

 Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee - August 2012		Agenda Item No. <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em;">6</div>
Title	Review of Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme	
For further information about this report please contact	Chris Brown Tel: (01926) 456204 Chris.Brown@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	Yes
The equality / sustainability impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the review of grants to voluntary organisations (see appendix 3).	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	23/07/12	Andy Jones
Head of Service/Finance	24/07/12	Mike Snow
CMT		Chris Elliott / Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	24/07/12	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	23/07/12	Andy Jones
Portfolio Holder(s)	/07/12	Cllr Grainger and Cllr Mobbs
Consultation & Community Engagement		
The Scheme was developed as one of the recommendations of the review of grants to voluntary organisations. The Grants Review Panel, have been consulted on the draft Capital Scheme.		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee with a view of how the Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme has been implemented over the previous 12 months. This follows on from a report that went to Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in January 2012.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Member's consider the findings of the review of the Rural/ Urban Capital improvements Scheme.
- 2.2 That the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee agree to the recommendations as detailed below and for consideration by Executive for approval.
- That the Scheme criteria is amended to cover the elements outlined in 3.1
 - That the current decision making arrangements of presenting reports to the Council's Executive throughout the year is maintained to ensure that the Scheme remains flexible as outlined in 3.2
 - That an improvement is made in terms of promoting and publicising the Scheme, especially in Urban Areas by printing and distributing leaflets to Clubs, Societies etc. in the main four towns. A large WDC Cheque to be made by the Media team so that when grants are awarded there could be an opportunity for more exposure from the press with a WDC representative handing over the cheque to the successful applicant, as explained in 3.3

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 A number of areas have been identified as having gaps in the current Grant Scheme criteria. It is recommended that amendments are made to the current criteria to include the following:
- To consider if those organisations who lease a building from the Council are eligible to apply for the Scheme or as Warwick District Council are Landlords, any work carried out to lease buildings should be funded from the Corporate Property Repair Budget. If it is decided to allow grants to lease holders, should they be for leases granted to applicants who have signed leases for 10 years or over?
 - To set a lower limit for those applying to the Rural/Urban Capital Improvement Scheme of £2,000 - which is the maximum amount that can be granted from the Community Forums.
 - The District Ward Councillor should sign the application form as sometimes they are not always aware of the project applications that are being submitted in their Ward.
- 3.2 Consideration was given to the current decision making process of presenting a report to most Executive Meetings throughout the year. It was suggested that perhaps a 'cut off' date is introduced and applications are presented to a single

Executive Committee meeting. This was discussed at a meeting with Councillors Knight and Grainger in February 2012 which considered this option and it was noted that by not having a single cut off date it allows more flexibility to applicants by allowing applicants more time to secure match funding to support applications. If this was to change it would be to the detriment of those applying and could lead to a reduction in applications.

- 3.3 The majority of applicants applying to the Scheme are from the Rural areas of the District. It is recognised that improvements need to be made in terms of how the Grant Scheme can be promoted to the Urban areas. Newspaper advertising has been tried and there is sufficient information on the Warwick District Council Web site. The large cheque idea came from the front page coverage in the Warwick Courier of the Warwick Sports Club cheque handover from Sport England, although WDC representatives attended, there was only a single line in the newspaper report stating that Warwick District Council had granted £26,000 to the project.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme Review supports the Sustainable Community Strategy and the cross cutting themes which form the priorities for funding are as follows:
- Engaging and supporting communities including community cohesion and
 - Embedding sustainability.
 - Targeted geographical areas (Neighbourhood Anchors).
 - Narrowing the gaps/ families at risk
 - Rurality

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The budget for the Rural/Urban Capital Improvement Scheme for 2011/12 and 2012/12 is £150,000 (£75,000 for rural projects and £75,000 for urban projects). To this has been added to £114,586 which is the unallocated budget from 2010/11 which will sit in a separate cost centre and can be allocated to either Rural or Urban Scheme as the main budgets are used up.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 N/A

7. **BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 The Council has operated a Rural Initiatives Scheme within the District for many years with an annual grant budget of £100,000 per annum for capital improvements and major equipment purchase for Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees and various clubs/groups within the Parish areas of Warwick District.
- 7.2 Following a report to the June 2011 Executive, the Scheme was extended to take into consideration the Urban areas or Towns of the District, with the Rural budget being £75,000 per annum and the urban areas having a new budget of £75,000 as agreed by the Grants Review Panel.

- 7.3 The rationale and the reasons behind the spilt were discussed at the Grants Review Panel meetings in March and April 2011 and it was agreed that the slippage money will be used to top up either cost centre which will be determined by demand.
The Grant review Panel also agreed that the new scheme would sit outside of the Integrated Grant Scheme that was being devised by the Joint Area Partnership Team.
- 7.4 There have been many discussions on applicants financial reserves and a statement does exist in the current criteria, although if a level or percentage amount were to be set, this could be detrimental to smaller clubs/societies who have only small reserves and alternatively larger Parish Councils who have large reserves could in theory put all their reserves into a project, this was the case with Bishops Tachbrook PC and their Community Centre, concluding that each applicant should be taken on its own merit and that Executive Members have the right to reject or reduce an application based on an applicants reserves.
- 7.5 From the start of the Scheme in June 2012 there has been £161,952 awarded to the Rural areas and £34,923 awarded to the Urban areas.
Subsequently there is evidence to advertise and promote the scheme more in the Urban areas of the District.