

## **REPORT (FOR RECOMMENDATION & NOTING BY COMMUNITY FORUM)**

### **SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM DATE 11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

#### **\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

#### **SERVICE DIRECTORATE: GOVERNANCE**

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To advise the Community Forum on the current expenditure and balances of the Community Grant budget.
- 1.2 To bring to the Forum's attention details of recent requests received for Community grant funding, made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To enable Forum Members to make recommendations to the Executive Member for Governance (formally Community & Partnerships), the Leader on grant applications.
- 1.4 To advise the Forum of the activities and schemes with which Community Partnerships officers have been involved in and some important community-based activities that will take place during the next few months.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **THAT THE COMMUNITY FORUM:**

- 2.1 Considers and notes the information within this report.
- 2.2 Makes recommendations to the Executive Member for Governance on the grant applications detailed below.
- 2.3 Offley Parish Council - **£600** towards the purchase of three Christmas trees and lights for local village festivals.
- 2.4 Preston School Association - **£1,500** towards the replacement of the outdoor activity trail.

### **3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Southern Rural Community Forum 2025/26 is **£15,000**.
- 3.2 Community grant payments totalling **£2,198** have been made to date, as itemised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The remaining budget available for community grants for the Southern Rural area for 2025/26 therefore stands at **£12,802**.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Following the decision of Full Council on 18 April 2023, a Community Forum shall consider applications for community grants in its area and make recommendations to the Executive Member for Community & Partnerships (now Governance) on them. The Executive Member is the Leader of the Council and has delegated authority to

make these Executive decisions under section 14.6.9(b)(iii)A of the constitution, in consultation with the Service Director: Governance. That decision will be subject to a 5 clear working day call-in period, following publication in the Members Information Service (MIS) and on the Council's website.

- 4.2 The Terms of Reference of the Community Forum can be found in Section 9 of the constitution which states that the forum will *'consider and act as an advisory body to the relevant Executive Member responsible for grants who approves these (in consultation with the relevant Director)'*.

- 4.3 Other issues raised in this report are for information and noting and therefore no direct legal implications arise.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 As outlined in Appendix 1 and under item 3.3 the Community Grant budget available is **£12,802**.

- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£2,100**.

- 5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2 and 3 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£10,702** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year.

## **6. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Good risk management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

- 6.2 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Ideagen Risk Management, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 7.2 Community Grant funds are awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

## **8. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to the matters contained within this report, as there are no recommendations on procurement.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 In relation to the Offley Parish Council application, Appendix 2, the environmental impact relates to the single use of cut Christmas trees, which contributes to organic waste, resulting in recurring waste each year. The alternative of artificial plastic trees has been considered as they can be reused over time, but they have a higher production footprint and are often non-recyclable. Another alternative to consider is the use of potted trees, which can be replanted or reused annually and have a lower carbon footprint. Real trees also decompose naturally and can be recycled into mulch or compost, reducing long-term environmental impact. Offley Parish Council has opted not to use potted trees due to their higher cost and the difficulty in sourcing trees of the required size.
- 9.2 In relation to the Preston School Association application, Appendix 3, if the full activity trail were replaced, this would result in significant wood waste. However, if a phased approach is used, this focuses on the most deteriorated areas, helping to reduce overall material consumption and environmental impact through targeted upgrades. The use of wooden materials does offer some environmental advantages over synthetic alternatives, as wood is biodegradable and renewable. To support this sustainable approach, the supplier installing the trail will also be removing and transferring the waste to a registered recycling centre for further processing.

## **10. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The activities of the Community & Partnerships team are covered by existing budgets.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Terms of Reference for Community Forums, Section 9 of the Council Constitution updated May 2024.
- 11.2 Community Grants Criteria Policy March 2025.

## **12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix 1. Southern Rural Community Grant Budget 25-26
- 12.2 Appendix 2. Offley Parish Council
- 12.3 Appendix 3. Preston School Association
- 12.4 Appendix 4. Community Updates

## **13. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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