

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 12 October 2020

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Covid-19 Special Grants Programme
Report of:	Director of Leisure and Community
Corporate Priorities:	Leisure Opportunities for Health and Fun Strong, safe, inclusive and healthy communities

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to propose the establishment of a Covid-19 Special Grant Programme for the financial year 2020/21.

Executive summary:

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant financial impact on the community and voluntary sector. The majority of charitable organisations and community interest groups were forced to cease their activities, resulting in lost opportunities to raise funds. In addition, when their activities restarted, they experienced an increase in costs for the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the cleaning materials needed to protect their members and hirers from the risk of contracting the virus.

This report proposes the establishment of a Covid-19 Special Grant Programme to help reduce the financial risk faced by these organisations. This would provide a quick and easy application process for a one-off payment of £250, with applications open to charitable and voluntary groups across the Borough.

It is proposed that £30,000 is ring-fenced from the 2020/21 Community Funding budget to resource this special grant programme.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

It is recommended that the Executive approves the establishment of a Covid-19 Special Grant Programme for the financial year 2020/21.

Reason:

The Covid-19 Special Grant Programme offers a much-needed source of income to charitable and voluntary groups, to help address some of the unprecedented financial pressures they are experiencing during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Cost of proposals:

The cost of the Covid-19 Special Grant Programme is a one-off allocation of £30,000, which can be ring-fenced from the 2020/21 Community Funding budget.

Appendices: None

Background papers: None

Reference papers: Community Recovery Plan – Executive Report, August 2020

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	12 th October 2020
Subject:	Covid-19 Special Grants Programme
Briefing by:	Director of Leisure and Community
Portfolio:	Leisure and Community

INTRODUCTION

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant financial impact on the community and voluntary sector. The majority of charitable organisations and community interest groups were forced to cease their activities, resulting in lost opportunities to raise funds.
2. In addition, when their activities restarted, they experienced an increase in costs for the provision of Personal Protective Equipment and the cleaning materials needed to protect their members and hirers from the risk of contracting the virus.
3. Whilst many of the larger community organisations with premises have benefitted from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant, many smaller community organisations and voluntary groups have had no access to external financial support. Due to the delicate balance of their finances, additional costs and loss of income could have a devastating and lasting effect on their future.
4. The loss of smaller community organisations, charitable and voluntary groups would have significant consequences affecting other areas of society. In addition to the direct loss of valuable services to the community that they offer, their demise risks loss of funds to others such as; community centres from room hire; the Council from pitch hire; and the local economy from the lost expenditure from these groups.

COVID-19 SPECIAL GRANTS PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

5. Fareham Borough Council proposes to help reduce the financial risks to the smaller community organisations and groups by offering a quick and easy application for a one-off payment of £250 from a Covid-19 Special Grant Programme.
6. This would be open to applications from charitable, voluntary groups and community organisations meeting the following criteria:
 - The group provides a community service to residents within the Borough of Fareham

- The requested funding is to help meet additional core-running costs, expenses or to cover income lost as a direct result of the Covid-19 restrictions
 - The group is able to supply a copy of their constitution and annual accounts
7. The grant would not be available to profit-making organisations, organisations with large reserves, or to those organisations which have already received funding from Fareham Borough Council during the pandemic.
 8. The application process would be quick and easy, with applications received via a simple online form and assessed promptly by the Leisure and Community Team.
 9. Funding decisions would be made by delegated authority to the Director of Leisure and Community, after consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Community.
 10. Once an application is approved, payments would be received by the applicant within a maximum of 10 working days, making the grants easily accessible at the time of need.
 11. All successful applicants would be required to keep receipts of how the grant was spent for 12 months, offering the Council the opportunity to investigate if any concerns were raised. In addition, a random selection of successful applicants would be visited, to deter any misuse of funds.
 12. The Special Grant would be made available to groups and organisations between November 2020 and March 2021, to coincide with the remainder of the financial year.
 13. To ensure that as many organisations as possible were able to benefit, the scheme would be widely promoted.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14. It is proposed that £30,000 is ring-fenced from the 2020/21 Community Funding budget to resource the Covid-19 Special Grant Programme. This would enable up to 120 local groups and organisations to benefit, on a first come – first served basis.
15. Currently £98,000 is available in the Community Funding budget, as applications were put on hold during Lockdown and one organisation has delayed their matched funding application until 2021/22.
16. The remaining £68,000 will remain available for general Community Funding applications.

CONCLUSION

17. The establishment of a Covid-19 Special Grants Programme would provide a large number of the Borough's charitable groups and community organisations with much needed financial support.
18. The quick and easy process would ensure that the funds could be accessed when they were needed, with the removal of unnecessary delays.
19. The £250 grant would make a noticeable difference to smaller charities which have seen an increase in spending on PPE and cleaning materials, combined with a drop-in fundraising opportunities.

20. In turn, this financial support for such organisations will increase their ability to hire halls, pitches or increase spending on resources, all of which increase the resilience of other sectors of our community.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Claire Benfield, Leisure and Community Officer (Ext 4495) or Emma Watts, Leisure and Community Manager (Ext. 4440)