

Midlothian Council Small Grants Allocation 2017/18

Report by Dr Mary Smith, Director Education, Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

This report is asking the Council to approve the recommendations of the Small Grants Programme for the funding of Third Sector organisations in 2017/18.

2 Background

- 2.1** In June 2014 the Council approved a set of recommendations following a review of Council grants (part of the wider review of Services to Communities). That wider review was prompted by a need to focus on the areas of greatest need for the Council's resources and services, to ensure that a more focused approach, driving efficiencies in seeking opportunities for financial savings. Overall the financial savings approved by Council was to achieve a recurring saving of circa. £500,000 by 2018, a reduction of 34% over a three year period.
- 2.2** For 2017/18 the Small Grants Programme has an annual budget allocation of £150,000 and funds individual projects up to £3,000. The Small Grants Programme is made up of four separate funding streams. Each stream has an allocated budget and set criteria for assessment by an independent scoring panel. The streams are:
- i) Developing Communities, including Community Councils;
 - ii) Employability, Learning, and Training
 - iii) Health and Physical Activity
 - iv) Poverty
- 2.3** On 15 December 2015 Council agreed that Gala Day funding of circa. £10,000 is considered as a separate funding stream outwith the Small Grants Programme: and the Head of Commercial Operations to be responsible for the future management of Gala Day funding.
- 2.4** During April and May 2015 an evaluation was undertaken with existing Small Grants Programme recipients. The purpose of the evaluation was to seek feedback with a view to improving the programme. A key feature of the feedback was that the application and monitoring forms were too lengthy, onerous and complicated to complete. In response the application and monitoring forms have been shortened and simplified – **see Appendix 1.**

- 2.5** On 28 June 2016 Council agreed to allocate the £40,000 annual Poverty Stream to the targeted areas of Dalkeith/Woodburn, Mayfield / Easthouses and Gorebridge in 2017/18 small grant round and beyond, using a participatory decision making process and gave governance for officers to use this money to apply for external funding. The Communities Team is developing a participatory budgeting programme for the targeted areas for 2017/18 and has secured an additional £10,000 from NHS Lothian to support this work. Due to the actions agreed in Section 2.3 and 2.5, the Small Grants fund available to apply for was £100,000.
- 2.6** Between August and October 2016 a small grants communication plan was delivered to promote the programme. This promotion included adverts in the local press, a social media campaign, correspondence to existing grant recipients, communication via Third Sector networks, and drop-in grant surgeries in Dalkeith, Gorebridge, Penicuik, Mayfield and Bonnyrigg – see **Appendix 2**.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

From the overall budget of £100,000 the Small Grants Programme recommended the following allocation for each of the grants streams;

Grant Stream	Budget	Requested	Awarded
Developing Communities	30,000	104,391	33,000
Community Councils	10,000	16,954	9,998
Employability, Learning and Training	20,000	24,673	14,264
Health and Physical Activity	40,000	120,626	42,701
Total	100,000	266,644	99,963

During the assessment process the lead officers for each grant stream accepted that there may need to be some movement across grant streams, depending on the quality and quantity of the applications. It was also acknowledged that a number of projects met the criteria of more than one funding stream. The Employability, Learning and Training stream had the lowest levels of applications and the grant stream leads agreed that the unallocated £5,736 would be redistributed to the Health and Physical Activity and Developing Communities Streams. In redistributing this money an assessment was made against the Employability, Learning and Training criteria and a reallocation was proposed accordingly.

A full breakdown of the organisations, funding by Community Council area and proposed awards is available in **Appendix 3**.

3.2 Risk

The Review of Council Grants has been risk assessed and these risks are included in the Council's Risk Register. The Small Grants Programme provides financial support to a range of local organisations, many of whom are struggling financially because of a reduction in Council core funding, and reductions in money available from other external funders. The risks for these organisations include losing staff and volunteers, closure, increased pressure to fundraise from other sources, and loss of external funding leverage. The Small Grants Programme helps to mitigate these risks.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☒ Community safety
- ☒ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan (SMP)

The SMP has directly informed the criteria used to assess and award all of the small grant applications for 2017/18.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The proposed small grants allocation will require monitoring to see if the desired outcomes for each grant stream are demonstrably being achieved. The existing robust monitoring processes will help ensure that the allocation of small grants will support the outcomes identified in the SMP.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Prevention is a key part of the criteria for all grant streams. All applications were carefully assessed by the scoring panels against this criterion.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The review of Council Grants used a co-production approach with the Third Sector. Many of the criteria and processes in the Small Grants Programme have been informed by this process. The Voluntary Sector Forum nominated the Assistant Manager at Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA), to take on an advisory role as part of the Small Grants Programme, but she was not directly involved in the scoring. MVA provided valuable support and advice to Third Sector organisations during the application period.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

A full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was undertaken as part of the Council's review of grants in 2014. The approved recommendations are now embedded in the three year small grants programme. The grants panels carefully assess the applications against the Council's equality duties. The funded organisations are required to monitor equalities and take positive action to promote access for equality groups.

A further Equalities Impact Assessment was completed on the 24 August 2016. The assessment concluded that the Small Grant Programme is compliant with the Council's Equalities Duties and will have a positive impact on equalities groups in Midlothian. **See Appendix 4.**

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The Small Grants Programme funding will help maintain the Voluntary and Third Sector in Midlothian. With reductions in statutory funding, the Voluntary and Third Sector has an increasingly important role in developing communities, reducing inequalities, and addressing social isolation.

4 Summary

- 4.1** The Small Grants Programme 2017/18 is a key part of the overall Council's contribution to Voluntary and Third Sector organisations. The programme has been promoted across the sector, and scoring panels have carefully assessed all the applications against the Council agreed criteria. The Gala day funding has been taken out of the competitive grants programme for 2017/18 in recognition of their unique contribution to community life in Midlothian. The poverty stream has been reallocated to the priority areas, allowing officers to use this resource to attract additional external funding and use a participatory methodology in the decision making process. The administrative processes have been improved following feedback from the Third Sector. The Small Grants Programme continues to support local organisations across Midlothian.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1** It is recommended that Council:
- i) approves the recommended grant awards as set out in Appendix 1 of this report (subject to meeting the appropriate conditions of grant); and
 - ii) acknowledges the significant contribution the Voluntary and Third Sector makes to communities across Midlothian.

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