



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



## Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee


16 March 2023

Report of Councillor Annie Mason,  
Cabinet Member for People and Safer  
Communities

# SK Community Fund – Proposed Amendments March 2023

### Report Author

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### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is two-fold, to (a) consider proposed changes to the funding criteria of the SK Community Fund and (b) provide a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities to approve the changes, to allow the Fund to re-open to applications in April 2023.

### Recommendations

**To enable the SK Community Fund to re-open to applications in April 2023, it is recommended the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Suggest any enhancements to the changes proposed to the criteria of the SK Community Fund.**
- 2. Recommends the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities approves the agreed changes to the criteria of the SK Community Fund via a non-key decision.**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Healthy and strong communities  
Clean and sustainable environment

Which wards are impacted?

All

## 1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from the report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 A criteria and Award Panel are in place which provide a good governance structure to the scheme.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

## 2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 South Kesteven District Council is aware of the significant contribution voluntary, charity and faith communities make to the residents of South Kesteven. Accordingly, the Healthy and Strong Communities theme of the Corporate Plan (2020-2023) recognises the importance of working effectively with partners in the voluntary, private and public sectors for the benefit of communities.

- 2.2 Grant funding from South Kesteven plays an important role in the wider availability of funding, especially for the community and voluntary sector. Small grants help local projects and activities to take place with a range of benefits. Larger grants help support more sizable projects, such as capital works, and can directly influence other funders to achieve match or levered funding into South Kesteven

- 2.3 In support of such groups, the Council introduced the SK Community Fund in 2015 to offer grants to constituted community groups, charities and social enterprise organisations. This scheme has operated under three specific strands since that time:
- **Small Grants Fund:** Awards of up to £2,000 for eligible groups and projects, where 100% of required funding can be applied for. Fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for small community event applications
  - **Community Projects:** Capital funding only. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant
  - **Community Events:** Generally capital funding. Fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for community events. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant
- 2.4 Since the introduction of the SK Community Fund, grants totalling £703,688 have been awarded for projects or events within South Kesteven. A report was presented on 28 April 2022 to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommending changes to determine access to the small grants scheme and a revised eligibility criterion, which was subsequently adopted by Cabinet on 31 May 2022.
- 2.5 Funding through the SK Community Fund is often used to support or act as match funding for larger funding bids made by the voluntary and community sector to external funders. The ability to use the SK Community Fund for this purpose therefore helps lever in additional funding to benefit the communities. For example, if a project costs £20,000, the maximum award from the SK Community Fund is £5,000. To deliver the project, further applications to other external funders would need to be made by the community group carrying out the project. Using this example, an additional £15,000 of external funding would be brought into the District which therefore impacts positively on the economy of South Kesteven.
- 2.6 The current criteria of the SK Community Fund allows for one-off grants for projects and events. Groups can make one application in each financial year. The criteria allows for three successful applications from any group. However, each application must be for a significantly different project or event to anything previously funded through any of the schemes in operation.
- 2.7 In the past two years, the Fund has seen a rise in applications from community groups and agencies delivering arts and cultural events, small-scale festivals, and participatory activity. These are often recurring arts, music, literary, heritage events and activities that, under the current criteria of the Fund, would only be eligible for funding once.
- 2.8 It is proposed the restrictions of one-off funding for projects or events and the maximum of three successful applications be removed from the criteria. This will

allow groups and agencies that deliver annual events to apply on a recurring basis. The restriction of one application per financial year will remain.

- 2.9 Since the introduction of the SK Community Fund, thirty-six community buildings projects costing a total of £1,351,707 have been supported with awards from the Fund totalling £248,250.00. These projects have all required additional supporting funding from other external funding streams.
- 2.10 A further proposed change to the criteria is the removal of the community buildings category. Currently groups can apply to refurbish community buildings. The rationale for this proposed change relates to the many alternative sources of funding available to the organisations operating village and community halls to carry out such work. The Council's SK Prosperity Fund (part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) creates an overlap of funding for such projects. External funders such as the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the FCC Community Action Fund (formerly WREN) along with the Asda Foundation have extensive opportunities for funding of community buildings projects.
- 2.11 The Fund's criteria currently require applicants to provide two written quotations for items of expenditure between £50 and £2,499 and three written quotations for items costing in excess of £2,500. To further simplify the process, particularly for smaller groups that do not have the benefit of a dedicated fund raiser or bid writer, it is proposed the need to provide three quotations be reduced to two, for all items of expenditure in excess of £50.
- 2.12 The Awarding Panel is made up of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Elected Members are currently informed of applications (successful and rejected) to the SK Community Fund following the meeting of the Awarding Panel and after the applicant has been informed.
- 2.13 To improve Ward Councillors' knowledge of intended applications to the SK Community Fund, it is proposed all applications to the Fund are made with the specific endorsement of a Ward Councillor. Groups will be required to inform the Ward Councillor(s) in the area in which their project/event is proposed to take place prior to making an application for funding and will need to provide evidence of the support of the Councillor as part of that application. Groups applying for funding for projects which would have district-wide reach, will be required to gain the support of the sitting Chairman of the Council.
- 2.14 A copy of the draft amended criteria can be found at **Appendix A**.

### **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1 Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the proposed changes to the criteria of the SK Community Fund as outlined above. For clarity, these proposed changes are:
- The removal of the restriction of one-off funding for projects and events

- The removal of the restriction that applicants are limited to three successful applications to the Fund
- The removal of the Community Buildings category from the eligibility
- The removal of the need to provide three quotations for items of expenditure exceeding £2,500 and replacing with a requirement to provide two quotations
- The inclusion of the need to obtain local Councillor endorsement for applications to the Fund

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Fund's criteria could remain unchanged. The proposed amendments, however, allow for improved opportunities and greater transparency.

#### **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1 The recommendations will improve opportunities offered by the SK Community Fund for the voluntary and community sector of South Kesteven.

#### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1 *SK Community Fund* – Report to Cabinet, published 31 May 2022, available online via:  
<http://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s34372/SKCF%20Report%20to%20Cabinet%2031.5.2022.pdf>
- 6.2 Overview of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, available online via:  
<http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=15988>

#### **7. Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix A – Draft Criteria, Application Process and Conditions Document.