

**REPORT TO A MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON 9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023**

**ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY GRANTS - REVIEW OF FUNDING AMOUNTS AVAILABLE TO APPLICANTS**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To review and discuss the maximum amount of grant funding available to future applicants to the Community Grant Fund.

2. CURRENT SITUATION

Applicants to the Town Council's Community Grant Fund can currently apply for a maximum amount of £2,000 per project. This has remained the case since the Grant Fund was established in 2005.

Tracking back through the applications made to the Fund since May 2018, the applicants which have requested the full £2,000 fall into three main categories:

- **Equipment** e.g. sports clubs, community centres, gardening groups
- **Events** e.g. Art in the Park, Lillington Fun Day, Leamington Music Festival, LOTT, music workshops/shows
- **Support** e.g. CELST, Muscular Dystrophy, Saturday Friendship Group, Helping Hands, MENCAP, counselling sessions, South Works NHS Trust

The majority of these applicants request the maximum £2,000 as part funding towards a larger overall total for which they seek additional funds elsewhere and also use their own reserves.

The total amount of the Community Grants Fund has fluctuated to a degree over the last five years as shown below:

	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Annual budget	£40,000	£45,000	£55,000	£50,000	£45,000
Actual expenditure	£39,856	£44,954	£46,134	£44,495.06	£24,719.14 (after two grants rounds)
Underspend	£144	£46	£8,866	£5,504.94	£20,280.86 (after two grants rounds)

This has taken into account the potential impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns. The number of applicants to the Fund in 2021/22 and 2022/23 has dipped as groups and organisations have struggled to maintain

their usual levels of activity and delivery, and new groups being set up in the wake of the pandemic to support recovery have struggled to recruit members and volunteers:

Year	No. of applications
2018/19	32
2019/20	36
2020/21	40
2021/22	26
2022/23	17 with 1 funding round outstanding)

### 3. GRANT FUNDING AMOUNTS OFFERED BY OTHER LOCAL TOWN COUNCILS

Warwick Town Council – has a two-tier grants structure in which they offer smaller grants of up to £3000 per applicant and then larger grants of £3,000 - £5,000. The smaller grant applications go through either Community & Cultural Committee or Economic & Tourism Committee for decisions; the larger grants go through Committee then onto full Council for a final decision. The Council do not have set deadlines but rather allow grant applications to come to the next relevant Committee (applications must be received ten days prior to the next meeting of the relevant Committee).

Kenilworth Town Council – has a two-tier structure in which they offer minor grants (£500 and less) and major grants (£500 plus). All applications go to Finance Committee and then onto full Council for a final decision. Applicants for the major grants must attend an interview to discuss their project. There are four grants rounds in a financial year (May, September, November and January).

Atherstone Town Council – has a two-tier structure in which they offer grants up to £1,000 then major grants over £1,000. Grant applications for up to £1,000 are considered in May and November. For major grants over £1,000, applications are considered in November and should be submitted by the first of the month as significant amounts may have to be included in the budget for the subsequent financial year and are then awarded the following April.

Southam Town Council – No set limit on grant amounts. Applications are considered by full Council in February and September.

Coleshill Town Council – offers grants between £250 - £1,500 (up to a maximum of £2,000). One deadline per year in August, applications considered by full Council in September.

### 4. OPTIONS

1. Increase the grant amount available to each applicant from £2,000 per application to £3,000 per application.

This would potentially offer greater certainty to applicants in terms of being realistically able to achieve their financial target for a project in a shorter timeframe. It

would also act as greater match funding for other grant applications for the same project, and it would act to reduce the underspend currently being experienced in the Community Grant Fund. The Town Council receives applications from the same groups and organisations each year which organise and deliver proven, much-needed services/experiences across Leamington Spa – this would give these groups the opportunity to ask for more necessary equipment/staff/insurances etc to help them deliver more and better quality projects.

There would be the possibility that the funds available in the Community Grant Fund may be expended by the final grants round or that not much funding remained by then. Careful monitoring of the budget going forward through the financial year would be necessary. If this did prove to be the case, a limit on the number of applications per round could be considered.

## 2. Retain the existing grant funding amount offered to each applicant at £2,000

This would maintain the status quo whereby successful applicants can apply for the maximum of £2,000 once in a financial year. This would not impact on the underspend currently being experienced.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee supports the increasing of the maximum amount of grant funding available per applicant to £3,000 for a trial period of one financial year, starting in May 2023, and then to be reviewed in February 2024.