www.oxford.gov.uk

OXFORD
CITY
COUNCIL

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**14 December 2022**
Report of:	**Head of Community Services**
Title of Report:	**Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	1) To confirm the criteria and weighting for assessing the 2023/24 grant allocations
	2) To give an interim update showing examples of the impact of the Community Impact Fund grants to date
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:
1. **Note** the implementation of the new Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021 as part of the strategic grants review; and
2. **Recommend** that applicants are requested to provide information regarding the demographics of their board/staff/volunteer teams and their response to the cost of living crisis in a voluntary capacity as part of project monitoring for grants awarded in 2022-23 and to make this obligatory for grants awarded in 2023-24.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford Community Impact Fund Grant Allocations to Community Groups
Appendix 2	Charts indicating the communities of identity, geography and interest that funded projects intend to reach
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 4	Risk Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Oxford Community Impact Fund (OCIF) was established following a grant review conducted in 2021 in consultation with existing grant recipients, unsuccessful grant applicants, voluntary sector organisations, other local authorities and funders. The review aimed to find new ways of supporting community groups amidst budget pressures as a result of the pandemic, to make the grant application process easier for everyone to apply, and to align grants with core council priorities.

2. As a result, all the existing community grant funds including the Culture Fund, Green Neighbourhood Scheme, Youth Ambition Fund, Youth Ambition Holiday Activities Fund, Small Grants and Open Bidding were merged into one – Oxford Community Impact Fund – with a combined budget of £1,515,000.

3. Oxford Community Impact Fund started in April 2022 and comprises four strands:

    - Commissioned services – £943k per year – rough sleeping and single homelessness commissioning (£442k); domestic abuse (£53k) and advice services (£448k)

    - Supporting peppercorn rent arrangements – £150k per year

    - Big Ideas grants – £338k per year (one round every three years with grant agreements in place for three years) and

    - Small and Medium Grants – £84k per year (three rounds each year – round one £24k, round two £44k and round three £16k)

    A Big Ideas Transition grant of £56k was set up due to the availability of additional funds following year-end adjustments and was used to give transition funding to unsuccessful Big Ideas applicants who had relevant project proposals.

4. The £442k allocated to the rough sleeping and single homelessness commissioning budget is managed alongside other funding streams in accordance with the Rough Sleeping Strategy (with the new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy out for statutory consultation). The impact of this spend will be included in a separate Cabinet report in early 2023.

5. £53k is allocated to support domestic abuse services and £448k is allocated to advice services

6. The grant application process was streamlined to be straightforward with clear criteria and submission timelines. Furthermore, regular briefing sessions are conducted to go through the application form and answer any questions from potential applicants, and more in-person and online help is also available. Answers to questions raised are added to the Frequently Asked Questions list so everyone has access to them and accessibility tools are built into the application form.

7. Grants are assessed as per the following criteria and weighting which align with Corporate Priorities:

Table 1: Grant criteria and weighting

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%

Oxford Community Impact Fund grant allocations made to date in 2022

8. Table 2 shows the allocation of funding across the different grants and the number of organisations/projects that have received funding in 2022 to date:

Table 2: Summary of the current grants and funding allocated

Grant	No. of projects/ organisations funded	Funding allocated (£)
Big Ideas	36	338,000
Big Ideas Transition	28	56,500
Small and Medium Grants round 1	25	24,000
Small and Medium Grants round 2	48	44,000
Small and Medium Grants round 3	Applications currently being assessed	16,000 available but not yet allocated
Total funding		**478,500**

9. Appendix 1 lists the organisations that received the funding in Table 2.

Interim update showing examples of the Impact of Community Impact Fund grants to date

10. The report on the impact of the funding for 2022-23 year is due to come to Cabinet in autumn 2023.

11. It is too early in the year to assess key elements of the social and economic impact, however, the charts in appendix Two indicate the communities of identity, geography and interest that funded projects intend to reach.

12. Table 3 gives a few examples of the different types of community impact from a selection of the funded projects.

Table 3: examples of the community impact of a selection of the funded projects

Criteria	Grantee feedback
Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion	• The Iranian Community Network is providing English language and ICT skill classes to the communities of Refugees and Asylum seekers. They are working closely in partnership with refugee and other charities in Oxford to share resources and ensure more people can benefit. • Oxfordshire Mind has adapted its services to better meet community needs by creating easy read electronic handouts and partnering with providers of translation services to make support more accessible. This in turn has helped communities such as the Chinese community in Oxford improve their wellbeing through learning tips and strategies shared on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing course. By working in partnership with the Oxford Chinese Community Centre, they have been able to build trust with the community and helped to overcome the stigma of seeking support for mental health issues. • Jacari is working to support young people for whom English isn't their first language to access and thrive in their education. From the latest impact report in July 2022 - 85% of pupils surveyed said the lessons helped them improve their English, and 97% said they helped them feel more confident. • Sanctuary Hosting are providing initial accommodation for people from different nationalities and backgrounds and supporting them to move to settled accommodation in rented accommodation, women's refuge or Home Office accommodation.
Environmental sustainability and zero carbon Oxford	• Low Carbon Oxford North are helping residents to understand how they can improve their homes and manage their energy use to keep their heating and electricity running costs to a minimum.
Partnership working and cross-sector support	• One applicant has secured additional funding in partnership with Oxford University and Oxford Brookes for a knowledge exchange research project to explore mapping African heritage • The Porch is working with Music at Oxford to provide work placements as ushers at music events for their members. They are also sharing resources with Narcotics Anonymous • FloFest partnered with the Oxford Playhouse for a free interactive theatre production and music. They also worked with Fusion Arts to deliver a culturally inclusive project with Asylum Welcome where there was free art and printing activities throughout the day.
Health and wellbeing	• Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee are helping to support children and families to access support services, empowering them to build skills, confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging and ownership. • Oxford Mutual Aid have delivered a variety of food parcels to around 500 under-18s to help meet their needs. • The Porch are encouraging project beneficiaries to sign up to Healthy Hearts wellbeing project to improve the cardiovascular health of people most in need including those who are in the homelessness pathway.
Attracting additional funding	• Justice in Motion were able to raise additional funding of £30,000 from the Arts Council Project Grants through leveraging funds received from the Big Ideas grant.

	• Oxford Mutual Aid has been able to raise additional funding through grants and donations worth over £120k, and also collaborate with some of the other grantees like Oxfordshire Asian Women's Voice, the Porch, and Syrian Sisters to offer appropriate and tailored support to groups who have often struggled to gain access to traditional support services, and coordinate with other food-provision non-profits to identify ways to mutually support each other and pass on surplus supplies.
Inclusive economy	• Broken Spoke bike co-op are supporting people in the Leys to access bikes and learn how to ride and maintain them which, in turn, will enable them to access a wider range of job and other opportunities.

Criteria and weighting for assessing the 2023/24 grant allocations

13. Since the funding criteria was agreed in the Cabinet meeting on 15 December 2021, the cost of living crisis has added significant additional pressure on communities.

14. Of the overall budget of £1,515,000, £943k (62%) is already allocated to commissioning critical support for those most in need via advice centres, domestic abuse services and rough sleeping and single homelessness pathways.

15. Some small and medium grant applicants are building food and other support into their projects (e.g. free lunches for participants)

16. Given the funding contracts already in place, criteria changes would come into effect for the £84k small and medium grants (6% of the overall funding).

17. Feedback is sought via a range of sources on an ongoing basis including briefing sessions, the grant application form, email and phone. So far the feedback given has been around small amends to the application form and the grants team have implemented suggestions for improvement. We have not received any feedback suggesting any amendments to the criteria.

18. The application form currently requires applicants to show how their project will meet the agreed criteria but it doesn't require or score how their organisation is being developed more intrinsically to meet the agreed criteria (e.g. diversifying their board, reducing their energy use etc.)

19. In light of the above, options for amending criteria for assessing 2023-24 grants include:

a) Maintaining the criteria as they are

b) Giving higher scores to projects which directly address the cost of living crisis

c) Giving higher scores to organisations who demonstrate how their organisation is being developed more intrinsically to meet the agreed criteria

Options appraisal

20. The pros and cons of the options are:

Option	Pros	Cons
a) Maintaining the criteria as they are	• Applicants have recently got used to working to the new criteria following a full review – maintaining them as they are will help people feel confident to apply • The criteria are currently delivering a wide range of benefits (appendix 2)	• The opportunity to encourage organisational development may be missed
b) Giving higher scores to projects which directly address the cost of living crisis	• The projects will help support those most affected by the cost of living crisis	• The scope of projects would be reduced therefore reducing the opportunity for people to benefit from projects which could help them avoid getting into a crisis situation in the first place
c) Giving higher scores to organisations who demonstrate how their organisation is being developed more intrinsically to meet the agreed criteria	• Organisations will be encouraged to create more sustainable and longer-lasting impact	• This could penalise smaller, often more diverse/grassroots organisations, who don't have the budgets or capacity available for more intrinsic organisational development

Officer recommendation:

21. Given the pros and cons of the options, the recommendation is option a) – not to change the criteria at this time. Instead, we recommend we request applicants to provide information regarding organisational development including the demographics of their board/staff/volunteer teams and their response to the cost of living crisis in a voluntary capacity as part of project monitoring for grants awarded in 2022-23 and make this obligatory for grants awarded in 2023-24. This information can then be considered as part of the cabinet report in autumn 2023 when the impact of the funding for the financial year 2022-23 is considered more fully and in a meaningful way.

Financial implications

22. A commitment has already been made to three years of funding for Commissioned Services and Big Ideas grants with signed grant agreements being in place for this. The annual amount allocated for small and medium grants is £84k.

Legal issues

23. Signed grant agreement contracts are in place for three years for Big Ideas grants and for one year for Small and Medium grants.

Level of risk

24. See the risk assessment (Appendix 3).

Equalities impact

25. See the Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 2).

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

26. The grant application process has been amended to include scoring of carbon/environmental considerations as an integral part of grant allocation decisions. Considering and mitigating the environmental impact of funded activity is a compulsory criterion awarded with a weighting of 15% of the overall decision.

Report author	Paula Redway
Job title	Culture and Community Development Manager
Service area or department	Community Services
Telephone	01865 252780
e-mail	predway@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None