

# CABINET

31 JANUARY 2025

## REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### **A.2 GRANT FUNDING BY THE COUNCIL AND OTHERS AND ITS APPROPRIATENESS GIVEN THE NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT**

(Report prepared by Keith Simmons and Hattie Dawson-Dragisic)

#### **BACKGROUND**

As a part of the Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme, the Committee considered the topic of grant funding by the Council and others and its appropriateness given the needs of the District. Prior to its meeting on 14 January 2025, the Members of the Committee, met informally on 9 January 2025. The informal scrutiny meeting aided the Members of the Committee in developing key lines of inquiry for its formal scrutiny meeting that was held on 14 January 2025.

At the Committee's formal meeting on 14 January, it considered the report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and asked the Portfolio Holder a number of questions in relation to this report that had been formulated as a part of the informal scrutiny meeting referenced earlier. At the formal meeting several supplementary questions were also asked to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships. The Committee heard from a number of external persons that provided their comments/experience on the Grant Funding process, the representatives of the organisations that spoke at the Committee were from Clacton Arts Centre, Jaywick Sands Community Forum and Ketchup Clothes.

The Committee had been provided, as part of the material for them to consider, the following:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships – A.7 External Funding Review – Submitted to Cabinet on 20 September 2024
- Commentary submitted by Headway Essex on their experience/thoughts on the Grant funding process
- Commentary submitted by Inclusion Ventures on their experience/thoughts on the Grant funding process

The submission from the range of external organisations into this enquiry greatly assisted the Committee to assess the extent to which there was corporate oversight of the diverse range of grant schemes provided by through the Council, the issues for many small organisations locally to access information on grant schemes and then accessing those schemes and the extent to which very important gaps in supporting organisations to pursue the Council's Corporate Plan themes and improve health and wellbeing across the District.

#### **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET**

- 1) *Welcomes the report on Grant Funding from/through the Council and the statements and responses from the Portfolio Holder and Officers to the Committee and further welcomes the flowchart and checklist adopted internally to identify when matters can follow an 'open call' grant arrangement and when a 'procurement';*

- 2) *Records 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;*
- 3) *urges 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 organisation an open day for community/voluntary groups in conjunction with other grant funding organisations (and CVST) to disseminate information on those grant scheme and help to break down barriers to access grant funding for these community/volunteers groups;*
- 4) *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*
- 5) *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.*

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENT(S) AND RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDERS’ COMMENTS**

*“I thank the Committee for their recommendations, and these will be considered as the forthcoming Grant Policy is developed. I note the comments in respect of a voluntary sector funding day and consideration will be given to supporting or running such an event to assist the voluntary sector.”*

**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:**

**That the recommendations made by the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and be given consideration for inclusion in the forthcoming Grant Policy which is currently being developed.**