



Grant Working Party 5 March 2013

Streamlining Rural Grants Decision Making

1. Summary and reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council are in the process of forming a single West Suffolk staff structure. To maximise the savings achievable both Councils are reviewing how they manage their business to ensure it is conducted as efficiently as possible.
- 1.2 In this context, at its 11 December 2012 meeting, the Working Party received a request from the Cabinet to consider how the decision making for the rural grants, the Rural Initiatives Grants Scheme (RIGS), might be streamlined. Background information on the level of awards made from RIGS funding has been made available to Working Party Members and Substitutes and they have been asked to provide comments.
- 1.3 Reflecting on the level of awards made from 2010/2011 to date and the current operation of the e-mail system, two of the Members responding to the request for comments have suggested extending the voting system to all applications for RIGS funding. The third response suggests that the work of the Working Party should be incorporated into the remit of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the following be approved:
 - (1) all applications for Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme funding are dealt with via the e-mail system, as detailed in Section 4 of Report D318; and
 - (2) the Grants Policy and the scheme of delegation be amended to reflect the use of the e-mail system for grants up to the maximum of £10,000.

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3. Corporate priorities

- 3.1 The recommendations meet the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:
- (a) Corporate priorities 1 and 2: *'Working together for strong, healthy and diverse communities,, and 'Working together for prosperous and environmentally-responsible communities'; and*
 - (b) Vision 2025: *St Edmundsbury will be a place which: has one of the healthiest resident populations in the country (V:He1); where the wide range of accessible leisure and cultural facilities on offer provides opportunities for all sectors of the community (V:L2); and where all residents live within walking distance of recreational and countryside activities (V:L4).*

4. Key issues

- 4.1 The request made of the Grant Working Party by Cabinet was *'To look at ways of further streamlining the current process of handling applications for rural grants, perhaps making more use of the electronic system, and reviewing delegations'*. The Working Party noted that a report would be brought to its next meeting, when a report back to Cabinet would be made with suggestions to implement in 2013/2014, and that in the meantime Members' views would be sought on how a new streamlined system might work.
- 4.2 Under the current Grants Policy, grant applications up to £5,000 are circulated via e-mail and provided a majority of Members, including Substitutes where appropriate, agree the grant is then approved by officers under delegated authority. This allows decisions to be made within 14 days of receiving a fully completed application. Where there is not a majority the application is then considered at the next meeting of the Grant Working Party. On the only occasion when this has happened, in the case of an application from Little Thurlow for funding for a local history book, the decision not to make an award was confirmed at the meeting of the Working Party.
- 4.3 All applications for sums between £5,001 and £10,000 are currently considered by the Grant Working Party at its next meeting. If received shortly after the previous meeting there can be a delay of almost 3 months before it goes to the Working Party, and a further 1-2 months for the recommendations from the Working Party to be considered/confirmed by the Cabinet.
- 4.4 The spreadsheets, attached as Appendices A and B, were circulated to Members to provide:
- (i) an overview of level of awards made over whole the life of the RIGS funding; and
 - (ii) from the 2010/2011 financial year to date.
- 4.5 The figures at Appendix B show that since April 2010, there have been seven applications in the £5,001 to £10,000 range requiring Working Party consideration while the great majority of applications, 31, have been dealt with via the e-mail system.

- 4.6 Three members of the Working Party responded to the request for comments. Two suggested that it would be appropriate to consider all RIGS applications via the e-mail system. As well as speeding up Grant Working Party consideration of the applications it also removes the need for a recommendation to go to Cabinet. The third suggestion was that the Grant Working Party be dissolved and the remit of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee be extended to incorporate the work. The suggestion is that the work transfers on the basis of the current decision-making process.

Extending the e-mail voting system

- 4.7 If the scheme is extended, it is recognised that Officers must continue to ensure a sufficient level of detail is provided to enable members of the Working Party to make an informed choice from the information available in the e-mail. Members will be aware that they can still raise queries/request further information when an application is considered via the e-mail system, and that Officers will go back to applicants to get answers to queries raised and circulate the information to all involved in considering the application. This ability to follow-up queries promptly and re-circulate Working Party members with the outcome quickly is preferable to an application having to be deferred for consideration at a future meeting which is likely to be three months away.
- 4.8 It would also help manage the situation which can arise now when an applicant rushes to put their application in in order to meet Working Party deadlines when the application might benefit from a little more detail.
- 4.9 If Members were unable to reach a consensus, then the option of referring the application to the next Grant Working Party could be retained if desired.

For information, officers can confirm that:

- (i) Cabinet has never overturned or amended a RIGS grant recommendation it has received from the Working Party;
 - (ii) to date there have not been any occasions when the e-mail voting system has not produced a consensus; and
 - (iii) a number of Officers across the Council already have delegated authority to authorise expenditure of £10,000 or more so this approach does not present any problems in terms of financial delegations.
- 4.10 If the Working Party moves to considering all applications by e-mail, Members may wish to consider incorporating into the e-mail system a mechanism for suggesting a lower award than that recommended by the Officers. Officers can work up some basic rules to facilitate this if required. It is suggested this should only apply to applications from £5,001 to £10,000 which are currently considered by the Working Party.

Transferring the function to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

- 4.11 This suggestion reduces the number of Working Party meetings by one and transfers the function to a Committee which is already concerned with budgeting and the efficient use of the Council's finances.

4.12 This suggestion does not of itself reduce the volume of business to be considered as the suggestion is to transfer the work on the basis of the current decision-making processes. The advantages to applicants of more speedy decision-making would not be achieved, although Members of the Working Party could consider a transfer and recommend an extension of the e-mail system of decision making.

4.13 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee currently meets five times a year and Members of the Working Party will want to consider whether there is the capacity to incorporate all the work of the Grant Working Party, i.e. RIGS applications, the annual round of core funding applications and review and update of the Council's Grants Policy, in addition to what is already a full work programme, particularly in the Autumn when the Budget is being prepared.

5. Other options considered

5.1 The options outlined at 4.6 to 4.11 have been identified by the Councillors responding to the invitation to provide comments.

5.2 Other options, such as raising the limit for e-mail applications to some amount less than £10,000, could be discussed by the Working Party. However a blanket system of e-mail decision-making for all RIGS grants is the most efficient to administer and offers the greatest opportunity to streamline decision making whilst still providing a focus on the grant-giving process.

5.3 To make no change to the current system is also an option but would not be in the spirit of the original request from the Cabinet.

6. Community impact

6.1 **Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

6.1.1 There is no adverse impact and a positive potential for schemes which help address crime and disorder to get off the ground more quickly if there is e-mail voting.

6.2 **Diversity and equality impact** *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

6.2.1 No adverse impact and the capacity for a positive impact as outlined at 6.1.1

6.3 **Sustainability impact** *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

6.3.1 Any reduction in the need to call Councillors together for an in-person meeting will help reduce the carbon footprint of the Council.

6.4 **Other impact** *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

6.4.1 None

7. Consultation *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

7.1 Members of the Grant Working Party and Substitutes.

8. Financial and resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 There are opportunity savings to be made in terms of Officer time plus modest direct savings from reduced travel costs for Councillors if fewer meetings of the Grant Working Party are required.

9. Risk/opportunity assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	High/Medium/Low		High/Medium/Low
Extending e-mail voting to all RIGS applications That councillors do not feel sufficient information is provided to make an informed choice	Medium	Officers ensure full details are available before circulating any applications and take any queries about the applicant promptly and share new information with Working Party Members (and where appropriate substitutes).	Low
Cabinet are unaware of the awards being made	Medium	Details of awards to continue to be included in the Leader's Portfolio Holder Report to Council.	Low
Transferring Grant WP functions to Performance and Audit That there is insufficient time to consider grant applications in addition to the existing workload	High	An additional meeting could be scheduled to deal with the core funding applications and e-mail voting could also be extended	Medium
Loss of specific focus on grant giving	High	Members of P&A to be provided with an induction into the grant giving process and their role	Medium

10. Legal and policy implications

10.1 The Grants Policy would need to be amended in the light of any decision made by Cabinet in response to a recommendation from the Working Party, and delegations updated.

11. Wards affected

11.1 All Rural Wards.

12. Background papers

12.1 The St Edmundsbury Borough Council Grants Policy.

13. Documents attached

13.1 Appendix A – spreadsheet of all applications made under the RIGS scheme.

13.2 Appendix B – activity from 2010/2011 to date.

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APPENDIX A

Grant amount awarded:	Grant applicant	Date awarded
0-5000		
£217.00	Hawstead Parish Council	17/04/2008
£320.00	Brockley Carpet Bowls Club	15/08/2012
£400.00	Bardwell Baby and Toddler Group	09/11/2012
£475.00	Thurlow Youth Football Club	26/06/2008
£500.00	Bradfield St George Village Hall Committee	21/06/2006
£500.00	Bradfield St Clare Parish Council	25/04/2007
£500.00	Horringer Baby and Toddler Group	24/07/2009
£500.00	Troston Parish Council	28/08/2009
£500.00	Coney Weston Parish Council	Jun-06
£525.00	Whepstead Community Association	Jun-07
£580.00	Troston Village Hall Management Committee	15/10/2012
£632.00	Great Bradley Village Hall	02/08/2005
£675.00	Stanton Football Club	07/12/2010
£750.00	Barningham Village Hall	21/06/2010
£800.00	Ousden Village Hall and Playing Field Committee	10/07/2007
£800.00	Clare Parish Council	11/03/2008
£850.00	Horringer Community Council	26/10/2007
£945.00	Chedburgh Parish Council	16/05/2006
£1,000.00	Whepstead Parish Council	22/06/2007
£1,000.00	Pakenham Parish Council	28/04/2010
£1,000.00	Stradishall Parish Council	17/02/2011
£1,000.00	Horringer Hedgehogs	31/08/2012
£1,000.00	Stanton Football Club	02/08/2005
£1,100.00	Friends of Lidgate Churchyard	27/03/2012
£1,100.00	Great Saxham Parochial Church Council	20/04/2012
£1,170.00	Cavendish Wanderers Cricket Club	Jun-07
£1,171.80	Rougham Sports Hall Management Committee	08/03/2011
£1,176.77	Great Barton Bowls Club	31/08/2012
£1,208.00	Bardwell Parish Council	30/04/2009
£1,241.00	Clare Duplicate Bridge Club	18/03/2009
£1,295.00	Bradfield St George Village Hall	Apr-05
£1,380.00	Brockley Cricket Club	24/04/2008
£1,495.00	Hepworth Parish Council	13/01/2009
£1,500.00	Hundon Sports Association	04/01/2006
£1,500.00	Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council	18/06/2012
£1,500.00	Thurlow Sports Club	Dec-05
£1,585.00	Great Livermere Parish Council	28/01/2010
£1,750.00	Bardwell Parish Council	22/05/2009
£1,767.63	Lidgate Parish Council	07/05/2009
£1,921.00	Ickworth Park Children's Centre	Jun-06
£2,000.00	Cygnet's Childcare, Great Whelnetham	19/07/2005
£2,000.00	Stanton Parish Council	21/11/2006
£2,000.00	Hargrave Village Hall Management Committee	18/03/2008
£2,000.00	Troston Parish Council	21/07/2010
£2,100.00	Stanton Community Village Hall	Nov-05
£2,130.00	Bradfield St Clare Village Hall	05/10/2011
£2,160.00	Bardwell Parish Council	21/09/2010
£2,185.00	Gt Livermere Parish Council	21/11/2006
£2,214.00	Great Livermere Parish Council	07/10/2008
£2,250.00	Fornham All Saints Parish Council	12/08/2008
£2,300.00	Honington and Sapiston Parish Council	17/02/2011
£2,374.00	Bardwell Parish Council	25/10/2010
£2,500.00	Combined Halls of Clare	18/06/2012
£2,500.00	Kedington & District Branch of the Royal British Legion	Oct-06
£2,500.00	Stansfield Village Hall and Playing Field	Dec-06
£2,537.00	Bardwell Playing Field Association Management Committee	11/03/2008
£2,592.00	Honington and Sapiston Village Hall	19/12/2011

£2,712.00	Stanton Parish Council	10/07/2012
£2,834.00	Great Thurlow Parish Council	Oct-06
£2,887.50	Kedington Community Association	18/12/2007
£3,000.00	Culford, West Stow and Wordwell Parish Council	11/09/2007
£3,000.00	Saxhams Parish Council	21/01/2008
£3,000.00	Coney Weston Parish Council	10/06/2008
£3,000.00	Ousden Village Hall Management Committee	26/10/2009
£3,000.00	Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre	20/06/2011
£3,255.00	Rougham Parish Council / Mouse Lane Playing Field Association	17/01/2011
£3,275.00	Friends of Pakenham Windmill	18/03/2008
£3,333.00	Suffolk County Council - Rural Services Scheme	01/08/2006
£3,340.00	Ixworth Village Hall	Aug-05
£3,490.00	Stanton Parish Council	11/09/2007
£3,500.00	Barnham Parish Council	07/03/2006
£3,500.00	Withersfield Village Hall Management Committee	08/07/2008
£3,500.00	Fornham All Saints Parish Council	Mar-05
£3,500.00	Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council	Mar-05
£3,531.00	Stanton Community Village Hall Mgt Committee	07/09/2010
£3,577.00	Horringer Parish Council	25/10/2010
£3,700.00	Thurlow Sports Club	23/10/2007
£3,865.00	Kedington Community Centre	03/08/2005
£3,913.00	Hundon Village Hall & Playing Field Committee	Oct-06
£3,942.00	Cavendish Wanderers Cricket Club	Mar-06
£4,000.00	Hargrave Village Hall	21/11/2006
£4,000.00	Clare Management Committee	02/08/2005
£4,000.00	Little Teapots Pre-school, Chedburgh	Jun-09
£4,000.00	Great Barton Scout Group	07/12/2010
£4,220.00	Brockley Cricket Club	Mar-05
£4,500.00	St Leonards Church, Wixoe, Council	21/11/2006
£4,595.00	Cowlinge Village Hall Committee	06/03/2007
£4,658.00	Barrow Village Hall Management Committee	15/08/2008
£4,810.00	Great Thurlow Parish Council	08/06/2010
£5,000.00	Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council	07/03/2006
£5,000.00	Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council	02/08/2006
£5,000.00	Great Saxham Parochial Church Council	21/11/2006
£5,000.00	Great Barton Thanksgiving Fund	21/11/2006
£5,000.00	Hundon Parish Council	06/03/2007
£5,000.00	Fakenham Magna Parish Council	24/04/2007
£5,000.00	Stanton Woodland and Wildlife Action Group	15/05/2007
£5,000.00	Little Ouse Headwaters Project	31/08/2007
£5,000.00	Ketton Early Birds Playgroup	15/11/2007
£5,000.00	Troston Parish Council	24/11/2008
£5,000.00	Horringer Parish Council	29/01/2009
£5,000.00	Barnham Village Hall	15/05/2009
£5,000.00	Bardwell Parish Council	11/01/2010
£5,000.00	Kedington Community Association	12/06/2012
£5,000.00	Great Livermere Village Hall	Mar-05
£5,000.00	Kedington British Legion	Mar-05
£5,000.00	Pakenham Village Hall and Playing Field Ass	Oct-06
£5,000.00	Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council	Jun-09
£5,000.00	Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield Parish Council	Jun-09
£5,000.00	St Edmundsbury Sailing & Canoeing Assoc	Dec-09
£5,000.00	Fornham All Saints	09/09/2010
£5,000.00	1st Horringer Scout Group	08/12/2010
£5,000.00	Kedington Community Association	12/06/2012
5001-5500		
£5,200.00	Suffolk Hunt Pony Club	07/09/2010
5501-6000		
£6,000.00	Barnham Village Hall	Apr-05
£6,000.00	Victory Ground Tennis Club	Dec-07
£6,000.00	Cavendish Sports Club	Dec-09
6001-6500		
£6,140.00	Risby Village Hall Charity Trust	Mar-07

£6,500.00	Brockley Village Hall	06/09/2011
6501-7000		
£6,870.00	Horringer cum Ickworth Parish Council	Sep-07
£7,000.00	Great Bradley parish Council	Mar-09
7001-7500		
£7,500.00	Kedington Woodland, Mill Lane	06/10/2005
£7,500.00	Rougham Acorns and Woodlands Limited	Jun-08
£7,500.00	Kedington Parish Council	Dec-09
£7,500.00	Chedburgh Parish Council	09/06/2010
£7,500.00	Stansfield Village Hall	08/09/2010
£7,500.00	Suffolk Wildlife Trust	07/12/2011
7501-8000		
£8,000.00	Brockley Community Council	Mar-07
£8,000.00	Stanton Bowls Club	Mar-09
£8,000.00	Hundon Village Hall	Jun-09
£8,000.00	Whelmetham Community Centre Management Committee	10/06/2010
£8,000.00	Fornham All Saints Parish Council	13/06/2012
8001-8500		
£8,400.00	West Anglian Suffolk and Haverhill (WASH) Sailability	Dec-08
£8,500.00	Kedington Parish Council	Jun-06
8501-9000		
£9,000.00	Culford Village Hall Committee	Oct-06
9001-9500		
£9,500.00	Risby Village Hall Charity Trust	Mar-09
9501-10000		
£10,000.00	Barrow Village Hall	May-04
£10,000.00	Brockley Village Hall	21/03/2005
£10,000.00	Hawstead Village Hall	Nov-07
£10,000.00	Stoke by Clare Playground Committee	Sep-07
£10,000.00	Great Barton Parish Council	Dec-07
£10,000.00	Great Barton Pathway	Jun-08
£10,000.00	Barrow cum Denham Parish Council	Sep-08
£10,000.00	Thurlow, Bradley and District Pre-school	Sep-08
£10,000.00	Great Barton Thanksgiving Fund	Nov-08
£10,000.00	Wickhambrook Parish Council	06/12/2011
10,000 +		
£15,000.00	Stanton Parish Council	Mar-09
£20,000.00	Lidgate Village Hall Management Committee	Oct-06
£20,000.00	Whepstead Community Centre	21/03/2005
£25,000.00	Pakenham Water Mill	08/01/2004
£25,000.00	Hawstead Village Hall	08/01/2004

Statistics:

0-5000	112
5001-5500	1
5501-6000	3
6001-6500	2
6501-7000	2
7001-7500	6
7501-8000	5
8001-8500	2
8501-9000	1
9001-9500	1
9501-10000	10
10,000 +	5

APPENDIX B

Grant amount awarded:	Grant applicant	Date awarded
0-5000		
£320.00	Brockley Carpet Bowls Club	15/08/2012
£400.00	Bardwell Baby and Toddler Group	09/11/2012
£632.00	Great Bradley Village Hall	02/08/2005
£675.00	Stanton Football Club	07/12/2010
£750.00	Barningham Village Hall	21/06/2010
£1,000.00	Pakenham Parish Council	28/04/2010
£1,000.00	Stradishall Parish Council	17/02/2011
£1,000.00	Horringer Hedgehogs	31/08/2012
£1,100.00	Friends of Lidgate Churchyard	27/03/2012
£1,100.00	Great Saxham Parochial Church Council	20/04/2012
£1,171.80	Rougham Sports Hall Management Committee	08/03/2011
£1,176.77	Great Barton Bowls Club	31/08/2012
£1,500.00	Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council	18/06/2012
£2,000.00	Troston Parish Council	21/07/2010
£2,130.00	Bradfield St Clare Village Hall	05/10/2011
£2,160.00	Bardwell Parish Council	21/09/2010
£2,300.00	Honington and Sapiston Parish Council	17/02/2011
£2,374.00	Bardwell Parish Council	25/10/2010
£2,500.00	Combined Halls of Clare	18/06/2012
£2,592.00	Honington and Sapiston Village Hall	19/12/2011
£2,712.00	Stanton Parish Council	10/07/2012
£3,000.00	Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre	20/06/2011
£3,255.00	Rougham Parish Council / Mouse Lane Playing Field Association	17/01/2011
£3,531.00	Stanton Community Village Hall Mgt Committee	07/09/2010
£3,577.00	Horringer Parish Council	25/10/2010
£4,000.00	Great Barton Scout Group	07/12/2010
£4,810.00	Great Thurlow Parish Council	08/06/2010
£5,000.00	Kedington Community Association	12/06/2012
£5,000.00	Fornham All Saints	09/09/2010
£5,000.00	1st Horringer Scout Group	08/12/2010
£5,000.00	Kedington Community Association	12/06/2012
5001-5500		
£5,200.00	Suffolk Hunt Pony Club	07/09/2010
5501-6000		
6001-6500		
£6,500.00	Brockley Village Hall	06/09/2011
6501-7000		
7001-7500		
£7,500.00	Chedburgh Parish Council	09/06/2010
£7,500.00	Stansfield Village Hall	08/09/2010
£7,500.00	Suffolk Wildlife Trust	07/12/2011
7501-8000		
£8,000.00	Whelnetham Community Centre Management Committee	10/06/2010
£8,000.00	Fornham All Saints Parish Council	13/06/2012
8001-8500		
8501-9000		
9001-9500		
9501-10000		
£10,000.00	Wickhambrook Parish Council	06/12/2011

Statistics from 2010-11 to current only:

0-5000	31
5001-5500	1
5501-6000	0
6001-6500	1
6501-7000	0
7001-7500	3
7501-8000	2
8001-8500	0
8501-9000	0
9001-9500	0
9501-10000	1