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Title of report: Proposed Grant Payments to Voluntary and Community Sector Groups from 2025-2027

Report : Ipswich Borough Council recognises the value and contribution of its Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners in supporting a diverse population with increasingly complex socio-economic needs. The Council is keen to work in partnership with the VCS to deliver the best services possible to improve the quality of life of local people across the Borough.

The Council provides grant funding to a range of voluntary and community organisations which assist the Council to meet its policy objectives. Intended results vary based on the nature of a group's Community Grant request, and all applicants must show how their application will support residents in the cost of living crisis and/or support vulnerable residents, and/or support health improvement.

Applications for the 2025/26 Community Grant scheme (with each grant proposed to last for two years) were considered by the 'Communities and Sport Working Group' in December 2024, comprising of Councillors who have made recommendations for provision of funding. This report sets out the recommendations of proposed grant payments to voluntary and community sector groups for 2025/26 which will be considered by Executive in February 2025. Applicants will be notified of the outcome in March 2025 with grants being in place for first payment in April 2025.

What evidence/data is being used to support this equality analysis? Please select all that apply.: Monitoring provided by applicants in previous years, Ipswich Borough Council's Community Grants Policy

Service area: Community Support

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Links to supporting documents where available:

<https://democracy.ipswich.gov.uk/documents/s35526/E-22-29%20Appendix%201%20-%20Community%20Grants%20Policy.pdf>

Please upload any supporting documents: Community Grants Policy.pdf

What is proposed?: It is proposed that grants are awarded for all organisations who have come to the end of their current agreement over a period of two-years, from April 2025- March 2027. This also includes a change to groups who were awarded funding before the new community grants policy came into effect, with groups now required to meet the criteria of 'supporting vulnerable residents', and/or 'supporting residents in the cost of living crisis, and/or supporting health improvement, in addition to agreeing to have an observer from the Council to sit on their board.

All groups recommended for funding meet one or more of the criteria set out as 'supporting vulnerable residents', and/or 'supporting residents in the cost of living crisis, and/or supporting health improvement. This applies to five applicants this year, with funding allocated towards core costs of running services. Existing grants will remain in place until they expire.

Why are the changes being introduced?: The requirement for VCS groups to meet the criteria of 'supporting vulnerable residents', and/or 'supporting residents in the cost of living crisis, and/or supporting health improvement is based on the updated Community Grants Policy which sets out council priorities.

The implementation of a board observer is also in accordance with the community grants policy and is in place to understand the work of the group further and to ensure public money is spent in the agreed upon monitoring agreement between the VCS group and the Council.

What evidence is being used to support this Equality Impact Assessment, and how is it being used?: - Feedback from the Communities and Sport Working group, used to assess the applications and decide on which amounts of funding will best serve the community in accordance with the policy and its priorities.

- Monitoring information provided by groups who have previously been funded, to ensure public money is being spent as specified in monitoring agreements with each applicant from their prior grant.

- The finances which the Council has available to support applicants, to spend this accordingly and in the most appropriate way in accordance with policy and council priorities.

How will this change be implemented?: The recommendations for 2025/26 grant funding are being tabled as a report to Executive in February. Following this, applicants will be notified of the outcome in March 2025 with grants being in place for first payment in April 2025. The 2025/26 grant scheme will be implemented and facilitated by the community support team.

Age: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: It is recognised that all of the applications received, have a focus on supporting families and different age groups from young people to older people. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

Monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any future adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to age, The Council will take action to address this.

Disability: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or

further promote positive impact.: This protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within this year's applications however it is recognised that demographics mean that there will be disabled residents accessing these services. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to disability, The Council will take action to address this.

Marriage & Civil Partnership: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: The new 2025/26 Community Grant recommendations will not impact the protected characteristic, Marriage, and Civil Partnership, as this protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within applications.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to marriage and civil partnership, The Council will take action to address this.

Race: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: It is recognised that some of the applications received, illustrated how their support would focus on supporting Black and minority ethnic groups, including nationality and other specifications of race within the 2010 Equality Act. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to race, The Council will take action to address this.

Pregnancy & Maternity: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: The new 2025/26 Community Grant recommendations will not impact the protected characteristic, Pregnancy, and Maternity, as this protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within applications.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to pregnancy and maternity, The Council will take action to address this.

Religion or Belief: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: This protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within this year's applications however it is recognised that demographics mean that there will be residents with different religions and beliefs accessing these services. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to religion and belief, The Council will take action to address this.

Gender Reassignment: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: This protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within this year's applications however it is recognised that demographics mean that there will be residents that fall within this protected characteristic, accessing these services. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to gender reassignment, The Council will take action to address this.

Sex: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: It is recognised that all of the applications received, have a focus on different Sexes. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

Monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any future adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to Sex, The Council will take action to address this.

Sexual Orientation: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: This protected characteristic has not been specified as an area of focus within this year's applications however it is recognised that demographics mean that there will be residents that fall within this protected characteristic, accessing these services. The Council does not have a statutory obligation to fund VCS groups and so any funding allocated to groups that support this protected characteristic can be considered to have a positive impact.

To mitigate any future adverse impact on service users, monitoring will be collected by the Council to ensure that applicants are using their funding in accordance with the specifications within their application. If any adverse impact is noted throughout conversation or monitoring with respect to

sexual orientation, The Council will take action to address this.

I can confirm the report does meet Ipswich Borough Council's equality objectives: I can confirm the report does meet Ipswich Borough Council's equality objectives

The report helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment & victimisation' in the following way(s): Equitable distribution of resource has been considered alongside the recommendations for 2025/26 Community Grant awards. All aspects of the grant process have been considered, not only with regards to the impacts of the 2025/26 grant awards specified but also governance and applicant experience.

The Council is committed to the provision of equal opportunities, both within its own activities and when making decisions on grant funding. Organisations that are making a grant application must have 'due regard' to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

All organisations recommended for funding have an Equality and Diversity Policy in place and are expected to demonstrate how they will help the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty. Equality and Diversity monitoring information will also be required by the Council as part of monitoring the performance of each grant holder.

The report helps us to 'advance equality of opportunity...' in the following way(s): By funding projects that focus on current priorities such as the cost-of-living crisis, vulnerable residents and health improvement, there will be increased equality of opportunity in Ipswich. Through these priorities, funding will support the residents of Ipswich who are most in need at this current time.

All organisations recommended for funding must ensure that their activities do not unfairly exclude individuals from participation.

The Council will signpost groups to external funding sources.

The policy helps us to 'foster good relations...' in the following way(s): The 2025/26 Community Grant recommendations under a new Community Grant policy will enhance the sustainability of VCS organisations in Ipswich and support the long-term provision of services to meet the needs of Ipswich residents. Applicants who are unable to operate on a reduced grant will be signposted to other relevant support or external funding opportunities where possible.

The new provisions will be reviewed in the following way(s): The Council recognises the importance of demonstrating that public money is spent in the right way and achieves best value. All grant holders will be required to agree to terms and conditions, which will include Key Performance Indicators and monitoring and evaluation requirements before any payment is made.

Monitoring and evaluation requirements will vary from organisation to organisation and will be commensurate with the amount of funding awarded. Regular monitoring will enable the Council to ensure that the outcomes and effectiveness of the funding as well as the funding expenditure are consistent with the original funding proposal. The Council reserves the right to withhold future payments and reject any further applications if they are dissatisfied with how grant funding has been used.
