Member Questions on Grants Policy (Agenda item 8)

1.   Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

I really welcome this policy because it's important that the awarding of grant funding is scrupulously fair and transparent. I fully support the reasons for preparing this, ie maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.

What are the key benefits that you see being delivered that the previous policy/practice did not address? What areas of risk have been mitigated?

Answer : The biggest benefit that will be derived from this policy is that it will ensure that the council is operating within a good governance framework, being open and transparent around its decision making and carrying out appropriate due diligence before giving money to third parties. It will also provide a solid platform on which we can build any future grants processes and introduce effective monitoring so that the council can be sure that funding delivers the required outcomes.

The policy mitigates a number of risks but at a high level it mitigates the risk of the council incorrectly awarding and/or spending grant funding due to error, omission, fraud, or poor budgetary controls resulting in financial loss and reputation damage.

2.   Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

How is the impact of grant funding measured and what has been learned from previous practice that has informed this policy and any new practices associated with it?

Answer: For many grants there is limited data available which would enable the council to effectively assess the impact grant funding has had. This policy introduces clear guidance around effective monitoring and evaluation of all grant funding which means that moving forward we will be able to provide detailed reports on the outcomes and outputs that our funding delivers.

3.   Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

What support is there for applicants who may be new to bidding for funding and how accessible is the process generally in terms of plain English, accessibility of documents, alternative format provision, opportunities for face to face support, etc?

Answer: The toolkit which will sit alongside this policy will provide a suite of documents in an accessible and plain English format. Copies can be made available in alternative formats as required. The intention is to make the application process as simple and easy to follow as possible, however, when developing schemes officers will be required to give to consideration to additional support provision.

4.   Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

There are clear guidelines about who should be involved in the decision-making processes for assessing bids received. To what extent is effort made to ensure that those involved represent as diverse a range of people as possible (in terms of various protected characteristics)?

Answer: The final make up of the decision making panel will depend upon the type of grant funding available. Officers will be required to ensure that there is appropriate diversity.

5.   Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

To what extent does providing grants for particular community activities mask the need for more sustainable funding for some of those activities and, if repeat applications are sought (and this is noticed) for an activity, what actions might be taken to support/advise the bidders in seeking longer term funding?

Answer: The challenge of any one-off or short-term grant funding is that it is not always conducive to creating a long term sustainable product or service. Repeatedly awarding funding to the same groups can mask the issue of sustainability and this is something that the council should consider as part of its decision making process. The policy doesn't seek to address this issue, however there is a broader piece of work required in this area and we hope to bring this forward next year.