

In October 2018, the Council agreed to alter the Grant Aid process, in regards how the Grant Aid budget is agreed.

Prior to October 2018, the process for receiving Grant Aid applications was that applications were invited in October for return by the end of November; awards were then made in April of the following year.

Either the chair and vice-chair of the council and of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee or a small group of councillors would review individual grant aid applications received and then bring forward a proposal to the budget meeting of the Council in January, based upon the individual awards proposed.

In October 2018, the Council agreed a revision of this process in that an overall Grant Aid budget was agreed in advance of agreeing individual awards, at the January budget meeting. This aimed to achieve a more strategic view of Grant Aid, based on a proposal of what the council can afford to commit to this purpose, rather than being based on what those who apply request. By agreeing a maximum figure for all awards rather than an unrestricted budget, focus is achieved.

The rationale for the change was as follows:

- Other funders agree the pot of money they have available, prior to asking for applications for grant aid.
- The figure agreed for Grant Aid will be debated and decided at the Budget meeting, taking into account all other budget decisions at the same time, a more systematic approach.
- The council will not be rushed into making individual Grant Aid decisions in time for the January budget; they can be made in February which is less busy.
- Those applying for Grant Aid will know in advance the money being made available.

The proposal before the Council tonight, is to revert back to the original process of Grant Aid which seeks to agree individual awards of Grant Aid, prior to agreeing the Town Council's Budget.

The practical effect if agreed is:

- Grant Aid will have to be launched immediately, with a closing date of the end of November.
- Any draft budget considered prior to a meeting that proposes individual awards can only contain speculative figures.
- The Council will be at liberty to agree any amount of individual Grant Aid, without a maximum agreed sum.
- The Budget meeting in January will have to agree all individual awards, prior to considering the overall budget.
- Community Groups will have to absorb the time pressure of completing applications in advance of December.
- The Town Council office will have to absorb the time pressure of administering Grant Aid during the busy month of November, rather than in February.