1.3 This report explains what the grants are for, the procedure for applying for the grants as well as the grants that have been supported in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

2.0 NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL GRANTS

2.1 Small Grant Scheme

2.2 The Small Grant scheme can really make a big difference in helping communities get schemes and projects started. The organisations applying for the grants need to be a not-for-profit, voluntary organisation, community group or a registered charity. Consideration is given to applicants that can demonstrate the benefits of a new and innovative project for the local community and residents of North West Leicestershire.

2.3 Grants are available for one off pieces of project expenditure, equipment and other items or simply just to try something different. The small grant scheme aims to make grants easily available to qualifying local community and voluntary groups. The application process is open all year to organisations.

2.4 The grant scheme allows organisations to apply for up to £500. The application must be 100% match funded for example an application of £250 must be match funded by £250 from the organisation. **Appendix A** provides details of the applications and awards in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

3.0 Green Grant Scheme

3.1 The Green Grants scheme supports environmentally focussed community projects across the district of North West Leicestershire. The grant is open to all constituted organisations. Between April 2019 and 15 March 2021 organisations could apply for £500 with match funding required; this needs to be cash as opposed to in-kind funding, therefore the project should have a minimum value of £1000. On the 16 March 2021 officers relaunched the Green Grant scheme as the Zero Carbon Grant, which permitted organisations to apply for amounts from £50 to £500 which has to be match funded. This was in response to the reduced number of applications received in 2020/21 and demand for smaller environmental projects.

3.2 The project needs to fit around the following themes:

- Community orchard
- Hedge planting
- Native bulb planting
- Wildflower meadow
- General environmental improvements
- Litter
- Flytipping
- Dog fouling
- Recycling
- Composting
- Energy efficiency
- Transport issues
- Cycling/walking

3.3 **Appendix B** provides details of the applications and awards in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

4.0 Coalville Special Expenses Community Chest grant

4.1 The Coalville Special Expenses Community Chest is a grant programme to support and encourage a range of community activities, initiatives and events that meet the needs of residents within the

wards that are close to Coalville who do not have a parish council, these are; **Coalville, Bardon, Snibston, Thringstone and Greenhill**. North West Leicestershire District Council will particularly look at supporting activities that build the strength of community groups and help organisations to support themselves.

4.2 The grant scheme allows organisations to apply for up to £250 with no match funding required.

4.3 **Appendix C** provides details of the applications and awards in 2019/20 and 2020/21

5.0 Green Shoots Scheme

5.1 The Green Shoots grant helps communities brighten up community areas in spring. There are the following bulb selections on offer but officers do their best to accommodate any other suggestions made. The main bulb selections are as follows:

- Narcissi
- Daffodils
- Crocus
- Tulips

5.2 The Green Shoots grant must be match funded and since the minimum order for each variety of bulb is 1000, the applicant must order a minimum of 2000 bulbs to qualify for the grant.

Appendix D provides details of the applications and awards in 2019/20. The scheme was cancelled in 2020/21 due to COVID but is planned to return in 2021/2

6.0 VE Day 75 Grant

6.1 The VE Day 75 Grant was set up for groups/organisations in communities across North West Leicestershire that were looking to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day in May 2020.

6.2 This was designed to include things such as social events to bring the young and old together, a dance with a commemorative theme/connection, school activities, commemorative bench etc. The project just needed to have a VE Day 75 anniversary commemoration link or theme. This grant was open to parish councils, community groups and schools (schools needed to evidence that their project was totally inclusive of their local community).

6.3 Unfortunately, many of the planned events were then cancelled due to COVID and applications were withdrawn or funds returned to the council where grants had already been awarded.

6.4 The scheme was managed and evaluated in the same manner as the Small Grant Scheme.

6.5 **Appendix E** provides details of the applications and awards in 2020/21.

7.0 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

7.1 Citizens Advice

7.2 The district council has supported Citizens Advice (CA) in 2019/20 and 2020/21, to provide residents of North West Leicestershire with advice, information and representation.

7.3 The organisation provides advice on the following subjects.

- Money Advice
- Welfare Benefits
- Employment

- Housing.
- Family and Personal matters

7.4 The organisation provides assisted information and/or signpost to a specialist service (e.g. Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline) on the following subjects:

- Consumer
- Taxes
- Immigration and Nationality
- Health
- Education

7.5 Households or individuals who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are prioritised for advice appointments and are expected to be seen within 10 working days.

7.6 It is a fundamental principle of the service that advice is free, impartial, independent and confidential.

Financial Year	Financial Support	Homelessness Element
2019/2020	£69,840	£10,000
2020/2021	£71,050	£10,000

7.7 Due to the value of this Grant a formal Service Level Agreement was drafted by the Council's legal team and signed by the Head of Legal on the authorisation of the Strategic Director of Place in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules.

7.8 A summary of the service provided by CA is attached as **Appendix E**.

8.0 Age UK

8.1 The district council has supported Age UK in 2019/20 and 2020/21, to deliver to the residents of North West Leicestershire with a befriending service for older residents to reduce social isolation, promote independent living and enable access to services through information and support.

8.2 Age UK also provide and support volunteering opportunities to residents of the district, reducing social isolation, improving employment skills and experience.

Financial Year	Financial Support
2019/2020	£21,560
2020/2021	£21,560

8.3 Due to the value of this Grant a formal Service Level Agreement was drafted by the Council's legal team and signed by the Head of Legal on the authorisation of the Head of Community Services in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules.

8.4 A summary of the service provided by Age UK is attached as **Appendix F**.

9.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATIONS FOR 2019/20 and 2020/21

Small Grant	Total applications	Successful	Unsuccessful	Withdrawn / Pending *	Total Council Spend	Total Value of Projects
2019/20	17	14	1	2	£6,214.17	£143,482.90**
2020/21	8	3	0	5	£1,350.00	£2,994.00

**Total project value includes 1 x large project (Measham Baptist Church - £116,000)

Green Grant	Total applications	Successful	Unsuccessful	Withdrawn / Pending *	Total Council Spend	Total Value of projects
2019/20	11	10	-	1	£5,000.00	£20,127.16
2020/21	5	1	0	4	£500.00	£2143.00

Coalville Special Expenses (CSE) community chest	Total applications	Successful	Unsuccessful	Withdrawn / Pending *	Total Council Spend	Total Value of projects
2019/20	9	5	1	3	£1,125.43	£5,593.77
2020/21	5	2	1	2	£499.00	£555.00

Green Shoots Scheme	Total applications	Total Council Spend	Total bulbs distributed
2019/20	20	£2,600	52,000
2020/21	N/A	N/A	N/A

Total Council Spend	Total Value of projects
£1,280.59	£3,047.59

¹This was funded from additional budget allocated 2019/20 and from small grant budget in 2020/21

* The reasons for the withdrawal of applications; the application does not meet the criteria; the applicant does not provided the information required to progress the applications or the applicant decided to withdraw their application. Pending applications are waiting for further information from the applicant or in the process of being evaluated.

9.6 The total funding given out in 2019/20 was £16,220.19 bringing £172,251.02 into the district.

9.7 The total funding given out in 2020/21 was £3,629.59 bringing £8739.59 into the district.

10.0 GRANTS FOR 2021/2022

10.1 Our intention for 2021/22 is to introduce digital forms for all of the community grant applications. Currently the applications are in an editable PDF format and have to be downloaded by the applicant before saving and emailing. Our aim is to make the application process more user-friendly, customer focused and to bring it in line with the other services offered by the council. The application process can be inefficient as applicants often do not attach the required supporting documentation such as quotes, bank statements etc. By moving to a digital form, we will be able to ensure the supporting documents are uploaded before the application can be submitted, therefore

speeding up the application process and reducing the amount of administration required. PDF versions of the form will be maintained and available on request for applicants who wish to print and post the forms.

- 10.2 Small Grant Scheme, 2021/22 budget has been set at £11,000
- 10.3 Zero Carbon Grants (formerly Green Grant) 2021/22 budget has been set at £5000 and this includes the “Green Shoots” scheme, which we are hoping to be able to relaunch following the suspension of the scheme in 2020 due to the pandemic. We are hoping that the reduction in minimum project value for the Zero Carbon Grant (previously £1000), will encourage more applications for smaller, more diverse projects in the district.
- 10.4 Coalville Special Expenses Community Chest, 2021/22 budget will be £2,000.
- 10.5 Green Shoots, 2021/22 is being supported by the Zero Carbon Grants budget.
- 10.6 We are looking at making an additional themed grant available, to launch in early 2022 for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. This will be available to community groups, schools, and parish councils in order for them to hold activities in the community to celebrate. A budget will be set for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 10.7 CONTAIN funding (Community and Sports Club COVID support grant) will be delivered in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Team in March 2021. The initial allocation of funds was managed through a deadline driven application process, future allocations will be managed via a rolling application process with consideration being given to expand the eligibility criteria to ensure that as many community groups are supported to stay open and resume activities in a COVID safe way. So far, £6,197.24 has been awarded to community groups and sports clubs from this fund.
- 10.8 The Community Focus Team is working with Environmental Protection to administer a £15,000 budget for litter picking equipment for parish councils from May 2021.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Insert relevant Council Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town - Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Developing a clean and green district - Local people live in high quality, affordable homes - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected
Policy Considerations:	n/a
Safeguarding:	Applicants are required to submit copies of their safeguarding policies where the project directly involves children or young people or where deemed necessary.
Equalities/Diversity:	Grants applications are evaluated consistently against the grant criteria and subject to an approval process to ensure that every application is considered equally.

Customer Impact:	Successful grants awarded directly enhance the community of North West Leicestershire and its residents.
Economic and Social Impact:	Successful grants awarded directly provide an economic and social impact by providing employment opportunities to organisations and businesses within in the district who are contracted to provide good and services. We would encourage organisations to buy local.
Environment and Climate Change:	Grant schemes actively support and promote the Zero Carbon agenda.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Ward members are asked for comments on CSE applications.
Risks:	Reputational risk is managed by ensuring we support positive community applications. Support for applications is provided to ensure they are not refused where possible.
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