

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OFFICER DECISION REPORT

Report Title	COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GRANT FUND			
Purpose of Report	To record the decision to set up the fund and set out the purpose and administration of the fund.			
Decision(s)	A decision has been made by the Section 151 Officer to: a. Make a fund of £100,000 available for grant payments to organisations proving assistance to vulnerable residents as a result of Covid-19. b. Set out the parameters of the scheme and its administration.			
Consultation and Feedback	Group Leaders of all four parties have been consulted together with the Chair of Community Services & Licensing, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.			
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Options	The Council could have decided not to accept the £50,000 funding from Gloucestershire County Council or to match fund that amount, but that would not further the aims of assisting those organisations who are at the forefront of delivering aid to our most vulnerable residents. Therefore, this is the only feasible option in the circumstances.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	None			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Early on in the Covid-19 crisis the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government charged Local Resilience Forums with responsibility for organising assistance for residents who were vulnerable to Covid-19 or who were being shielded as a result of being identified as being particularly at risk. This work is being led by the County Council closely supported by the District Councils.

- 1.2 A hub has been set up by the County Council which is intended to be a coordination point for organisations able to offer help and assistance to residents in this time of need. Anyone wishing to seek help can register with the hub either online or by telephone. The County Council carry out an initial sift of those seeking help to ensure that anyone in need of adult or child social care is referred to the appropriate service and the remaining data is sent to the Districts on a daily basis. The hub can be accessed at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/helphub
- 1.3 The District Councils then organise the pairing up of the need for assistance with local organisations, many of whom are voluntary or have come together as a result of the current crisis. There is a clear need for local authorities to appropriately support these organisations and as such, the County Council made the sum of £50,000 available to the District Councils to make grants to support this network.
- 1.4 The Section 151 Officer has made a decision to match fund that amount to create a grant pot in the sum of £100,000. This report is to record the decision to create the fund and to set out the process for administering the paying over of grants to recognised organisations.

2. GRANT RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1 The purpose of the fund is to provide some funding to assist local voluntary sector agencies and community groups who are supporting vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis. This is to cover additional costs they may incur due to increased activity or functions that they have insufficient resources to meet. The aim, where possible, is to share the fund fairly across the whole district, whilst at the same time not disadvantaging those who are using their own organisation's resources to mount a major co-ordination effort.
- 2.2 Organisations may apply for up to £1,000. To manage expectations, the application form indicates that funding up to £1,000 can be agreed but indicates that further conversations will be held if a higher amount is requested. Officers have authority to agree up to £5,000 in consultation with the Chair of Community Services and Licensing Committee providing need is demonstrated. If there is a request for more than £5,000 the Section 151 Officer will need to agree.
- 2.3 The funding may only be used for expenditure in relation to the Covid-19 Crisis including but not exclusively:
- Setting up of Community Floats to purchase food and essential supplies for vulnerable people and families
 - Development of digital/virtual support – equipment such as mobile phones or tablets
 - Expenses incurred by volunteers such as petrol
 - Developing infrastructure to support vulnerable people.
- 2.4 Applicants must be registered through the GCC Community Help Hub for Covid-19 assistance to qualify for assistance and will usually be organisations such as:

- Community or voluntary groups
- Registered Charities
- Community Interest Companies
- Town and Parish Councils.

2.5 It is important to note that the fund cannot be used to support the mainstream activities of an organisation e.g. ongoing yearly spending commitments including salaries and administration costs. Payment of a grant does not create any ongoing funding commitment or obligation to the Council.

2.6 Given the need to administer the fund as soon as possible, the application process will be simplified with a lighter touch due diligence process. Applicants will submit a simple application form to the District Council.

2.7 Decisions on applications for funding will be made by Officers and overseen by Councillor Mattie Ross, Chair of the Community Services and Licensing Committee. The District will keep a simple record of who has been funded and to what extent and this will be shared with the County Council. This record will be published on the SDC website for transparency and updated when new awards are made.

2.8 Payments from the fund will only be made into a bank account held and operated by the applicant and all applicants must:

- have a recognised legal and constitutional status;
- be financially viable; and
- have clear financial controls.

2.9 In order not to exclude smaller organisations from the scheme, if a smaller Covid-19 response group does not have its own bank account, they will be asked to link up with a known community partner to hold the funding on their behalf.

2.10 All grant recipients will be expected to account for the grant money and will be required to keep all receipts and documentation relating to the project.

2.11 The sum of £20,000 will be retained to cover the eventuality that the Council has to step in directly to provide community support in the event that volunteer groups become unable to continue to assist residents.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that an officer decision is authorised to be made on the following basis:

- The Council provides the sum of £50,000 to match fund the grant provided by the County Council and that a Community Resilience Grant Fund of £100,000 is established.
- That grants of up to £1,000 be made to available to applicants on the basis of and subject to the criteria and controls set out in this report.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

This decision requires the use of £50k of Council funds which are not contained within the Council budget. The money must therefore come from the reserves. The most appropriate reserve is the funding from the 100% Business Rates Pilot which can be used for “reducing poverty and equality within the district”. The use of the grant fund to support those in need at this time of crisis is within that parameter.

As is appropriate for funds of this type the proposals include provision of reporting and publishing the grant awards.

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4.2 Legal Implications

The Council has a general power of competence to do whatever an individual generally may do. This applies to the provision of grants subject to budget being available, necessary controls being in place and record keeping demonstrating appropriate disbursement of public funds.

Given the current restrictions on meetings, the lack of Regulations to hold meetings remotely and the need to disburse grants as soon as possible, as a matter of necessity, it is appropriate for the Section 151 Officer to make this decision in consultation with the political group leaders and the other statutory officers.

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4.2 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision which necessitate an equality impact assessment.

4.3 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.