

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 28 March 2022

Title: Discretionary Grant Policy Review

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

The Council's Discretionary Grants Policy was reviewed and amended at a meeting of this committee on 14th June 2021, minute no F299 refers,

Recommended:

- 1. That, the Discretionary Grant Award Policy be amended by the deletion of sections 4.3 and 5.1 and 4.4 being amended to hospitality only;*
- 2. That, consideration of grants be undertaken twice a year at the March and September meetings of the committee; and*
- 3. That, the revised process be reviewed after six months operation.*

Current Situation

The above amendments have now been in place over six months.

The deletion of point 4.3, which excluded an application for maintenance costs for buildings or equipment, and 5.1 which removed the maximum amount of £500 have allowed more organisations to apply and have afforded flexibility to the Council in awarding higher amounts where needed.

Regarding bi-annual applications in March and September, members may recall at the meeting held on 27th September 2021, three of the requested amounts were over £2,000 due to the deletion of point 5.1. If the committee agrees to continue the March and September applications, it will need to be mindful when awarding grants at the March meeting, that adequate funds are left for September and may like to consider a maximum total award cap for the earlier meeting i.e., half of budget.

There were two applications received by the Council which required a more pressing decision during the review period and could not wait for the biannual meetings. The committee may like to consider whether officers continue to judge whether an application needs to be presented to the Committee at an earlier date, outside of this process where there is a clear community benefit.

With the March meeting falling at the end of the financial year it is likely that some requests will be for the following fiscal year. This is evident in the accompanying grants and subsidised lettings report and could cause confusion with what funds are coming from which year/budget. To help mitigate this, the bi-annual applications could be considered during the June and January cycles instead.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Consider the continuation of the bi-annual discretionary grant process with any further operational amendments.