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OXFORD
CITY
COUNCIL

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**15 December 2021**
Report of:	**The Head of Community Services**
Title of Report:	**Communities Grants Strategic Review**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report lays out the findings, recommendations and implementation plan following the Grants Strategic Review. The report reflects what we have learnt during the Review and proposes changes to ensure the grants remain fit for purpose, with particular reference to processes, equalities and equity, partnerships, transparency and levering in external funding for Oxford.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities, Inclusive Economy and Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Corporate plan 2020-24: the Communities Grants Strategic Review is a corporate Change Project, and the grants programme is linked to most of the Council's strategic framework.

Recommendations:That Cabinet resolves to:

1. **Endorse** the recommendations and approach to implementation contained in the Communities Grants Strategic Review;
2. **Recommend** the Council to approve the establishment of a Community Impact Fund totalling £572,000;
3. **Recommend** the Council establishes a commissioning fund totalling £501,000 for domestic abuse, and advice services;
4. **Recommend** that the Council continues to use the £442,000 homelessness monies alongside the Government grant (section 22);
5. **Recommend** the Council agrees the savings shown in table one;
6. **Agree** the criteria and weightings (shown in table three) for assessment of Applications;
7. **Agree** that there should be an annual report to the Cabinet to confirm the criteria and weighting for assessing the following year's grants to ensure the programme remains fully transparent, inclusive and aligned with the Council's strategic priorities. This report will also update on the impact of the previous year's grants and commissioning programme; and
8. **Agree** that officers should engage directly with the groups impacted and

> people who responded to the consultation to explain the changes before they are implemented.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Consultation and Best Practice
Appendix 4	Impact and support for organisations currently funded

Executive summary

This Review of the Council's community grant programme is set against the backdrop of profound changes and challenges, but also at a time when we have seen innovation, new ways of working and a genuine desire to tackle the structural inequalities that Covid has exposed and exploited. For any city, this would be worrying, but for Oxford - already identified as the second most unequal city in the UK pre-pandemic - this must incite a collective effort to challenge systems that have perpetuated such disparities. New voices and grassroots organisations with lived experiences require support, mentoring and backing to challenge and change the status quo.

An extensive review of emerging trends and good practice has been backed by targeted in-depth consultation with a broad base of stakeholders, including existing grant recipients, unsuccessful grant applicants and other local authorities. This work identifies and supports the following principles:
- equalities are at the heart of the programme
- recovering from Covid
- tackling deprivation, and
- delivering a route to zero carbon

Achieving £200k in savings from the Council grant budget requires partners to collaborate, coordinate and target in order that those most in need are least impacted. In order to improve access to other sources of funding and strengthen the voluntary and community sector, the Council will continue to play a leadership role encouraging better coordination and understanding of need across funders; through community hub teams, we will provide regular funding surgeries to share information, encourage partnerships and grow skills to support local community groups.

The Council will launch a new **Community Impact Fund**. Simple to understand with shared criteria, a straightforward application process and transparent timelines, three bands of funding will be made available:
- small (up to £1,000)
- medium (£1,001 to £5,000) and
- big ideas (£5,001 to £35,000)

Cabinet will agree the criteria and weighting each year to ensure the grants are targeted where they can have the greatest impact and the investment remains aligned to the Council's ambitions.

Introduction and background

1. The Council very much recognises the valuable contribution third sector organisations make to the city and has chosen to continue to invest significantly into its grants and commissioning programme.

2. These funds support some of Oxford's most vulnerable residents, help to lever in national funding and have helped create a strong community infrastructure that has made such a positive difference in Oxford's response to the pandemic. The Council also works with community groups to support them in areas such as creating business plans and signposting alternative sources of funding to support their sustainability.

3. Local authorities have faced significant budget pressures, trying to support increasing needs with a continued reduction in financial support from the government. Over recent years, Oxford has created a new delivery model. Its trading companies create income streams, provide local employment and a robust change programme to ensure the Council operates as efficiently as possible. Even with these measures, the Council is facing difficult decisions to balance its budget.

4. The Strategic Communities Grants Review ("the Review") objectives included reviewing: the alignment of grant funding to support the Council's priorities, equalities, emerging best practice, rentals of council premises by grantees, grant-funded advisory service options, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the third sector. The Review was a corporate Change Project under the Corporate Plan 2020-24 with a savings target of £200k per year.

5. The Review has been undertaken over a period where we have seen short term policy changes ending, such as the removal of the universal credit top-up, the eviction ban ending and household costs increasing pushing families across the country further into hardship. The government have provided some welfare support grants and, while welcomed, these must be spent by the 1st April 2022 and their criteria makes it difficult to weave the funding into a holistic blanket of local support.

6. The feedback from the consultation was that, while groups are concerned about the immediate impact that national policy changes will have over winter, the greater concern is the new financial year when these short term support grants will dry up.

7. This Review has been developed after several months of in-depth consultation. This included data analysis, conversations with fifty city council employees, outreach to groups the Council currently funds (as well as unsuccessful grant applicants) and a cross-party member advisory group who gave views on the objectives and focus of the grants and review findings. In addition, ten workshops were held that focused on protected characteristics[1] and homelessness, alongside one to one interviews with 50 community groups and ten open workshops (attendees are listed on p.15 of appendix three). The Review also included a public consultation survey that was widely distributed.

8. Roundtable discussions were held with national funder partners, including the National Lottery, and local funders, including the local enterprise partnership (OxLEP). Representatives from other Councils also attended and shared good practice.

9. The detailed findings from the consultation and best practice form the basis for the Review and are shown in Appendix Three. The Equalities Impacts have been considered at every stage of the Review, the Equalities Impact Assessment is included as Appendix one. This Review presents back these findings and has used

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[1] Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, as set out in the Equality Act 2010 as well as homelessness.

them to propose how we can improve the accessibility of the grants programme, especially for smaller grassroots groups, alongside making the £200k saving.

Context

10. The Review is set in a context of 19 months of response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with significant poverty and inequality impacts. It has increased demand for services delivered by third sector organisations. Many funders have run emergency programmes to support the community response to Covid-related challenges.

11. The Review intersects with the increased visibility of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement emphasising institutional discrimination challenges and equalities issues. In parallel, the Review comes as the UK hosts COP26.[2]

12. From the start of the pandemic, the Council has supported communities through 'Community Hubs' bringing together Council staff and partners to support residents, respond to local needs and build resilient communities. The Council has also supported communities by distributing grant funding from internal budgets as well as via national Covid support grants. The combined support figure currently totals £3,543,000.

13. The June 2021 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Oxford City[3] confirmed the longevity of poverty in community areas predominantly in south-east Oxford and in specific groups. Oxford has 10 out of 83 neighbourhoods amongst the 20% most deprived in England and one in the most deprived 10%. Oxford is one of the most diverse cities in the UK with 28% of the population were born outside the UK. 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications, and 2018 schools census data indicates 32% of children did not have English as a first language. One in six residents has a main language other than English[4].

14. Based on Indices of Deprivation 2019[5] (after adjusting for housing costs), 29% of children in Oxford live below the poverty line. According to the Indices of Deprivation, child poverty rates have reduced in the most deprived neighbourhoods, but six Oxford neighbourhoods still have child poverty rates over 30%.

15. Men in the most deprived areas live 15 years less on average than those who live in the least deprived areas. The Centre for Cities 2020[6] data cites Oxford as the 2nd most unequal city in the UK, while the Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities report consistently places Oxford as the number one city in the UK.[7]

16. Participants at the Climate Citizens Assembly requested the Council to use its grants to better support positive climate action. The Council undertook to review its grants programme due to the pandemic and suggested that a portion of grants may be used to this purpose. However, this Review proposes that environmental impact is a key criterion by which we assess *every* grant. With the UK hosting the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) there are a host of other grants on offer which are aimed at small community groups such as the National Lottery £2.5m programme 'Together for the Planet', which is currently open and offering grants up to £10,000. The Council also has a green neighbourhood grants scheme, available to individuals as well as any new or existing resident and community groups who are looking to 'green' their communities

[2] https://publications.ncvo.org.uk/road-ahead-2021/road-ahead-hopes-and-fears-voluntary-sector-and-volunteering/

[3] https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/joint-strategic-needs-assessment#:~:text=The%20Joint%20Strategic%20Needs%20Assessment,meeting%20on%2018th%20March%202021. And https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/places

[4] https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/463/first_or_preferred_language

[5] Indices_of_Deprivation_2019_Oxford_Report_word_version_v3.pdf at oxford.gov.uk

[6] https://www.centreforcities.org/city/oxford/

[7] https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth.html

17. Charities Commission data shows Oxford has 1,430 registered third sector organisations headquartered across the city. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, NCVO, states that the third sector in England and Wales has grown during the pandemic, bearing out indications the third sector in Oxford has grown. The demand for services provided by the third sector grew hugely over this period. 39% of the charities surveyed reported that increased demand had been driven by both new and existing clients needing help. 19% said it was due to existing clients needing more help, and 11% said it was due to new clients.

18. The Charity Commission suggests that individual donations might have increased at the start of the pandemic by as much as £800 million. However, estimates from the sector itself suggest that the overall loss of income could range from £4.3 billion to £6.7 billion. The #nevermoreneeded briefing provides further examples of the ways in which incomes have been affected. There has been a 'professionalisation' of the income generation of charities, including diversifying into charity retail, renting office/ conference space, delivering training or selling products.

Current Position

19. In 2020/21 the Council's annual grants budget was £1.72m. This included: Commissioning, Advice Development Fund, Culture Fund, Leisure for all, Green Nighbourhood Grants, Holiday Activities, Open Bidding, Youth Ambition and other funds. The separate Ward Member Budget scheme (micro-grants) totalled £72k in 2021/22. A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood allowance of £5k is also available for councillors in 19 wards. CIL may be spent by Ward Members in their ward to fund infrastructure either through purchase, renewal, replacement, or maintenance to support the development of its area. In addition, Ward Members can fund anything else that addresses the demands development places on the local area.

20. The Council's largest grant funding budget is the Commissioning Programme at £895k (55%), including advice services (c.£473k or c.£518k including the Advice Development Fund). The other themes for which there is commissioning are: homelessness, community safety, community/voluntary sector infrastructure, arts and culture, play and leisure for disabled children and young people.

21. A £45k Advice Development Fund aims to support advice centre reforms. In September, the Oxford branch of Citizens Advice Bureau began a pilot providing services from St Aldate's Chambers, saving rental and building maintenance costs. This is initially a three-month trial.

22. The second largest commissioned area is homelessness (£442k). A separate report goes to cabinet each February that shows how these funds are allocated. For example, this includes commissioned services such as Gatehouse Café, The Porch Day Centre and Aspire and direct funding for the Single Homelessness Team and tenancy sustainment. These funds are managed alongside government monies that the housing teams distribute as a single pot, and allocated in accordance with the homelessness strategy. Of the £442, £136k is used to commission services (alongside over a million pounds of government funding) the remaining £306k is used to support delivery by the direct funding to teams.

23. The Council also uses its premises to support communities. Some community groups occupying council buildings, such as Fusion Arts, Modern Art Oxford, and Arts at the Old Fire Station, pay rent and receive a grant to pay, or contribute towards the rent. The grant award they receive from the Council is used to lever in external funds. Funding support from the local authority is vital in proving the organisation delivers to meet local needs, which is a prerequisite to access most larger funds. The timing of the Council's grant awards needs to be in line with conversations with national funders. It is important to announce our awards before the end of the year to increase the likelihood of levering in significant external funds.

Other community groups, e.g. the Community Associations that manage Community Centres, have peppercorn leases in exchange for the social value they deliver.

Summary of grants and commissioning

24. The section below shows how the Council allocates its funds.

25. *Open Bidding* - £96k for small to medium sized community groups. Many of the groups have been in receipt of funding for more than ten years.

26. The *Small Grants* programme - £30k for local activities, often funded for several years. Currently, this is via *The Good Exchange*[8], a fund matching platform. Since 2018 an additional £98,683 in additional grants, match funding, donations, and Gift Aid has been generated by adding Council grants to this platform.

27. *Holiday Activities Fund* - £138k. Providing positive activities for young people during school holidays and a £50k *Youth Ambition Fund*, to address these same needs during school terms.

28. *The Culture Fund* - £30k. Offers grants of £500-£1,000 to cultural agencies, which often helps applicants leverage income from other funders.

29. *Leisure for All* - £10k. A pilot (match-funded by Fusion Lifestyle) up to £1k for disadvantaged groups such as refugees and LGBTQIA+ to access leisure facilities.

30. *Green Neighbourhood Grants* - £4k. £50 to £500 for individuals or community groups to get you started on your journey to create a more vibrant, active, welcoming Green Neighbourhood.

31. Over the last year, the Council has also issued Covid support grants using in year funding from the government; it is not expected these grants will continue beyond April 2022.

32. The below chart shows a breakdown of our grants in 2021/22.
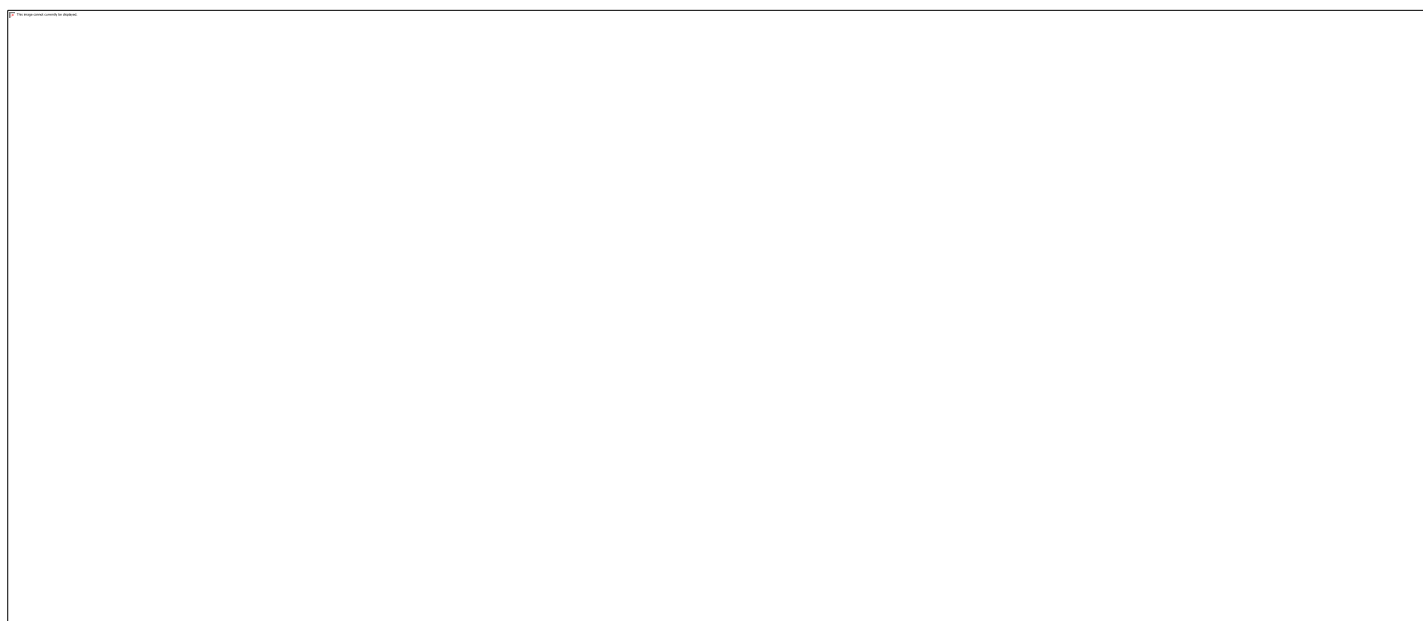
33. In January 2021 a £35k #WeAreOxford grant was re-launched to build community cohesion (this was a one-off grant, created by pooling three separate budgets, and is not shown above).

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[8] 'The Good Exchange' thegoodexchange.com/ is a not-for-profit online 'match funding' platform, owned by a charity, the Greenham Trust. It aims to help funders grant efficiently and enable crowdfunding.

34. *Ward Member Budget*. Budgets of £1.5k per ward per annum, totalling £72k overall. There has been a persistent annual underspend (particularly pre-Covid). There is a carry forward underspend of c.£78k (October 2021). From 2017/18 the average year-end underspend has been £85k. A £5k Community Infrastructure Levy is also available in unparished wards.

35. *Innovation*. The *Oxford Lottery* was established in 2017[9], which generates c.£12k a year to good support good causes.

Headline findings from the Review

36. The Council's grant programme is very well regarded and enables a range of impactful interventions. Recent changes and the Council's flexibility in approach have mitigated some of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the third sector and on the poorest individuals.

37. Covid-19 has impacted funding, flexibility, sustainability and demand for the third sector. While the third sector appears to have grown in scale, it has lost some sources of income, but other, generally short-term pots have been available. Many groups have moved to a hybrid business model with work underpinned by web and IT-based service delivery. This approach allowed for some efficiencies but reduced contact for those without digital access.

38. Engagement by the Council on equalities issues were highlighted across all areas of the Review. It was though felt more focus could be placed on BAME[10], youth, disabled and LGBTQIA+ groups. Geographically concentrated inequality affecting south and east Oxford was repeatedly emphasised.

39. Commissioned advice services play a clear and important role. The advice services are working more collaboratively with the locality hubs providing support funded by the locality support grants.

40. Best practice emerging across national funders includes more community participation, localisation and improved coordination across partners. This includes working together on intractable issues, combining funds and bidding, distilling and simplifying requirements, trust-based approaches with reduced monitoring, and a shared learning approach replacing formal monitoring formats. Web and IT systems are increasingly used for customer relationship management (CRM) and are improving efficiency and targeting.

    The Council has already implemented a range of best practices - for example:

    - The [Community Impact Zone](#) (CIZ), which is a partnership with Oxfordshire County Council's children's social care team, Thames Valley Police and Oxford Hub and which has drawn in £308,000 of additional funding since 2018 to support disadvantaged children and families in south Oxford;
    - The Museum of Oxford Development Trust enabling structure[11];
    - The 'Cultural Partnership' and 'Cultural Education Partnership' driving better coordination, peer to peer support and leadership development;
    - A granular understanding of local issues and supporting people to build on local strengths through the Locality Hubs; and
    - A lighter-touch approach to reporting on performance, enabling groups to focus on delivery.

41. Respondents to the consultation said that the Council should continue to champion equalities, provide coordination by bringing community groups and funders together,

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[9] Gatherwell, the operator, provides similar services to over 80 Councils.

[10] BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'. The 2011 Census shows that 22% of Oxford's residents are characterised this way.

[11] Details at https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5100038/accounts-and-annual-returns

improving grants' accessibility (simplifying its processes, using clear and accessible language) and adopt a learning approach that encourages innovation.

42. All the good practice local authorities we spoke to during the Review used independent council officer panels to review grant applications; most then made recommendations to the Executive Member. These independent panels were used to [ensure objectivity](#) and mitigate risks to the equity of the process. The Executive Member will be briefed after initial Expression on Interest rounds as well as after the full application panel meetings.

43. For community wide funds, good practice is that Members are involved in policy, setting the wider framework for applications, including transparent criteria, but are not involved in the grant making panels. The Member Steering Group will continue to meet to monitor the impact of the funding and support the criteria review.

Options Analysis and Changes

44. The section below summarises the three main options we explored -

Stay as We Are – Option One

45. This would involve making no more than marginal changes. The current grant process is competitive, and perceptions from consultations are that funds are regularly awarded to the same organisations. Based on data from 2019/20, 79% of grants reached groups who have previously received Council grant-funding, with many of these having been funded for more than five years.

46. There is a risk that making changes at this point in the pandemic cycle could endanger the health of many stretched and pressured existing partners, who have either directly contributed to addressing the emergency or themselves are suffering because of it. Keeping the grant process as it is could protect existing relationships.

47. Without change it is unlikely new, small and emerging community groups would obtain funding.

48. This option would *not* facilitate the savings in the 2021/22 Council Budget to be achieved without an across the board 'cut' and would not reflect findings of the Review.

A new approach – Option Two

49. This would see a shift in approach, criteria and weighting. Across the grants fund there would be greater outreach and visibility to maintain the new ways of working gained in the pandemic, reducing the paperwork in applications, monitoring, reporting, and maintaining the focus on accessibility.

50. Inconsistency and lack of clarity arising from the range of calls, at different times, using different criteria would be streamlined by combining funds into one single pot that all community groups can apply for. The critical importance of climate change would be embedded as a universal key criterion.

51. The locality hubs teams would provide funding surgeries to support local groups, with a focus on collaboration and supporting grassroots organisations to apply. A minimum of 20% of the Community Impact Fund would be used to support small and medium-sized projects.

52. This process would involve open partner workshops, replicating the good practice sector leadership shown through #WeAreOxford (#WAO) and the Culture Partners (aimed at a 'one city' collaboration approach). These will act as 'consultation' events, enabling greater understanding of needs, participation and feedback.

53. On the Council's website, a single grants landing page (including both commissioned[12] and other) will set-out, 'must haves' (criteria/weighting), approach, and banding; clear language will lay out purpose and weighting criteria under a new brand – "Community (or Oxford) Impact Fund." Partners from diverse communities would be asked to test accessibility, clarity and appeal; monitoring will be through learning events hosted by locality hubs[13].

54. *Equalities*. Positive action for equalities related bids, with targeted social media and physical outreach to equalities groups, individuals and events; a reduced emphasis placed on the quality of written applications and more on promoting diverse leadership and upskilling; targeting those most in need with applications being accepted in different media and/or face to face. Language support would be delivered to reach non-EFL speakers, and early initial drafts would be accepted in other languages (with later support). These changes would be promoted openly in advance of application deadlines.

55. *Match Funding*. It is good practice to seek match funds, and this would be proactively supported via regular funding surgeries and form part of the assessment process. Appendix three provides some good practice examples. A target of an additional £50k is being set for the Council's grants programme.

56. A single IT/CRM[14] system would allow all grantees/applicants to use IT and web-based systems to register, join EOI's, apply and participate in #WAO style learning processes, and to receive updates. A scoping exercise which makes use of existing software is underway.[15]

57. *Strategic Coordination.* The 'Cultural Partnership' group coordinate, share information, offer coaching and advice to new entrants, and meet regularly. This should be replicated by establishing a group of partners, including local foundations which can mobilise funding or other resources for communities. A coordination group would meet regularly to share information on need, promote the benefits of the funding, share best practice and consider how to lever national funding.

58. This option requires refocusing of staff time, allocating resources to establish and manage specific tasks, e.g. upgrades to website content, enhanced use of new software such as Windows365, Smartsheets and PowerBI to improve efficiency, focus and customer relationship management. Additional support around community languages may also be required.

59. This option will enable the Corporate Change Savings to be met - and will potentially generate new funds for investment.

60. The combination of a reduction in available funding, a change in funding priorities and an increase in expected applications may mean that some previous regularly funded grant recipients receive less or no grant funding from 1 April 2022 with a month's notice of the change. The nature of the competitive process means that we can not pre-judge which organisations will be affected, and no doubt those used to receiving core funding over many years will feel vulnerable. However, the application process will include a question relating to how the organisation will mitigate any possible loss of grant income and the impact will be taken into consideration as part of the decision making process. Consultation revealed that Covid has driven organisations to adapt their business models, taking advantage of digital opportunities and reducing overhead costs. Many grantees had not

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[12] Commissioned service criteria/weighting as noted. Priorities: essential/necessary services include: homeless, domestic abuse/rape crisis, refugee support, and advice services.

[13] For example if four hubs held a meeting once a year, streamed online like #WAO, these would be quarterly.

[14] Some Councils use in house developed systems e.g. based on 'Google Forms', others use third party commercial IT.

[15] Best case MS Office 365 Dynamic (linked to outlook), or well-developed use of Google Apps - Forms/Sheet/Gmail, is recommended. Both cases involve expert implementation support.

previously maximised opportunities to seek funding from other sources, including from other funders, and the new bi-monthly grant surgeries will help support them to do so.

Radical Change – Option Three

61. A further option, but with higher costs and a range of trade-offs, is to lead radical change, making a significant shift, addressing some of the above points and aiming to address more fundamental emerging issues.

62. Among these are wholesale joint funding and co-commissioning with the Council's strategic partners. Under this option, the single pot would be used as a highly targeted partnership leverage fund, supplemented by the Community Infrastructure Levy and used to lever other funders, to make a concerted effort to tackle strategic and systemic disadvantage experienced in some communities.

63. It would use new methodologies such as 'Social Impact Bonds' and target emerging resources such as central government 'Partnership Funds'. It would wholesale pilot participatory budgeting, would enable community-led partnership forums in localities to select priorities and commission community groups and projects working to localised priorities, identified through the forums.

64. This option would require further resources and take longer to implement. There may be benefit in piloting aspects of this. Notably, a low-risk option of asking funding partners and other local key institutions to enter a longer term compact focusing on one area, for example, Blackbird Leys, as it applies to a single issue, or single funding/bidding approach (such as on child poverty or literacy). It is important to be realistic about the resourcing implications of this even as a pilot.

65. Option One does not respond to the Review findings or Corporate Transformation objectives on costs and improved service cohesion.

66. Option Two meets review requirements, responds to the evidence and enables Corporate Transformation targets.

67. Option Three involves development costs and new staffing roles. It fails to meet Corporate Transformation needs but offers an ambitious set of choices.

68. Option Two is the recommended option, as it delivers the £200k of corporate transformation savings and offers flexibility to decide how to best deliver this.

Option Two - Implementation

69. **Coordination**: The intention is to work more strategically with other local funders. Bring foundations/others together to discuss funding opportunities, needs and learning, and to lever in additional investment.

70. **Marketing**: The grant programme budget would be rebranded as a 'Community Impact Fund' with flexible funds and longer-term awards (up to 3 years).

71. **Communications**: Increase outreach and visibility particularly using social media, Locality Hubs and events targeting priority equalities groups.

72. **Process**: Separate out 'commissioned' service grants and 'other' grants in the budget. Limit commissioned grants to advice centres, domestic abuse and homelessness. Move all remaining funds into a single pot with three cycles a year. Hold advance meetings for advice, expressions of interest and partners' forward planning; focus on learning and case-based monitoring; offer jargon-busting, simple, appealing web-based information, reducing confusion.

73. **Criteria** - Introduce visible criteria to ensure the grants are strategically aligned with the Council's ambitions, these are – 262

Priority 1: Enable an inclusive economy

74. The Council can then flex the criteria and weighting to target its investment (these are shown in table three below).

75. **Innovation and Funding:** There is a plan to build on the small grant pilot with fund-matchers, promote the 'good causes' fund/Oxford Lottery, adopt successful practices to generate income; work with crowd funders and implement other creative approaches. It is important to emphasise that grant funding from these sources are usually time-limited rather than ongoing grants.

76. **ICT**: Implement a CRM solution. Develop a simple web/IT system used across the grant cycle with in-house software/tools (e.g. Smartsheets) to make the application process easier, increase efficiency and reduce administration for all.

77. **Advisory services**: Encourage reforms and coordinated approaches for improved service levels and reduced costs; support alternative delivery models and explore co-location and use of community 'pop up' shops, and the savings that flow from this.

78. **Governance** – The criteria for awards would be agreed by Cabinet, enabling members to set the strategic direction for the years ahead.

79. Independent officer panels would review the applications after each of the three annual bidding rounds and make recommendations to the Executive Member. The cross-party reference group would continue and be used as a sounding board for the grant awards.

Proposed Savings (table one)

The below table shows the savings.

Element	Saving £000s	Implications	Mitigations
Advice Centres/CAO	£25	A reduction from the advice centre pot (£473,461) delivered through alternative provision and location options.	The Council would support advice centres to secure additional funding and work more closely with them through our locality hubs and continue to explore co-location building on the work done with the Covid support grants.
Advice Development Fund	£45	Since the fund was set up three years ago, c.£85k has been awarded in total.	The Council would support advice centres to find other funding and access support through our Impact grants on specific projects.
Rental Contributions	£20	Agreements and annual reports and accounts will be assessed to deliver this without impacting the ongoing viability of the organisations affected.	Further conversations with the groups we support before making the reduction.
Ward Member Budget	£24	Due to underspends and annual carry forwards, the £72k ward member pot had grown to £164,264 at the start of the year. Pre-Covid average annual spend per ward member was c£500, this has grown over the past year to £1,100. The reduction would mean members would receive £1,000 (WMB) plus the £5,000 CIL for non-parished areas (the member allocation is higher for parished areas).\n\n*This would need to be taken through the budget process.	The small grants pot will be easy to access, with members playing a key role in promoting to residents.\n\nThe hubs teams will also hold open door meetings every two months to help people unfamiliar with the grants process, helping them access the funds and also signpost other opportunities for support and match funding/crowdfunding. Alternatively, the Council could have a smaller ward member pot for members to bid into to reflect the variable spend patterns.
Across the Board Reduction	£86	The assessment criteria will mean that corporate priorities are supported and grants can be refocussed as priorities change. If other options are not progressed, the Council would need to increase this saving.	The Council will continue to work with partners to bring in external funding, e.g. the CIZ has brought in £308k into south Oxford since it was set up in 2018.
TOTAL Yr1	**£200**	While there are no easy options, these proposals are intended to find savings with least impact and for which there is mitigation.	Consultation, research, partner conversations, a members' reference group.

Implementation plan (table two)

The below table shows the implementation plan for the Community Impact Fund and commissioned services.

	Community Impact Fund	Commissioning
Total amount	£572,000 (of which up to £150,000 will be used for grants towards building rental costs) so £422,000 is available	£943,000
Strands	*Small grants* – up to £1k (easy access) *Medium* – up to £5k At least 20% available for small and medium grants *Big ideas* – up to £35k. Strategic partners, a condition would be they support emerging groups. This £35k cap excludes grants to groups that are used towards rental payments. This means that no groups we currently fund will be negatively impacted from the cap.	Domestic abuse Advice Centres Homelessness grant (see paragraph 22).
Mechanics	Grants over £5k available for up to three years. Three open bidding promotion 'rounds' a year.	Three year cycle
Development & partnership	Coaching and mentoring of: new applicants, small and/or equalities focused organisations. Open attendance at bi-monthly update meetings. Increased outreach and targeting on equalities and new/small applicants.	Move from traditional monitoring to learning model with trust based funds flexibility. Encouraged to bid for longer term funds, to bid for development funds into other grants funds.
Timescales	20 Dec: Public Information campaign starts/Big Ideas EOI call opens/dates given for other grant rounds and surgeries 5 Jan: Deadline for Big Idea EOI applications 12 Jan: Full applications open for Big Ideas 31 Jan: Deadline for Big Ideas full applications 21 Feb: Small and Medium grant call published 28 Feb: Big Ideas In-principle decisions communicated 1 April: Big Ideas contracts start 8 April: Deadline for Small and Medium grant applications – first round 2 May: Small and Medium grant application decisions communicated	15 Dec: Cabinet approval and sign off for amounts and approach 28 Feb: Deadline for 2022/25 SLA conversations

Grant criteria and weighting (table three)

Criteria	Explanation (see paragraph 73: OCC Priorities 1 – 4)	Weighting
Eligibility	All applicants must demonstrate that they are financially viable; operate on a not-for-profit basis; have a track record of delivery, and that the funded activity will take place in Oxford	Pass/Fail
Equalities, diversity and inclusion (mandatory)	Demonstrating how the funded activity will help to reduce inequalities and increase diversity, inclusion, and access is mandatory for all applications. Proportionality will apply for applicants to small and medium grants – with consideration given to the evolution of the organisation and the extent of core documentation in place. (OCC Priorities 1 & 3).	15% Pass/Fail
Environmental Sustainability and Zero Carbon Oxford (mandatory)	Demonstrating how the funded activity will be managed to minimise its impact on the environment is mandatory for all applications (5% maximum weighting). Higher scores will be awarded to applications that will reduce carbon emissions in the city (up to an additional 10% maximum weighting). Proportionality will apply for applicants to small and medium grants – with consideration given to the evolution of the organisation and the extent of core documentation in place. (OCC Priority 4).	15% Pass/Fail
Partnership working and cross/sector support	In order to maximise the impact of funding and deliver value-for-money, we expect applicants to work together with relevant partners both within and, where relevant, across different sectors, placing the needs of beneficiaries at the forefront. Higher scores will be awarded to those who mentor and support new voices and grassroots organisations that reach into excluded and disadvantaged communities. (OCC Priorities 1 & 3).	10%
Inclusive economy	This criterion is designed to ensure that, in awarding grants, due weight is given to initiatives that encourage the distribution of wealth across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth. (OCC Priority 1).	10%
Health and wellbeing	All sectors and communities are recovering from the impact of the pandemic, which has exacerbated health inequalities in the city. We welcome applications that deliver activities to increase positive mental and physical health and wellbeing. (OCC Priorities 1 & 3).	10%
Leverage and match funding	Given pressures on public funding, applications that can demonstrate the ability to generate additional income and/or lever in additional funding using OCC grants as a catalyst to unlock further investment in the city will score more highly. (OCC Priorities 3).	10%
Innovation	Undoubtedly these are challenging times for those in the third sector and therefore additional weighting will be given to those able to demonstrate innovation in – the use of technology, processes, service delivery or any other aspect that can result in better quality, value-for-money or reach. (Innovation may support any or all of the 4 OCC Priorities).	10%
Balancing	To ensure that a fair and balanced programme of grant awards is made that supports the needs of different localities, and communities of interest and identity, it is proposed to retain a fifth of the weighting for this purpose.	20%

Financial Implications

80. The recommended approach will achieve the £200k reduction as per the summary shown in table one.

81. The savings covers all aspects of the £1.72 million grants pot.

82. The breakdown of the £1.72 million is shown in the graph in section 32 (the additional £5k shown in the graph is due to Fusion Lifestyles match funding allocation to the Leisure for All grant)

Legal Implications

83. There are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

Level of Risk

84. A full review of risk has been undertaken, which is reflected in Appendix two.

Equalities Impact

85. Equalities considerations are at the centre of the Review and have been undertaken continually. The equalities impact assessment is included as Appendix three.

86. Appendix four shows the support we will provide to organisations currently commissioned.

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