

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 13 February 2025
Title:	Achieving Outcomes in Partnership with the Voluntary Sector – Corporate financial support to the voluntary sector	
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Communities	
Report Author:	Carla Claydon, Community Partnership Manager cclaydon@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: Yes

Summary

1. At the Cabinet meeting held on 5 September, Members agreed to adopt a new approach to funding voluntary and community sector organisations by moving from a one-year applications process to a three-year outcome-focused commissioning process.

The starting point for this exercise, in policy terms, were the following four properties of UDC's Corporate Plan:

- Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Encouraging economic growth
- Building strong communities
- Putting residents first.

The protecting and enhancing our environment priority was out of scope of this exercise, as it is currently funded through a separate Zero Carbon Grants scheme.

Similarly, encouraging economic growth priority was largely out of scope of this exercise too, as this is addressed through the council's economic development strategy and associated funding.

2. Members attended a series of meetings and Cabinet agreed to prioritise the following services on an outcomes-based commissioning process with the following financial envelope:

Priority and overall allocation proposals	Key funding activity	Approach
Priority outcomes for 3-year funding agreements - £467k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), tackling poverty, more effectively mapping and coordinating data and evidence 	£140k
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tackling rural isolation and loneliness (including rural transport (£62,000 pa)) 	£62k
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy, resilient and active communities (inc. mental health and sports and leisure) 	£70k
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for older people & those with learning difficulties 	£110k
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth ▪ Arts and culture 	£50k £35k

Cabinet also agreed to assign funding to one-off single year funding of £83,000 to lower priorities:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any other contribution towards Corporate Plan Outcomes. Two one-off funding streams – small grants (up to £500) or larger (£500-£3,000), including direct Member submitted or supported proposals 	£83k
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The one-off grant was launched 14 January and will close for applications midday on 21 February 2025. Applications will be assessed by a cross-party working group of members with officer support.

3. We were advised that, due to the sums involved, Information, Advice and Guidance should follow a light touch procurement process and must include KPI requirements. This process will be launched early February by Chelmsford City Council. The incumbent organisation currently undertaking the service in Uttlesford was written to advising them of the separate process arrangement.
4. The “Support for older people & those with learning difficulties” and “Arts and culture” categories reflect the Councils commitment to supporting organisations by offering rent free accommodation in the form of The Garden Rooms, Pam’s Place and Rowena Davey Day Centre, and providing assistance with utility costs as well as office accommodation at the London Road offices. The associated costs are recognised and accounted for but were not included in the application process.
5. The three-year grant process was launched on 20 October 2024 and the closing date was originally planned for 20 December, however, following consultation with the voluntary sector this was extended to midday on 10 January 2025.
6. Due diligence was undertaken on the applicant’s finances, safeguarding policies and essential supporting documents prior to the applications sent to the panel members for scoring.
7. Applications were independently evaluated and scored by panels members that included district councillors, UDC officers and partner agencies such as colleagues from Essex County Council, Active Essex and the NHS. The scores awarded by the panel were consolidated, and moderation meetings held week beginning 27 January 2025, where projects were approved to receive grant awards.

Recommendations

8. To note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
9. To approve the list of successful projects agreed by the selection panel as listed in *Appendix 2*.

Financial Implications

10. A total of £182,000 grant funding has been awarded for each year for 2025-26, 2026–27 and 2027-28. All contracts will include a non-fault break clause attached due to the uncertainty over of the government’s Local Government Reform.

11. Grant payments will only be released to the organisations when Officers are in receipt of a signed agreement and any other requested information, to confirm that conditions of the funding have been accepted and/or met by the applicant.
12. All applicants will be subjected to strict, robust monitoring procedures which will include, quarterly reporting of targets, visits by council officers to the projects as well as presentations by the applicant to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Background Papers

13. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:
 - The paper to Cabinet on 5 September 2024
 - Application forms for each of the grants
 - Individual specifications and criteria for each of the grants

Impact

14.

<p>Communication/Consultation</p>	<p>Meetings with Informal Cabinet Board undertaken to establish Council's priorities.</p> <p>Workshop engagement with the voluntary and community sector to explain and inform the process.</p> <p>Cross-party Member workshop took place to consult and inform the process.</p> <p>Those organisations previously in receipt of the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant were written to prior to grant launch with links to applications. E-mail with link sent to Town and Parish Clerks.</p> <p>Information on the application process was shared widely via all Council communication and social media platforms.</p>
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Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	Grant funding will be allocated so that Uttlesford District Council can support as wide a range of projects as possible across the district. All projects will need to demonstrate how they will engage and work collaboratively with other voluntary and community organisations to support Uttlesford residents.
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	
Sustainability	The fund specifically supports enabling the voluntary sector, town and parish councils and community groups to deliver projects aligned to the Council Corporate Plan and priorities.
Ward-specific impacts	n/a
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

15. The closing date for grant applications was extended to midday 10 January 2025 following consultation with the voluntary organisations.

16. Applications for grants were invited under three themes:

- Tackling rural isolation and loneliness (including rural transport (£62,000 pa))
- Healthy, resilient and active communities (inc. mental health, sports and leisure) (£70,000 pa)
- Youth (£50,000 pa)

17. All applicants were asked to provide a method for how they would evaluate and measure the impact of their project.

18. At the closing date, a total of 25 applications for funding were received. Please see a breakdown of applications received in *Appendix 1*.

19. The selection panel independently scored and assessed each application ahead of moderation meetings held week beginning 27 January, where all applications were discussed, and the successful grant awards agreed.

20. A scoring system was used to evaluate each application against the grant award criteria, please see further details at *Appendix 3*.
21. Sixteen projects were selected to receive a grant award this year, see *Appendix 2*.
22. The Communities team will monitor and engage with projects over the next 12 months, sharing stories and details of their implementation.
23. The grant provides an opportunity for the Council to support a programme of community engagement against its Corporate Plan and priorities for the benefit of its residents.
24. Following approval of Cabinet all applicants will be contacted. The successful applicants will receive contracts for signing, which will outline any feedback from the assessment panel. Organisations who were unsuccessful will be also communicated with and supported to secure alternative sources of funding.
25. All community, voluntary sector organisations and parish councils have previously been communicated with through workshops and forums to inform them of the Council's proposals and the need to remove £250,000 from the Council's grants budget from 2023-24 onwards.
26. All grants will be listed on the Council's transparency page.

Risk Analysis

27.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the demand for grants cannot be met by the funding available, leading to projects not being delivered.	2	2	<p>Feedback will be given to all applicants on the outcome of their proposal. Arising themes from applications will be reviewed to look at where other grants or resources could be utilised to support delivery.</p> <p>Other suitable grant funds will continue to be publicised which provides a further opportunity for voluntary and</p>

			community groups.
There is a risk that project impact measurements are not delivered, which means the contribution of projects to the community will be limited.	2	3	Guidance and requirement for each of the applications has been provided prior to organisations submitting their applications. Meetings will be set up and robust reporting put in place to assist the organisations in delivering the Council's priorities.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

- **Appendix 1 Summary of Applications-** Attached.
- **Appendix 2 List of Successful Projects** - Attached.
- **Appendix 3 Questions and Evaluation Criteria** - Below.

Appendix 3 Questions and Evaluation Criteria

Understanding, methodology, approach and beneficiaries needs

- (a) Tell us about the project's beneficiaries and their needs.
- (b) Please provide a clear account of your understanding of the requirements of this grant and describe in as much detail as possible your overall project/service proposal, how it will achieve the identified outcomes and how your project/service will meet the beneficiaries needs both now and as part of an annual review process.

Skills, knowledge and experience

Please tell us why your organisation is best placed to deliver this project/service and details of any other partner organisations involved in delivery or who are an integral part of your project. Please describe your knowledge of the local Uttlesford Voluntary and Community economy and how you will ensure that your service is signposted and promoted by other organisations and how you will refer and signpost into other services where needed?

Social value

Please tell us how many local people your organisation directly employs, has as volunteers and as trustees? Please give examples of other ways your organisation demonstrates social value to Uttlesford District residents. (Local refers to residents living in Uttlesford)

Promotion and communication

How will you promote and publicise your project? Explain what you will do to make sure that people and organisations know about your project and services and how you will actively seek to identify people who need support, ensuring they can access services your project provides?

Budget and management

- (a) Please explain what the grant will be used for and provide a budget sheet in Excel format for the project's total costs broken- down annually.

- (b) Has your organisation been in receipt of any other funding from other sources to support this project? If so, please give details of where you have received the funding, what has been delivered and how much was given.

Monitoring and evaluation

- (a) Please define the specific outcomes that the project/service will aim to achieve.
- (b) How will you measure these outcomes and report on the difference this project/service has made?

Risks and safeguarding

What are the risks associated with the project and how do you intend to minimise them? Please attached your risk register detailing any associated risk and mitigations.

Further information

- (a) Has your organisation had a grant terminated?
- (b) Does the applicant, whether as individuals or as an organisation, have a connection to or relationship with Uttlesford District Council, its staff or its councillors?

Description	Score
<p>Excellent Response</p> <p>The response was robust, detailed, well-articulated in all material respects providing strong evidence that the criteria would be met, with no weaknesses or areas of concern with the content</p>	6
<p>Good Response</p> <p>The response presented evidence that the criteria would be met, good in many respects but with minor weaknesses or concerns with the content</p>	4
<p>Satisfactory/ Poor Submission</p> <p>The response provided limited evidence that the criteria would be met, there were major weaknesses or concerns with the content. The response lacked significant detail/or clarity</p>	2
<p>Unsatisfactory Submission</p> <p>The response did not provide evidence that the criteria would be met; and was wholly unsatisfactory in terms of content Major weaknesses, issues or omissions were identified. The response was poorly articulated and/or inconsistent.</p>	0

Required document

- Copy of your constitution/terms or reference/operating document
- Copy of your health and safety policy
- Copy of your insurance certificate and schedule
- Copy of your safeguarding policy and evidence of training
- Copy of DBS numbers for staff involved in delivering the project
- Copy of your safeguarding risk assessment