COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE DECISION MAKING MEETING – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021**
Report Number	**AGENDA ITEM 1**
Subject	**COMMUNITY WELFARE GRANT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE LAST TWO QUARTERS OF 21-22**
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Evemy, Cabinet Member for Finance Tel: 01285 623000 Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Joseph Walker, Community Partnerships Officer Tel: 01285 623146 Email: joseph.walker@publicagroup.uk Jacqueline Wright, Healthy Communities Manager Tel: 01285 623617 Email: jacqueline.wright@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To roll forward current arrangements for the Community Welfare Grant until year end, to enable decision and roll-out of a new approach.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	a) *To agree a roll forward of current arrangements until new arrangements commence, anticipated to be 1 April 2022.*
Corporate priorities	Help residents, businesses and communities to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health and well-being
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Senior Management Team

1. BACKGROUND

The Community Welfare Grant is a budget used to support one of the Council's key areas of focus – help residents, businesses and communities to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health and wellbeing. One way we help to achieve this is to provide core funding support to voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners providing vital services and support aligned to this priority in the Cotswold District.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1. The process for allocating the Community Welfare Grant is due for review. The scheme has been tied into long-standing grant arrangements with key partners. While the value of their service provision has been demonstrated by the VCS response to the Covid-19 outbreak, there is not a current process to consider new grants nor criteria to determine what scale of support should be provided.

2.2. Over recent months the purpose of the budget has been reviewed, and options for managing the budget considered. These options will be the topic of a report to Cabinet in October. Irrespective of what process is agreed by Cabinet, a period of time will be required to finalise procedures and run the process to agree the disbursement of the budget. It would appear sensible that new arrangements commence with the new financial year in April 2022.

2.3. In recognition of the valuable services our current funded partners provide, and in order to provide appropriate notice of any change to the support individual partners receive, officers recommend that the current arrangements are rolled forward pro rata until the commencement of the Council's new arrangements. This is expected to be at the start of financial year 2022-23, although will be subject to agreement by Cabinet.

2.4. In 2020-21, the budget for the scheme was increased, and distributed across new and existing recipients. The final two agreements were new recipients in-year. A six month pro rata figure is provided in parentheses.

a. The Churn Project - £9,000 (£4,500) for services; a neighbourhood project working in Cirencester, services include providing support to jobless residents, befriending services and older people's groups. Contribution to core costs.
b. Cotswold Counselling - £5,425 (£2,712.50) towards rent; this is a registered charity dedicated to the relief of emotional distress caused by mental or physical ill health or by social or economic circumstances, affecting people in the Cotswolds and the surrounding area. Contribution to core costs.
c. Cotswold Friends - £9,100 (£4,550) for services; services include community transport and befriending services as well as running social prescribing in the North Cotswolds. Contribution to core costs.
d. Gloucestershire Rural Community Council - £13,100 (£6,550) for services; SLA covering a contribution towards the two local advisors covering Cotswold District, providing a range of services such as advice on external funding, neighbourhood planning, and setting up community organisations.

e. Stroud and Cotswolds CAB - £70,920 (£35,460) towards advice services across Cotswold District.
f. CHYP - £3,200 (£1,600) towards mortgage repayments
g. People 4 You - £2,050 (£1,025), towards their Befriending service

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. The proposal is budget neutral

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. This is discretionary activity by the Council, to recognise the vital work carried out across the district by partner organisations. The Council is not bound into long term agreements with such partners, but sectoral good practice indicates that funding arrangements should not be altered without appropriate notice.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. In reviewing the Council's financial support of its voluntary and community sector partners, the biggest risk is impact on the services they deliver, and reputational fallout from such impact. Potential impact is mitigated by ensuring decisions are procedurally and evidentially sound, and notice of any changes given.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

6.1. No EIA is required at this stage, as the proposal is to roll forward existing arrangements. However, a revised process to distribute this budget may need to be assessed, as any reduction in support to voluntary and community sector partners could have an equalities impact.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

7.1. None at this stage

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1. None. This budget is established to support the voluntary and community sector, and it has already been agreed that a better process needs to be established. A roll forward of the existing arrangements is the best way to create the time and space for such a review without negatively impacting on the organisations this budget supports.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. None