

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: 27 MARCH 2015

LEAD OFFICER: RACHEL CROSSLEY, NEW MODELS OF DELIVERY LEAD

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY BUILDINGS GRANT SCHEME



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To make decisions to approve or reject applications to the Community Building Grants Scheme (CBGS) for the year 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

1. reviews all of the applications highlighting the ones that have been approved and will be awarded the grant.
2. highlights any unsuccessful applications with clear reasons why they have not been successful.
3. gives direction to the Community Building Advisor on the next steps where a clear decision has not been reached.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Each year the Council commits £150,000 to the Community Building Grant Scheme. This is a tripartite grant scheme and grants are awarded for refurbishment and renovation of community buildings to widen access for community use. Any grant the County Council awards requires match funding from the Borough or District Council in which the community building resides and from the applicant organisation themselves. The scheme is administered and managed on behalf of the County Council and Borough and District Councils by Surrey Community Action.

Each year the scheme generates in excess of £500,000 of capital funding to renovate community buildings which sit at the heart of vibrant and active communities. By providing this funding there are huge benefits for the residents of Surrey in terms of community cohesion, addressing social isolation and improving the health and wellbeing of the communities.

DETAILS:

Community Buildings Grant Scheme

1. The Community Building Grants Scheme has been supported by the County Council since 1998 and offers capital grants to village halls, community centres and voluntary youth buildings. Grants can be for any general refurbishment that will improve usage and accessibility to the building such as:
 - New buildings/extensions
 - Disability access and facilities

- Major structural work to amenities or refurbishment
 - Car parking maintenance, fencing etc
2. Community buildings sit at the heart of successful communities. By investing in them the County Council drives significant benefits for the residents of Surrey. A wide range of activities are hosted through community buildings, such as training, childcare, social programmes for older people, supporting and reaching the most vulnerable in our communities. This links in to key strategic priority areas for the Council to drive wellbeing, economic prosperity and ensure the outcomes for Surrey residents are improved.
 3. The County Council has committed £150,000 annually to the scheme. The scheme is a partnership between the County Council, the Borough and District Councils and applicant organisations. Any grant the County Council awards requires match funding from the Borough or District council in which the community building resides. Currently all of the Borough and District Councils apart from Epsom & Ewell and Waverley Borough Council are part of the Scheme.
 4. Community groups apply for assistance but must contribute at least a third of total project costs themselves. The organisation of the whole scheme is contracted by the County Council and Borough and District Councils to Surrey Community Action who deal with the application process, assess the schemes through site visits and back ground work and make recommendations to the councils.
 5. It is an essential requirement of the scheme that the community halls are actively managed and marketed for the use by the wider community. The Community Buildings Advisor assesses current use and anticipated increase of use once the refurbishment has been carried out and scores against the criteria.

Community Buildings Grant Scheme (SCBGS) 2015-16

6. The application round for the 2015-16 scheme opened in August 2014 and closed in November 2014. Annex A has a breakdown of all the applications. There are twelve applications for consideration this year which come from seven of the Borough and District areas. After the applications were submitted, the Community Buildings Advisor liaised with the Borough and District Councils to carry out site visits, understand any localised issues and carry out the due diligence related to the application qualifying process, eg: is the building available for wider community use, checking their accounts and systems etc.
7. The SCBGS is broadly promoted through press releases via newspapers, radio stations and on-line bulletins across the whole county. In addition to this all community buildings and religious buildings on the SCBGS and Diocese of Guildford and Southwark database were sent letters informing them of the funding round and opportunity. Adverts were also placed through national sites such as NCVO and Grantfinder.
8. In total there were 236 enquiries with 115 requiring further work and in depth support as shown below.

Elmbridge	17
Epsom & Ewell	5 (BUT NOT PART OF SCHEME)
Guildford	12
Mole Valley	27
Reigate & Banstead	9
Runnymede	7

Spelthorne	6
Surrey Heath	6
Tandridge	6
Waverley	17 (BUT NOT PART OF SCHEME)
Woking	3
TOTAL:	115

CONSULTATION:

9. Prior to the Cabinet Member's decision making meeting, local Divisional Members have been consulted by both the applicant organisation and the Community Buildings Advisor (Annex A). Their support for the application is critical in enabling the Cabinet Member to make an informed decision, based on local knowledge.
10. Officers from the relevant Borough and District Councils have also been extensively engaged in the application process prior to this Decision Making meeting to check the viability of the proposal and to gain the Borough or District support, where this is possible. This again enables the Cabinet Member to have some confidence in both the credibility and suitability of the application. However, not all of the Borough and District Council's will have given their final approvals by the time of this Cabinet Member Decision Making meeting so some decisions may need to be subject to that decision.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

11. There is a risk that the funds may not be used in the ways that have been specified or that the management board of the community building disbands before the project has been completed. To counter this, payment is only made once the work has been completed and inspected by the both the Borough/District Council officer and the Community Buildings Advisor. Also, during the application process scrutiny is given to ensure there are robust governance arrangements and policies and procedures in place that depict a well managed community building, such as audited accounts, secondary contacts etc.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

12. The CBGS provides excellent value for money. The £150,000 the County Council puts into the scheme is match funded by the relevant Borough and District Councils to provide total grant funding of £300,000. Along with the applicant organisations' funding this generates a much greater amount annually for investment in to community buildings in Surrey. On average, the scheme generates an annual investment in excess of £500,000.
13. For the 2015/16 Scheme there is a total of £156,447.04 available to give out as grants. This is made up of the £150,000 annual allocation plus £6,447.04 of underspend from the previous year. The potential project total exceeds this amount and the Cabinet Member will need to make decisions on the £156,447.04 available.
14. Annex A shows a summary breakdown of the applications. The anticipated wider capital funding generated to Surrey will be in excess of £2.6 million.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

15. There is an approved annual capital budget of £150,000 within the 2015/20 Medium Term Financial Plan. The funding is transferred annually to Surrey Community Action. The Cabinet member's decisions will lead to allocation of grants within that budget.
16. The Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered/addressed.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

17. The general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 enables the Council to make these grants as it empowers local authorities to do anything an individual may generally do. Given the Council's fiduciary duty, it is noted that processes are in place to ensure the appropriate governance of the projects and to ensure that the grants are only made once the work is properly completed.

Equalities and Diversity

18. Investment in the community buildings has a positive impact across all protected groups encouraging them to participate in community life where possible and often reach the most vulnerable in our society. Grants are only successful for those organisations that demonstrate they serve the wider community and exclude no group or individual.

Other Implications:

19. As discussed in paragraph 6 above, by investing in community buildings there is a strong understanding the general well being of the residents of Surrey is enhanced. The whole scheme is based on the premise that a thriving community building sits at the heart of a vibrant, successful community, offering valuable support and opportunities often to the most vulnerable in society, enhancing their health and wellbeing.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- The Community Buildings Advisor will notify successful applicants of the award where the final approval has been made at the county and local level.
- The Community Buildings Advisor will notify unsuccessful applicants where appropriate.
- The Community Buildings Advisor will follow through necessary steps as directed by the Cabinet Member where a decision is reliant on further actions being completed.
- The Community Buildings Advisor will write to all Division Members to inform them of the outcome of the Cabinet Member Decision meeting.

Contact Officer: Saba Hussain, Policy and Strategic Partnerships Manager – 0208 541 9876

Consulted: Relevant Division Members

Annex Annex A – details of the applications to 2015-16 CBGS

Sources/background papers: N/A