



**COTSWOLD**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE – DECISION-MAKING MEETING – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023</b>
Subject	<b>COMMUNITY WELFARE GRANT ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2023-24</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Evemy, Cabinet Member for Finance Tel: 01285 623000 Email: <a href="mailto:mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk">mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director, Community Email: <a href="mailto:andy.barge@publicagroup.uk">andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</a>
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Summary/Purpose	To roll forward current arrangements for the Community Welfare Grant for one year, to enable a grants review and roll-out of a new approach during the first year of the Council's next term.
Annexes	None



Recommendation(s)	<i>To agree a roll forward of current arrangements until new arrangements commence, anticipated to be 1 April 2024.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deliver the highest standard of service</li> <li>● Support health and wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>The Community Welfare Grant supports a number of voluntary and community sector partners, who play a key role in supporting individuals and communities around the district. Partners are often useful allies in promoting the Council's priorities, especially on climate change, and play a role in helping residents become work ready, and accessing employment</p>
Key Decision	No
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Local Management Team.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Community Welfare Grant supports a number of voluntary and community sector partners, who play a key role in supporting individuals and communities around the district. This report seeks agreement for the distribution of this grant for 2023/24, and notes the intention to carry out further review in-year.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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.

## 3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1 The Community Welfare Grant budget is a key mechanism the Council uses to support the work of VCS partners, helping them to address the health and wellbeing of our residents,



particularly more vulnerable groups and individuals. The scheme has been tied into long-standing grant arrangements with key partners. This means that there is not a current process to consider new grants nor criteria to determine what scale of support should be provided. The process for allocating the Community Welfare Grant is therefore due for review.

- 3.2** A review also presents an opportunity to reflect on changes to the VCS landscape since the current allocations were agreed. There are a number of newer organisations doing valuable work, and as a positive legacy of the efforts the VCS and the public sector made during COVID, there is a strong local network of organisations, in regular contact, helping coordinate activity to address critical issues and sharing knowledge.
- 3.3** The operation of this budget, and how the Council supports its VCS partners should be reviewed early in the Council term which commenced this May. Officers recommend that this review takes a wider look at the Council's approach to community grants, as this would be an opportune time to review the operation and future of Crowdfund Cotswold - it will be three years this October since Cabinet took the decision to go down this route. The findings of this review will be the topic of a report to Cabinet.
- 3.4** 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, to prevent any break in service provision to residents. New arrangements would be expected to commence at the start of financial year 2024-25, although will be subject to agreement by Cabinet. Such a timeframe will allow the design, agreement and implementation of a new scheme, reflecting the Council's priorities.
- 3.5** Moreover, this timeframe will also enable a managed transition into such arrangements for our partners - who could face a change to the level of support they receive from the Council, or may simply need to adapt case management/ performance management to respond to a new monitoring process. A key message within any transition is the assurance that a new approach is proposed to respond to the passage of time, good governance and changing circumstances, and is not a reflection on the work that partners currently carry out on behalf of our residents
- 3.6** Please see below the current distribution of this budget, which it is proposed to roll forward:
  - a. The Churn Project - £9,000 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 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 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 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 towards advice services across Cotswold District.
- f. CHYP - £3,200 towards mortgage repayments
- g. People 4 You - £2,050 towards their Befriending service

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** The Community Welfare Grant award proposed in this report will be funded from the 2023/24 budget.

**4.2** The Council faces a significant budget gap in future financial years, as indicated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy considered by Council at their meeting on 15 February 2023. Members will need to consider the level of the budget, support provided to voluntary organisations, and the value of the contribution made as a result of the financial support as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** 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.

#### **6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

**6.1** 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

#### **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)**

**7.1** 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.



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## **8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)**

**8.1** None

## **9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**9.1** 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.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

(END)