

Summary of the draft new grants policy: Exeter Grants Programme

This document summarises the proposals for the council's future grant investment in the City to ensure we focus our resource on what matters most - working together on the key challenges faced by our city. The draft policy is the result of almost a year's work and follows an internal audit of system and process in relation to grant giving; and an independently facilitated listening exercise. The full draft policy can be found <https://exeter.gov.uk/communityandartsgrants/>

We are proposing a new model within a transparent and purposeful strategic framework aligned to the council's objectives and priorities. The framework will:

- Enable a balance of awarding grants with a model around commissioning through contracts for more strategic service requirements;
- Support a clear 'bottom up' approach to community development;
- Establish a grant funding approach that will maximise the value of the council's spending and ensure the sustainability of community groups; and
- Ensure that the Council and community decide on priorities together but will recognise the specific accountability of elected members.

1. Proposals for modernising the Council's approach to grant giving.

Establish a Strategic City Fund

Create the Exeter City Fund, where all grant funding is held in a single fund, against clear priorities. Priorities for 2019-2021 are:

- Address inequalities
- Improve health and wellbeing and get people active
- Support communities working together to address local needs
- Encourage volunteering
- Improve where we live

Use a digital approach

Use a digital approach alongside a simplified grants process and provide support to ensure that everybody has a fair chance, enabling a wider audience to engage.

Use a crowdfunding platform

Use a crowdfunding platform to simplify the grants process and make the money go further by attracting match funding and reach new audiences.

Build capacity for a sustainable community and voluntary sector

In addition to Community Building, commission support and capacity building in the city to support community groups to manage areas such as finance, governance, funding applications, using digital platforms, marketing and building support networks.

We intend to:

- Commission a City-wide Independent Information Service;
- Commission an Exeter Infrastructure Support Service;
- Continue to support communities through the Wellbeing Exeter Community Builders;
- Continue to support Exeter Culture and encourage community cultural and art activities that underpin community engagement and celebration.

Adopt a commissioning approach

Where funding allows, formal contractual agreements for priority service delivery areas can be agreed. Organisations can be commissioned by the council to deliver services in line with council priorities.

Separate out the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

These grants will be separated from the grants process, funding ring-fenced and converted to contractual agreements.

Improve communication

Improve accessibility and enable better communication and feedback through the creation of a strategic grant fund, with a digital emphasis.

Improve evaluation

Simple evaluation frameworks to be built in the beginning of a project, so that communities can easily evidence the impact of their work.

Strengthen asset transfer

We lease a range of land and properties to voluntary and community organisations, ranging from short-term licences to long leases and this process is known as 'Community Asset Transfer' (CAT).

2. How the grants system will be funded

The Exeter City Fund (ECF) will initially consist of:

- ECF Ward Grants of up to £300, funded by New Home Bonus Funding;
- ECF Large grants of up to £30,000, funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- ECF Small Grants of up to £3,000, funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- ECF Community Buildings grants, a 3 year grant towards the annual running costs of up to £5,000 per year, will be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy; and
- ECF Move More Community Chest grants of up to £300 will be funded by the Sport England Delivery pilot

All grants except the Ward Grants and the Move More grants will require a level of matched funding.

3. How decisions will be made

All grant applications will be on-line through the *Exeter City Fund* website which will link directly to the *CrowdfundExeter* website for grants requiring match/crowd funding.

A Grants Panel will be set up. The aim is that the panel represents the range of community networks in the city taking into account the need to include those that may be disadvantaged or who may not have the confidence to participate in community networks. The purpose of the panel will be to make recommendations on grant applications. ***Particular attention will be given during the consultation process on how such a panel might operate.***

An annual report will be provided to Council in October each year that will include:

- Impacts from previous year's grants programmes
- Recommended priorities for the forthcoming years programme.
- Proposed budgets for the forthcoming years programme.
- Membership of Grants Panel for the forthcoming year.

4. Draft proposed conditions for grant applications

All grant applications will:

- Be made on line through the Council's new Exeter City Fund website: the application process will be easy to access.
- Show that the project ties in with one or more of our priorities and how it meets the demands of development across the City
- Show that at least 75% of people benefiting from your project live in Exeter
- Show that there is community support for their project: this can be by asking local people to contribute volunteer hours to running the project or to contribute to a crowdfunding when there is a requirement for a grant to be joint or match funded.
- Be required to provide feedback about how the grant has helped by supplying proof of how fund monies have been spent in the form of invoices, photos and a simple project summary and impact template within 1 month of project completion.
- Acknowledge Exeter City Fund support in project publicity material by using the logo provided.
- Give Exeter City Fund the right to share information you have provided in public reports and publicity material.

All grant applications will need to confirm that they understand:

- Funds must only be spent as detailed in the project application.
- Funds cannot be allocated to individuals or private/for profit enterprises.
- Funds cannot be allocated retrospectively.
- Funds not spent must be returned to Exeter City Council.
- Repayment of the fund can be required at the sole discretion of Exeter City Fund if you supply false information or you do not spend funds within 12 months.
- Repeat funding will not be awarded unless there is a compelling business case proving transition to sustainability.

5. Consultation

These proposals have been formed from the extensive listening exercise of 2018. We now need to consult: we would like to know if there is a consensus for the strategic framework, the priorities and the creation of the Exeter City Fund from the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

A formal consultation on these proposals will take place between **20 March and 1 May** with a report going to the Council in July 2019. We will engage residents, community groups and associations as widely as possible through an on-line survey and themed focus groups.