

 Executive – 12th March 2014		Agenda Item No. 8
Title	Rural/Urban Capital Improvement Scheme (RUCIS) Criteria	
For further information about this report please contact	Jon Dawson Finance Administration Manager 01926 456204 e mail: fsteam@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Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?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	N/A	
Background Papers	Rural/Urban Capital Improvement Scheme details	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	18.2.14	Chris Elliott
Head of Service	18.2.14	Mike Snow
CMT	18.2.14	Chris Elliot, Bill Hunt and Andy Jones
Section 151 Officer	18.2.14	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	18.2.14	Andy Jones
Finance	18.2.14	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	18.2.14	Cllr Mobbs
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Community Partnership Team and Manoj Sonecha (Active Communities Officer) – Email explaining suggested changes sent 30.1.14, Copy of report forwarded 18.2.14		
Noted on RUCIS webpage on Council website – 31.1.14		
Final Decision?		Yes/No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report aims to seek the Executive approval of the revised criteria for the Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme (see appendix 1).

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Executive agree the revised criteria for the Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme. Proposed changes are as follows:
- The maximum award amount is reduced from £50,000 to £30,000 for applications received from 1st April 2014 onwards
 - A grant can only be considered if the applying organisation has no outstanding projects that have previously received funding from the RUCIS scheme

(see appendix 1)

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Historically there has been a steady volume of RUCIS applications throughout each year which on the whole have been approved if they met the scheme criteria; however, the budget for the scheme has usually been under spent with slippage being carried forward into the next financial year.
- 3.2 Within the current 2013/2014 financial year we have seen a high level of interest in the RUCIS scheme and experienced an increase in applications for large amounts (see appendix 2 – for analysis of recent grant applications and expected applications) which has left the budget close to being fully spent for the first time since the scheme was introduced.
- 3.3 Potentially the budget for the 2014/15 financial year, including slippage from 2013/14, may run-out in the early part of the year with some large applications expected.
- 3.4 Historically there have been some projects where RUCIS awards have been allocated which have then been unspent for a number of years as projects have not progressed as noted within the RUCIS application; this has resulted in allocated budget being carried forward as slippage year after year which potentially prevents other well-deserving non-profit community organisations receiving funding support. The revised criterion that was introduced in 2013/14 established a condition whereby grants must be used within 12 months of the offer being made unless there are exceptional circumstances; with the higher level of interest being experienced in the scheme this was to ensure that the budget was used in a timely manner and to prevent other community organisations missing out on funding opportunities. To further support this it is suggested that organisations are limited to having one live RUCIS funded project at a time.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme supports the Sustainable Community Strategy and the cross cutting themes which form the priorities for funding areas as follows:-

Community Engagement & Cohesion (including Families at Risk)
Targeting disadvantaged rural locations
Narrowing The Gaps

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The budget for the Rural/Urban Capital Improvement Scheme applications for 2014/15 is £150,000 (£75,000 for rural projects and £75,000 for urban projects).
- 5.2 The unallocated budget from 2013/2014 currently £33,208 subject to the approval of the grant proposed elsewhere on this agenda will be requested to be as part of the June Final Accounts Report. This will sit within a separate cost centre budget so as to be added to either Rural or Urban schemes once the 2014/2015 budget has been used.

6. RISKS

- 6.1 The main risk of not adopting the proposal is that the 2014/15 RUCIS budget is fully used early in the new financial year resulting in the Council being unable to help other well-deserving non-profit organisations later in the year with capital projects which contribute to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 7.1 The Council could do nothing and retain the current criteria, however, this is not deemed a viable option as per the rationale noted above in the reasons for the recommendation.
- 7.2 To reduce the maximum value the Council could decide an alternative amount.
- 7.3 The scheme currently accepts applications throughout the year for consideration by the next suitable Executive meeting. It is possible to move to a scheme whereby all applications are considered together with there being an annual or quarterly deadline. If applications exceed the available budget this would enable a more objective prioritisation of projects. However, an annual or quarterly application deadline may cause delays for many organisations in securing funding. This may also be a problem in cases of "unforeseen" applications (i.e. responding to an emergency), or if further funding sources are dependent on an organisation showing a degree of funding has already been secured. On balance, it is not believed that there is a strong enough case to change from the current process.

8. BACKGROUND

- 8.1 The Council operates a Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme (RUCIS) which gives grants to non-profit community organisations towards capital projects that are located in an area of Warwick District.

- 8.2 Historically there has been a fairly low volume of applications throughout each year which has meant that the budget for the scheme has usually been under spent with slippage being carried forward into the next financial year.
- 8.3 The scheme hasn't previously been widely publicised although details can be found on the Council's website and most Parish / Town Council's should be aware of the scheme.
- 8.4 However, interest in the scheme has increased in the last 12 months and there has also been an increase in the number of high value awards. (see appendix 2)
- 8.5 This leads to the question of whether we want to help fund a few large projects or fund more small to medium projects.
- 8.6 The key criteria revisions recommended are as follows:

Amendments to Existing Criteria

- The maximum amount has been decreased to £30,000, it now reads: "The amount requested must be within the range of a minimum of £1,000 up to a maximum of £30,000"
- The criteria that states grants can only be awarded once in a two year period has been extended to include that a grant can only be considered if the organisation has no outstanding projects that have previously received funding, it now reads: "Please note that grants will only be awarded once in a two year period, for example; if an organisation is successful with a grant application in 2013 they will not be able to apply again until 2015 after the 2 year anniversary of the previous award. Additionally, a grant can only be considered if the applying organisation has no outstanding projects that have previously received funding from the RUCIS scheme."