

TITLE OF REPORT: ITEM REFERRED FROM SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE: 9 JUNE 2016 – COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANTS APPLICATIONS (REVIEW OF NHDC GRANTS AND GRANT POLICY)

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Southern Rural Committee meeting held on 9 June 2016 (insofar as it relates to a discussion in relation to the Review of the NHDC Grants and Grant Policy).

14. COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

Members initially discussed the value of the small Ward Budgets to the Southern Rural Area. At the start of this discussion it was noted that the report presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding Grants Review and Grants Policy would set a minimum grant limit, which may prevent the use of this type of funding. Members therefore decided that, prior to discussing the Southern Rural budgets, Community Update and grant applications, they should consider the implications of the report considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2016, which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 14 June 2016.

Members noted, that particularly in rural areas, very small amounts of grant funding can enable a village group to continue and/or grow and that these small groups were invaluable to village and rural communities.

They were concerned that a minimum spend may seriously impact on village and rural groups and youth groups such as Scout and Guides. There should be no minimum spend, if only for a portion of the grant budget.

They agreed that Ward budgets should continue and that this should be reduced to £500 per Member for 2016/17.

Members agreed that small groups, which often only needed a few pounds, were the very groups that should be supported, particularly in rural areas, where they made a big difference.

They acknowledged that Officer Time in processing grants had an impact on costs, but felt that the rigorous checks required for larger amounts of funding should not be necessary for small amounts, as Members knew the groups well and could answer any questions about them. They also noted that there had previously been a simple system in place for processing grants, which was less Officer intensive and therefore less costly.

They considered that the County Councillor Locality Budgets had no limits set on it and seemed easy to administer.

Members asked the Chairman to present the views of the Committee to Cabinet at their meeting on 14 June and prepared a statement for Cabinet to consider.

RESOLVED: That Ward Budgets in the amount of £500 per Member from the base budget be agreed for the Civic Year 2016/17.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet consider the following, unanimously agreed, statement from the Southern Rural Committee when considering the report entitled Review of NHDC Grants and Grant Policy:

“The Southern Rural Committee, having re-established Ward Budgets, would hope that Cabinet endorse these funds being used to fund small organisations with no minimum spend imposed.

Cabinet are urged to investigate a suitable, cost effective system of administering grants, perhaps asking if the County Council system could be used. The Southern Rural Committee would like to remind Cabinet that a few years ago NHDC had a simple and effective system for administering grants, which we are assured could be re-activated, if Cabinet were so minded.

The Southern Rural Committee would like to draw attention to the Baldock and District Committee meeting held on 6 June 2016 where many of the grants awarded were below the proposed minimum spend. Baldock and District Committee also operate on a Ward budget system only and would also benefit from the suggested simplified grants system.”

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the views of the Southern Rural Committee regarding grant funding are presented to Cabinet.

[NOTE: The report to which this referral relates is Item 13 on this agenda.]