

AN INCREASE IN THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF NEW HOMES BONUS MICRO GRANT THAT MAY BE APPLIED FOR FROM APRIL 2019

1 Purpose

To seek the Cabinet's approval to increase the maximum amount that town and parish councils and voluntary and community sector organisations can apply for under the New Homes Bonus Micro Grant Scheme from April 2019.

2 Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet approve an increase in the maximum New Homes Bonus micro grant award from £1,000 to £2,000 from 1 April 2019 as outlined in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2017 AVDC Cabinet approved the introduction of a micro grant scheme to run alongside the already established New Homes Bonus project grant scheme.
- 3.2 The decision to introduce the new micro grant element helped to mitigate the loss of the Aylesbury Vale Community Chest funding, and also increase access to the NHB initiative to all parishes, not just those larger parishes taking growth.
- 3.3 The micro grants are easily accessible and also encompass bids from the voluntary and community sector, where supported by the appropriate parish council.
- 3.4 Up to £1,000 per project is currently available for a variety of purposes such as village hall refurbishments and the purchase of new equipment.
- 3.5 The applications are assessed by the grants officer and the level of the awards is determined by a scoring system. The grants officer's funding recommendations are sent for ratification by the Cabinet Member responsible and a nominated AVALC representative on a monthly basis.
- 3.6 The budget for the micro grant scheme is met from the existing 20% NHB allocation set aside for town and parish councils - £80,000 per annum in 2017/18 and 2018/19. If the total NHB government allocation increases or diminishes, then the Microgrant Scheme should grow or diminish in proportion.

4. Current position

- 4.1 The list attached at Appendix A shows that sixty micro grants have been awarded to a diverse range of parishes and voluntary and community sector organisations for a variety of purposes since the start of the scheme's administration in September 2017.

- 4.2 The monitoring feedback received demonstrates that the funding is appreciated, especially by smaller parishes and voluntary organisations and provides benefit at a local level to local communities for a relatively low investment.
- 4.3 The number of applications received is comparable to those received by the Community Chest. In its ten year administration, the Community Chest did not award more than fifty micro grants in any given year.
- 4.4 The micro grants have been widely advertised to parish and town councils and the voluntary and community sector and have also been advertised in the AV Times on several occasions and will be again in the March issue.
- 4.5 The scheme is however undersubscribed and will be topped back up to £80,000 at the beginning of April for funding in 2019/20.

It is therefore proposed that:

- 4.6 The maximum amount applicants may apply for is increased from £1,000 to £2,000, given the availability of funds and the value of these smaller grants to the community.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 That Cabinet approve an increase in the maximum NHB micro grant award from £1,000 to £2,000 as outlined in point 4 of this report.

6. **Options considered**

- 6.1 Whether or not to increase the current maximum micro grant award of £1,000 to £2,000.
- 6.2. In consultation with Andrew Small, whether or not to top the micro grant budget back up to £80,000 in April 2019.

7. **Reasons for recommendations**

- 7.1 To help voluntary and community sector organisations, and smaller parishes who have been unable to benefit from the larger project grants, apply for a higher level of funding to provide a greater benefit towards smaller project costs.

8. **Resource implications**

There are no additional resource implications as a result of the recommendations within this report as the NHB micro grant budget allocation is met from the existing NHB grants budget.