

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD ON TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2025 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Steady (Chairman), Barrett (Vice-Chairman), Davidson, Goldman (substitute for Councillor Doyle), Griffiths and Oxley
Also Present:	Councillor Placey (Portfolio Holder for Partnership)
In Attendance:	Lee Heley (Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Place & Economy), Richard Barrett (S151 Officers and Assistant Director for Finance & IT), John Fox (Head of Health & Community), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services & Elections), Hattie Dawson-Dragisic (Performance and Leadership Support Officer), and Emma Haward (Leadership Support Officer)
Also In Attendance:	Brad Thompson (Jaywick Sands Community Forum), Ian McKeown (Clacton Arts Centre), Adrian Goody (Clacton Arts Centre), and Dr Karen Dennis (Ketchup Clothes)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Ferguson and Doyle with Councillor Goldman attending as a substitute for Councillor Doyle. An invitation to attend the Committee had also been extended to the Leader of the Council but the Chairman of this Committee had agreed that he did not need to attend. Invitations were also sent to a number of organisations that had applied for grants from the Council and apologies had been received from the following organisations: the Lemmings, Headway Essex, Inclusion Ventures and, ATF (Achieve, Thrive, Flourish). It was highlighted that albeit representatives from Headway Essex and Inclusion Ventures weren't in attendance at the meeting written material had been circulated to the Committee from those organisations.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes from the meeting of the Committee held on 15 October 2024, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by Councillors in relation to any items of business on the agenda for this meeting.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

On this occasion no Councillor had submitted notice of a question.

5. REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIPS PORTFOLIO HOLDER - A.1 TO CONSIDER GRANT FUNDING BY THE COUNCIL AND OTHERS AND ITS APPROPRIATENESS GIVEN THE NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT

To introduce this item to the Committee the Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Councillor Gina Placey and the Head of Health & Community, John Fox to speak to the Committee. The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that the report highlighted the significant work the Cabinet considered in respect of use and allocation of grants on 19 April 2024. The Portfolio Holder further advised that, within the report submitted to Cabinet, it identified the types of allocation of funding, it also included a flowchart to identify possible funding routes and set out parameters for allocating funding to ensure a consistent approach was being followed. The Council's Head of Health & Community then addressed the Committee by highlighting the importance of the Grant Funding process being closely linked to the themes that make up the Council's Corporate Plan, such as 'working with partners to improve quality of life, to achieve the Council's expectation of 'good' governance and to meet the objective of financial sustainability. The Chairman of the Committee then invited the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Place & Economy, Lee Heley, to speak to the Committee. He highlighted the importance of the process of grants being allocated in an effective way to support the Council pursue its Corporate Plan.

Following the introduction of the report, the Committee then asked questions of the Portfolio Holder that has been formulated at their informal meeting on 9 January 2025. These questions and answers are set out in the table below.

Question	Committee Member Asking question	Cabinet Members to Answer Question	Answer
1. The Portfolio Holder's Report set out the scope of this enquiry as approved by Full Council – can she detail for us how this report addresses this scope	Councillor Barrett	Councillor Placey	<p>This report provides a background and highlights a number of reports agreed at Cabinet which are referenced in the previous relevant decisions section of the report.</p> <p>Within those reports reference is for example made (in Appendix 1 of the report of 19 April 2024 on the review of grant funding) to the types of grant funding and extent of that funding and over what time period. The funding referred to in those reports was therefore reviewed for its appropriateness and in addition reference is made to the importance of securing and evaluating outcomes.</p> <p>In particular the report of 20 September 2024 sets out the process and administration of funding going forwards and that the receipt and allocation of funding are covered by checklists (appendices B and C). As part of the reports (executive summary of 20 September 2024 report) it is highlighted that specific schemes or activities for funding are</p>

			not pre-determined as these may change over time but criteria are set and there is usually an open call process to ensure fair allocation.
2. Looking at the flowchart on page 15 of our papers, is it the case that if an application for grant funding was received that does not meet the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, would it instantly be rejected. As an example, if the application was to assist with Animal Welfare.	Councillor Barrett	Councillor Placey	The flowchart is clear that allocation of funding does need to meet the Corporate Plan priorities and the Council would therefore not expect to fund items outside this. Each application would be looked at broadly to see if it fits into the Corporate Priorities. These are the Administration's priorities which have been consulted on and approved at Council and so it is right that this is the focus for allocation.
3. What check and balances in places for grant funding? As an example, what checking takes place that a project had been delivered against the application? Are there assurances organisations are using the funding for the schemes they have applied for? Are site visits carried out?	Councillor Davison	Councillor Placey	The flow chart in the External Funding Review report identifies the importance of grant criteria and in terms of a commissioned service that there is a specification. In addition, the allocation of funding checklist highlights the importance of criteria for use of the funding. This ensures clarity about what grants are used for and officers do seek updates from those provided with funding to ensure it meets the original criteria. This may include a site visit. Although is more usually via written update.
4. Is there any mileage in introducing a flexible delivery on grants? Could organisations receive funds every other year, allowing funds to be used for other projects?	Councillor Steady	Councillor Placey	Grants are delivered against criteria which has not as yet included a flexible alternate year's approach. Such an approach may be ineffective as grant availability changes between years. However, consideration may be given to whether funding has received by an organisation previously to ensure fairness of allocation.
5. Does the Portfolio Holder think there would be value in establishing a Group of Councillors to look across the board at all grant funding schemes, a Member Oversight Working Party perhaps? In asking this I am aware of the praise	Councillor Griffiths	Councillor Placey	Currently there are a number of routes for oversight for grant funding. Reports have gone to and been agreed by Cabinet in terms of the grant process and use of funding. In addition, wider reports such as the community projects update agreed at Cabinet also highlights allocation of funding in terms of grants. This Overview and Scrutiny meeting also provides an opportunity to review grant funding. I therefore think there

given to the Working Party that oversaw the Tendring Community Fund.			is already sufficient opportunity for the use of grants to be reviewed.
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Further questions were asked by the Committee in relation to external organisations being aware of the information of possible Grant Funding opportunities and were advised that information is made public through the Council's Social Media posts, on the Council's website and through asking Members and Partners to share the information more widely. This prompted a discussion around holding open days or sessions with small organisations to support in the process of applying for Grant Funding.

The Chairman of the Committee invited the representatives present from external organisations, namely Clacton Arts Centre, Jaywick Sands Community Forum, and Ketchup Clothes to address the Committee and provide their thoughts and experiences of the Council's Grant Funding process and areas that they felt the process could be improved. The representations of the organisations advised the Committee of the type of grant they applied for, how they found the process of applying and how they felt the funding awarded had supported their organisation positively. Brad Thompson, Chairman and Trustee of the Jaywick Sands Community Forum, informed the Committee that he was kept well-informed in the process and that there were strict requirements to provide proof of how they intended to use the funding. Following the receipt and use of this funding by Jaywick Sands Community Forum a report was provided to the Council with evidence detailing what had been done.

Dr Karen Dennis, owner of Ketchup Clothes, advised the Committee that she had received funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. She advised the Committee of her experience of working with the Council and that the process of applying for grant funding had been relatively easy and transparent.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officers for their attendance and their explanations of the grants flowchart and checklist adopted internally to identify when matters could follow an 'open call' grant arrangement and when it would require 'procurement'. The Committee also wish to record its thanks to all those who contributed to the enquiry into Grant Funding by/through the Council including written submissions from Headway Essex and Inclusion Ventures and the attendance by representatives from Jaywick Sands Community Forum, Ketchup Clothes and from Clacton Art Centre and their insight into the processes and value of grant opportunities for community activities.

The content of the report had not fully addressed the request from the Committee and the language used was particularly difficult to engage with due to its technical nature and absence of explanation.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Cabinet to seriously consider the following actions:

- (a) the establishment of an Oversight Group of Members for grant schemes across the Council;
- (b) some form of gap analysis – even is full analysis is too large a project to be achieved and the opportunities to 'flex' grant giving to maximise the range of organisations receiving financial support in the District across the years.

- (c) further standardised processes for different grant giving arrangements to help deliver best practice across those separate grant giving arrangements (eg around the length of time between opening invitations for applications and the closing date, common and plain language to explain the processes (and be available on the website), details of other grants received, the time between closure of application and determination/notification of outcomes, and the post grant-giving monitoring arrangements).
- (d) Adopt a consistent 'you said, we did' opportunity for organisations applying for grant funding to feed back on their experiences;
- (e) Look at organising an open day for community/voluntary groups in conjunction with other grant funding organisations (and CVST) to disseminate information on those grant schemes and help to break down barriers to access grant funding for these community/voluntary groups.

The Committee also **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to:

- (f) request that the Chairman of the Committee and the Portfolio Holder to consider the recommendations above and to encourage a positive response to them from Cabinet; and
- (g) Note that there are proposals for LGR in Great Essex and that we are awaiting confirmation from Government to whether these will proceed and over what timetable. On the basis that Government does approve the principle of LGR in Greater Essex the Committee record that it would wish to undertake an enquiry into the implications of LGR on areas within its responsibility (including grant funding) in the work programme for 2025/26 and that this enquiry would look at possible areas where the transition to a new unitary structure could be supported.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman