

Briefing Note

COVID-19 Community Fund proposal

1.0 Background

1.1 The parish council already manages two funding streams that organised groups in the parish can make application to. The Donations Fund (£500pa funded through the annual precept) and the Community Grant (£5000 for 2020/21 and funded from reserves). Both are set up with criteria that only permit the council to make awards when an application has been received. There is no scope in the current system for the parish council to make proactive awards.

1.2 This note will set out what the options are for setting up a scheme that will permit the council to make proactive donations that are consistent with its current grants scheme, but with more flexibility in the criteria used.

2.0 Legal

2.1 Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act allows parish councils to make grants and donations to organisations which provide benefit to residents. The maximum permitted in the current financial year is £11,665, which is greater than the annual budget already agreed (£5,550) by £6,165.

2.2 This means that the council can set up an additional grants scheme and with a maximum budget of £6,165.

3.0 The changes

3.1 Current grants and donations are time limited. Small donations can be agreed at every council meeting, but there is an upper limit of £100. Community Grants are awarded twice each year with an upper limit of £2,000 with an application and assessment process that might deter small groups from applying.

Councillors may wish to be flexible in their maximum donation and make decisions outside of organised meetings.

3.2 Current grants and donations are only available to groups which make an application. There is no provision in their terms and conditions to allow the parish council to make proactive awards.

Councillors may wish to identify groups that could benefit and offer funding without being asked.

3.3 This funding stream would be set up specifically for community groups and organizations bringing help and support to those facing isolation and need.

Councillors may wish to limit the time that this funding is available for but mindful that the economic effects of the national emergency may last beyond the current financial year.

3.4 Current grant schemes are only available to organised groups that can show evidence of how they are managed, together with a financial history.

Councillors may wish to relax their usual criteria and allow informal groups of volunteers who can demonstrate the value of their work to receive funding.

4.0 What cannot change

4.1 Councillors should not be donating funds to profit making or commercial organisations.

But you might wish to consider supporting volunteers helping to support essential business services, for example petrol costs for volunteers making food deliveries.

4.2 Individual people may not make application or receive funding directly from this fund. *But you might consider giving grants to an organisation that does provide individual benefits, and where the organisation is set up and managed to provide benefits. For example, a cash donation to a foodbank or other charitable group.*

4.3 Generally, grants are not given retrospectively. *But where a group has already delivered a benefit to the community and is out of pocket, you might consider reimbursing expenses. For example, a sewing group who have made PPE and paid for materials themselves.*

4.4 Evidence of need: the council usually asks for a business case as part of the application. *But you might take a view that small donations of money do not require the same level of scrutiny as large donations. This will rely on relationships based on trust and local knowledge.*

4.5 No grants given to organisations that already receive statutory funding *But you might agree that in the national emergency, and where resources are stretched, you would find alternative ways of support. For example, surgeries which make deliveries of medicine are currently reimbursing expenses to volunteers. You might consider making a donation to the surgery for them to disburse themselves.*

5.0 How to apply

5.1 Section 3.2 above suggests seeking out groups. Currently, suggestions made by councillors include: Liskeard & Looe Foodbank, St John's Ambulance, Primary School, Young Farmers

5.2 Invite applications by promoting the scheme on our website, social media and parish notice boards.

5.3 Simplified application form available and more detailed information can be requested depending on the level of funding. Where the donation is proactive, Clerk to complete the form in lieu of a formal application.

6.0 How to make an award

6.1 Clerk checks that essential criteria (listed on the application form) are met.

6.2 Investigates the organisation of the applicant to demonstrate due diligence (a proportionate approach)

6.3 Prepares assessment with recommendations

6.4 Circulates to councillors for decision.

7.0 Next steps

7.1 Should the council be setting up a COVID-19 Community Fund (Section 1.0)

7.2 Agree budget, maximum £6165 (Section 2.2)

7.3 Agree terms and conditions (Section 3.0)

7.4 Agree boundaries to funding (Section 4.0)

7.5 Agree the application process (Section 5.0)

7.6 Agree the decision making process (Section 6.0)

7.7 If proposals are adopted, agree a date to open applications.

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