

COVID-19 EMERGENCY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

COVID-19 – Emergency Grant Funding for Charities and Community Groups

1. Decision:

To top up the £50,000 allocated by Gloucestershire County Council to award grants to local voluntary sector and community groups within the Borough, for eligible activity in support of vulnerable people during the COVID-19 emergency, by a further £50,000 and to put in place a criteria and mechanism for dealing with applications.

2. Background documents

<https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/forms/emergency-grant-for-charitable-organisations-and-community-groups>

3. Reasons for decision:

To provide a source of urgent funding for local voluntary sector agencies and community groups who are supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 crisis to cover additional costs they have incurred as a result of increased activity or functions that they have insufficient resources to meet.

4. Resource implications:

£50,000 allocated from the release of business rates provisions in 2020/21.

5. Who has been consulted:

Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Members for Finance and Asset Management and Community.

6. What were the comments:

Very supportive of this decision.

7. Background/context:

On 23 March 2020, the government set out the measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 involving the closure of the majority of businesses, services and shops that were not deemed essential. At the same time guidance was published to protect medically vulnerable individuals known as the shielding cohort and those aged over 70 who were advised to stay at home for 12 weeks.

Local voluntary sector and community groups immediately mobilised to support the needs of vulnerable people in their basic food and essentials needs, collecting prescriptions and medicines, social support and daily tasks such as dog walking. The scale of the response required exceeded the resources of many community groups.

A community help hub portal was set up online on the County Council website for residents to register whether they could be a volunteer, whether they needed help or whether an organisation could offer help. The volume of requests for help created more demand on local community groups.

The Gloucestershire local authorities were concerned that local community groups would run out of money and agreed to set up an emergency COVID-19 grant scheme to support the voluntary sector activity.

Gloucestershire County Council allocated each District Council £50,000 from funding it had received from the government and Tewkesbury Borough Council matched that sum allocating £100,000 in total to support community groups.

The scheme was launched at the beginning of April with robust criteria and a processing mechanism including consultation with the Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Community.

8. Alternative options considered and why they were rejected:

Options involving other voluntary grant givers were considered but dismissed due to the need to provide immediate support.

9. Risk analysis:

Robust criteria put in place together with processing and monitoring mechanisms. Minimal risk to the Council that funds are not being used for community support.

10. Any other relevant considerations:

None.

11. Chief Officer authorising decision:

Chief Executive.

12. Title of Officer completing report:

Deputy Chief Executive.

13. Date:

3 April 2020.