



Additional Supplement for:

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 5 JULY, 2023

Agenda No Item

9. **Grant Scheme Overview** (Pages 3 - 18)

Purpose:

The report to the Executive from 8 March 2023 titled Review of Communities Grant Scheme, is attached for Member's attention relating to Agenda Item 9 – Grant Scheme Overview .

10. **CCTV Update** (Pages 19 - 26)


Purpose:

To provide a progress update on upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney (with Chipping Norton under consideration) and associated monitoring control room arrangements.

Recommendation:

Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- a) *Endorse the continued need for public open space CCTV;*
- b) *Note the progress towards a shared monitoring control room;*
- c) *Note the camera optimisation review and provide a view on extending public open space CCTV to cover Chipping Norton;*
- d) *Provide a view on the options for mitigating tree growth;*
- e) *Note the proposed future operating model.*

 <p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	
Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEMES
Wards Affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director - Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report proposes a new approach to community grant funding, better aligned to the outcomes intended from the Council Plan and fostering greater community engagement and involvement.
Annexes	Annex A – Community revenue grant recipients 2022-23 Annex B – Spacehive proposal Annex C – Equality Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	<p><i>That the Executive is recommended to resolve to:</i></p> <p><i>a) Introduce a new approach to revenue grant funding from 2024/25, aligned to four lots and supported by three year service level agreements.</i></p> <p><i>b) Agree the four lots as:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities</i> <i>2. Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery</i> <i>3. Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision</i> <i>4. Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own</i> <p><i>c) Request officers to consider potential outline allocations within each</i></p>

	<p><i>of the lots and report back on proposals.</i></p> <p><i>d) Agree that the community revenue grant funding awarded in 2022-23 be awarded again in 2023-24 to the same recipients and at the same level to allow a managed transition.</i></p> <p><i>e) Approve civic crowdfunding as an alternative to community facilities grants and make up to £120,000 available to pledge against proposed projects.</i></p> <p><i>f) Agree the proposed procurement route to appoint Spacehive as the Council's civic crowdfunding platform provider on a three year contract.</i></p> <p><i>g) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment, and Climate Change to agree the type of projects to be supported and the pledge criteria for crowdfunding.</i></p> <p><i>h) Approve the allocation of £25,000 to increase the Council's grants capability, as described in the report.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putting Residents First 2. Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All 3. Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife 4. Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency 5. Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the 'Your Voice Counts' consultation on the Local Plan and Council Plan • Learning from other councils • Current community revenue grant recipients • Executive Members • Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive

I. BACKGROUND and SCOPE OF REVIEW

- I.1 West Oxfordshire District Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector provide a range of valued services and facilities to local communities in West Oxfordshire and wish to support this through grant funding schemes.

- 1.2 Executive asked for a review of the current arrangements with a view to adopting a new approach, better aligned to the strategic priorities and outcomes intended from the new Council Plan adopted in January 2023 and fostering greater community engagement and involvement. As stated in the Plan, this will target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.
- 1.3 The Council currently operates three different types of community grants:
- a. **Community Revenue Grants** usually between £1,000 and £10,000 are available to fund relevant organisations that contribute to the Council’s priorities. Higher awards are possible but only where the activity offers significant benefits across an extensive part of the District, or in cases where the activity has a strong connection with achieving the Council’s ambitions for the District through partnership working. These are available to constituted voluntary organisations, charities and community interest companies and currently operate on an annual application process.
 - b. **Community Facilities Grants** of up to a maximum £50,000 (match funding is a requirement) to provide financial support for community led capital projects for the improvement or enhancement of existing community facilities and the procurement of new facilities or equipment.
 - c. **Community Activity Grants** to a maximum of £500 to support grassroots community groups wishing to undertake community based activity that contributes to the health and wellbeing of residents and quality of community life.
- 1.4 The budget for community activity grants is £11,000 per year. In the current year, it is supporting not for profit community groups to deliver activities and services that meet the needs of residents most affected by the cost of living crisis. It is therefore outside the scope of this review.
- 1.5 The annual budget and historical spend for the community revenue and community facilities grants is summarised in the table below:

	Annual budget	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Community Revenue Grants	£188,000	£174,346	£188,260	£179,368	£187,851
Community Facilities Grants	£200,000	£146,989	£176,844	£146,035	£91,551*

* Projected spend for current financial year

- 1.6 In addition, an annual revenue budget of £80,000 is used to commission housing advice, welfare and debt advice services. The current provider is Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire and the service is due to be re-commissioned for April 2024.
- 1.7 The £200,000 community facilities grant is a capital budget (but funded from revenue contributions). It is focused on improving and enhancing existing community facilities and for buying new facilities or equipment such as village halls, play areas and sports club equipment. Whilst of community benefit, the capital only nature of the scheme could be perceived as restrictive if we consider community ‘assets’ in its broadest sense. A community asset is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life.

- 1.8 A review of the community revenue grants last took place in 2018, which resulted in a more open application process and improved management of those revenue grants awarded. It also forged a stronger link between Council priorities and the activities funded.
- 1.9 Historical practice has been to award revenue grants for a period of one year. Many funding arrangements, however, are in fact long-standing. This annual cycle can result in a 'hand to mouth' approach for funding recipients and presents a significant administrative burden to the Council.
- 1.10 The current recipients of community revenue grants are summarised at Annex A.

2. GRANTS versus COMMISSIONING

- 2.1 A feature of this grants review has been to consider the activity and associated outcomes currently funded and assess whether it is best characterised as grant funded work, or if it would more appropriately be described as activity that should be defined and procured through commissioning.
- 2.2 The use of grants is most appropriate for funding that supports development to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector, to encourage innovation and/or to develop and support strategic partnerships between voluntary and community organisations and public bodies. Funding projects or initiatives, which are distinct from, but complement public services and which are in broad alignment with Council priorities and desired outcomes aligns well with grant awards.
- 2.3 HM Treasury guidance states, "A grant maker is not contracting for a service that forms part of its own business. It is offering financial support in an area of work, designed and proposed by the third sector organisation, which it wishes to sponsor. The work to be carried out by the third sector organisation would be deemed to add value to a public body's overall aims or objectives."
- 2.4 A commissioning approach is more applicable where there are multiple potential providers and the Council seeks to support a core service or activity to meet an identified need and where it wishes to specify the design and intended outcomes of the service. In this instance, the approach set out in the Council's commissioning framework should be followed, contract rules observed and the management process should be proportionate to the planned scale of expenditure.
- 2.5 The main determinant of the financial relationship is the nature of the intended outcomes and this is summarised as:

<p>Grant funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic development to build capacity in the VCS • To encourage innovation by the VCS and/or to develop and support key strategic partnerships between VCS organisations and statutory agencies • Services which are distinct from but complement public services and which are in broad alignment with public sector strategic objectives e.g. to promote community well-being 	<p>Commissioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the public sector is 'shopping' for a supplier to deliver a core service to meet an identified need • Where the public sector wish to specify closely the design and intended outcomes of the service • Where a decision has been taken to outsource a core service, which would otherwise need to be provided directly by the public sector to exercise statutory functions
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- 2.6** A range of supplementary factors can also be used to help inform the decision between grant funding or commissioning:
- a. The value of the agreement – the higher the value of the agreement, the more likely it is that a commissioning route is the best approach.
 - b. Which funding mechanism will achieve best value for money?
 - c. How competitive is the market? If there are only one or two potential providers a grant is more likely; if there are many then commissioning is likely to be more appropriate.
 - d. What level of control over the agreement and outcomes is appropriate - the higher the level of control needed, the more likely a commissioning route is most applicable.
 - e. How specific will the measurement of outcomes and outputs need to be? The more specific, the more likely a commissioning route is most applicable.
- 2.7** In most cases, grant funding is the appropriate future approach. However, two exceptions exist:
- 2.7.1** In the case of our residents having access to a high quality welfare advice and support service, currently provided by Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, we are recommending a commissioning approach. This is based on the annual value of award (currently £62,800) and the level of control over the agreement and its outcomes.
- 2.7.2** Recognising the impact of firstly the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently the cost of living crisis have had on demand for advice services, the Executive wish to increase the level of support to £70,000 per annum.
- 2.7.3** Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), the Council has a statutory obligation to make sure all decisions have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - now named the Cotswold National Landscape. In parallel with all other local authorities within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) the Council will pay its annual subscription to CNL to enable its functioning as the organisation with responsibility for conserving and enhancing this protected landscape within West Oxfordshire, and across the landscape as a whole, thereby fulfilling the Council's statutory obligation.

2.7.4 As the work of Cotswolds National Landscape supports a core service of the Council and helps it meet its statutory obligations, grant funding is not the appropriate approach. Instead, as the Council is contracting for a service that forms part of its own business, a commissioning approach will be adopted and an amount of £11,000 be moved to an appropriate revenue budget cost centre.

3. A NEW APPROACH ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

3.1 A conventional approach to awarding grant funding can be perceived as being:

- Transactional – a process to just fund projects, initiatives services to the same, long standing organisations and this can prevent wider collaboration in the voluntary and community sector and co-ownership in communities.
- Centred on institutions rather than communities - with most of the ‘power’ centred on appointing organisations, even where co-production potential is strong.
- Focused on metrics instead of outcomes – where the need for financial efficiency and value drives focus on measured inputs and outputs.
- Services instead of creative solutions - predefining a solution for a ‘need’ where a cross-cutting approach for complex issues may work better.

3.2 Encouraging greater collaboration seeks to combat this and provide an ongoing way to empower communities and make creative use of resources around desired outcomes. It has core features such as approaches based on relationships and trust; and strong collaboration between organisations, professionals and people who access the service. This could be provider collaboration, with two or more organisations with a shared purpose coming together to deliver a common outcome; or a range of commissioners coming together e.g. local authority and health.

3.3 The proposed future approach to Council grant funding seeks to encourage innovation, create conversations with the Council to co-produce and co-design services and solutions and encourage potential providers to come together and submit consortia proposals.

3.4 A market place event is proposed to foster this intent. This would be widely publicised through our own voluntary and community sector networks and through Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action.

4. ACHIEVING OUTCOMES ALIGNED TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

4.1 Integral to this new approach are a number of suggested outcomes, or ‘lots’, all of which have been informed by the Council Plan adopted in January 2023. The Plan itself was shaped by the extensive ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation and therefore reflects what’s most important to our residents.

4.2 The proposed lots are shown below and each would be allocated a lead officer:

Lot 1 – Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities.

Lot 2 – Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery.

Lot 3 - Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision.

Lot 4 – Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own.

- 4.3 Whilst the previous approach to community revenue grants was broadly aligned to Council priorities, it could be argued that it was as much about meeting grant recipient needs as it was about helping the Council deliver on its own objectives. As noted in 3.4, the new Council Plan has been shaped by community needs, so the message to potential grant recipients will be ‘these are the outcomes we’re looking to achieve for our community, how can you help us deliver these outcomes?’
- 4.4 It is notable that these lots focus on environment; climate and ecology; and community resilience and wellbeing. The Council Plan’s focus on supporting a vibrant local economy, which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs, exciting careers and entrepreneurship, is not being overlooked.
- 4.5 This review has considered the other funding streams available to help deliver the Council’s strategic priorities and a vibrant local economy is the main focus of the £1 million UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the £716,216 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The former spread over 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25; and the latter over 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- 4.6 The Executive considered the intended focus of UKSPF in July 2022, with the main focus described as work that supports rural services to ensure people have access to what they need, and town centres and markets to help ensure their viability and the towns’ roles as vibrant service centres for residents and visitors. To see the Council’s investment plan summary:
<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/v5kbqk5f/wodc-investment-plan-summary-feb-2023-v2.pdf>
- 4.7 Similarly, Executive considered REPF in November 2022, with its primary focus being helping small businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of benefit to the local economy; and providing new and improved community infrastructure. The Council’s investment plan for REPF has been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and we are awaiting its approval.
- 4.8 The complementary nature of UKSPF and REPF to the Council’s own grant funding allows a holistic approach to be adopted and gain optimum leverage from the range of funding available.

5. ELIGIBILITY AND DECISION MAKING FOR GRANT FUNDING

- 5.1** It is proposed that applications aligned to delivering our desired outcomes in the four lots be accepted from:
- a. Constituted voluntary and community groups
 - b. Registered and excepted charities
 - c. Community Interest Companies (CICs)
 - d. Independent statutory bodies in appropriate circumstances
- 5.2** Commercial organisations and exempt charities would not be eligible to apply for funding and it will not be open to town and parish councils, other statutory bodies, organisations providing a statutory service on behalf of a statutory body, education providers or unincorporated groups and associations. More detailed information for applicants will be developed in readiness for opening the new approach in early autumn 2023.
- 5.3** It is proposed a grants panel appraises applications received, after each application has been screened for eligibility based on the qualifying criteria which will be detailed in the information for applicants.
- 5.4** The grants panel will consist of the lead officer assigned to each lot and the Executive Members with responsibility for environment, climate change and ecology, communities, and social welfare.
- 5.5** Eligible applications will be evaluated against criteria relating to:
- a. Evidence of financial need by the applicant body
 - b. Strategic fit and alignment to the relevant lot's outcome
 - c. Extent of impact, innovation and collaborative working
 - d. Fit with any existing provision to avoid duplication or displacement of activity
 - e. An assessment of risks associated with the proposed activity
 - f. Proposed monitoring and evaluation
- 5.6** After considering these factors the grants panels(s) will make recommendations as to the organisations to be funded. In line with the approach described at 3.3, the lead officers will liaise with those organisations to co-design and finesse the proposed services and solutions ensuring optimum fit with the lots' outcomes.
- 5.7** Final recommendations will be presented to the Executive's December 2023 meeting where the final allocations will be approved. The three year service level agreements will then be executed, ready for 1st April 2024 implementation.

6. AN ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING

- 6.1** An alternative to the Council's community facilities grant funding, particularly when supporting one off projects or initiatives, is civic crowdfunding. Investing in a civic crowdfunding platform could lever better outcomes than the current community facilities grants, whilst at the same time improving transparency and engaging with our communities by investing more in the projects and initiatives that matter most to them.

- 6.2 It provides a new and accessible way that our residents can be at the heart of civic change and this aligns directly with the key aims of this listening Council, which has a drive to be aspirational, innovative and bold; and sits well with our priorities of 'Putting Residents First' and 'Working Together for West Oxfordshire'.
- 6.3 Crowdfunding itself isn't something new, so much as a new term for something that is massively enabled through 'new' internet platforms. Many of our civic buildings were originally financed through public subscriptions and donations such as 'buy a brick', and more recently community share offers and donations have been used to support community shops in particular.
- 6.4 The term 'civic crowdfunding' refers to a subcategory of crowdfunding through which citizens, often in collaboration with government, propose, fund and deliver projects that aim to provide a community service or deliver public value through a local area improvement project.
- 6.5 Typically, project ideas are encouraged and sourced from community promoters and placed on a website, where potential funders are able to search and make financial contributions to projects that resonate with their areas of interest or values. These 'pledges' are generally only released when the target is reached and this conditionality is a key benefit of this approach, as it removes the risk that donations may be given, but not used. Anecdotally, successful community projects which have used a civic crowdfunding approach report that private funding is easier to elicit when greater confidence that a project will take place can be given.
- 6.6 The current approach for community facilities grants requires match funding, but this usually comes from other organisations or agencies, such as Sport England. A civic crowdfunding approach would not preclude this from happening, but does have the benefit of allowing individuals to pledge support too.
- 6.7 This approach levers investment, but also promotes community involvement, allowing people to take an active role in the physical and social improvement of neighbourhoods. The Council could support projects that fit its criteria through pledges, in place of our community facilities grants, which are restricted to capital projects only. This means that many more community projects seeking the Council's support would have to access the platform and would be automatically exposed to support from other backers.
- 6.8 So long as projects are presented legitimately, and are civic in nature, they can be submitted to the platform and assessed - this means the platform provides an opportunity for projects which the Council may choose not to support directly to access funding from other quarters.
- 6.9 Examples of the type of projects the Council would be willing to pledge support for and the outcomes the Council is looking for from its investment are suggested below. Equally, there will be a need to agree the maximum pledge the Council will make towards any one project and the maximum percentage of the project's target the Council is willing to pledge. It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader and relevant Executive Members, to agree the final criteria in line with the Council's priorities and the emerging Action Plans to deliver them.

Support projects that:

- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our local communities
- Directly address climate change
- Enhance lives through events and activities
- Support young people's ideas and ambitions
- Help to tackle the barriers and challenges many of us experience in life, such as poverty, ill health, distance from services, social isolation/loneliness
- Cultivate food equity, building a fair food system for everyone
- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment
- Invest in and maintain the facilities we rely on for these activities to take place

Delivering outcomes of:

- Community led change
- Improved health and food equity
- Well connected and resilient communities
- Improved mental and physical wellbeing across all age groups and backgrounds
- Improved essential local infrastructure that facilitates rural living
- Improved environmental outcomes, such as carbon reduction, improved biodiversity or green infrastructure

6.10 While there a number of crowdfunding platforms, the majority of these are targeted on commercial investment opportunities. A number of these do enable civic projects, but are not tailored to this process. 'Spacehive' is the only dedicated civic crowdfunding platform provider on Government's G Cloud procurement framework, which enables a direct call-off by the Council.

6.11 Spacehive's award winning platform provides a number of distinctive features which add value to the process:

- a. The platform of choice for over 40 other local authorities including recently appointed Cotswold, Malvern Hills and Wychavon districts and Worcestershire County Council.
- b. The only platform that allows partners to set their project criteria and be automatically matched with projects that fit those criteria, with the ability to assess projects before pledging funds to them.
- c. A verification process, operated independently by Locality, that checks the viability and feasibility of all projects on Spacehive thus de-risking projects for partners and supporters who pledge cash to them. They check for evidence on things like landowner consent, planning permissions, costs, project impact, risk and safety assessments, licences and agreements before a project can fund raise.
- d. Provides a boots-on-the-ground activation programme delivering face to face community engagement to generate awareness, facilitate workshops for would be project creators and provide ongoing project support via telephone, email and live chat.
- e. A comprehensive, annual social impact report is provided.

f. The Spacehive platform allows projects to add offline contributions to meet their funding target. This enables communities to blend classic fund raising activities with online donations - ensuring that this platform offers an additional fundraising opportunity, rather than displacement.

6.12 The annual contract fee is £30,000, which is based on population size. In addition, there is a small management fee of 5% + VAT per project. This fee is added to a project's crowdfunding target at the outset and covered by the crowd, but only if that target is met and the project implemented.

6.13 If approved, a three year contract, with an annual break clause, would commence in early 2023-24, allowing a lead up to launch in May and workshops for project promoters in June, ready for the first round of projects to take place between July and September. A second round would take place in early 2024.

6.14 The current community facilities grant budget is £200,000 per annum. As noted at 1.5 there is a consistent underspend, so the proposed use of this budget for 2023-24 is summarised below. This would see no actual reduction in the amount of Council money being invested in community projects:

	£
Spacehive platform fee	30,000
Pledges to projects	120,000
Additional funding to 3-year SLA grants	25,000
Grants capability	25,000
TOTAL	200,000

6.15 Taking the learning from Cotswold District Council and others, every £1 of Council money pledged levers in £3 from other backers. This force multiplier could therefore see the Council's £120,000 achieve up to £500,000 of total investment in community projects, each year. To see examples of the types of project funded and how it all works visit:

<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/cc>

7. HOW WILL PLEDGE DECISIONS BE MADE?

7.1 All projects seeking support from each of the two rounds of pitching each year complete a set of questions when pitching to the fund. The grants panel(s) described at 5.4 will consider the responses to those questions to determine the eligibility of their projects.

7.2 Projects will also need to demonstrate they have local support for the activity proposed prior to the panel's assessment. This assessment will take place six weeks after the deadline to pitch. If a project has evidence of eligibility and local support the Council will consider a pledge towards the project, but retains its discretion to choose not to pledge against a project, or to pledge an amount higher or lower than indicated on the platform.

7.3 In line with the Council Plan, the pledge decisions made will be in the best interests of residents and accord with the Council's intent to act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.

8. AN IMPROVED GRANTS CAPABILITY

- 8.1** Whilst Spacehive undertake a significant amount of the work to make the civic crowdfunding such a success, notably the workshops for promoters, due diligence, managing each funding round and ongoing project support, an improved grants capability is proposed as an outcome of this review.
- 8.2** Management and oversight of much of the outgoing Council grant schemes formed part of the duties of a post which was deleted from the establishment after it became vacant at the end of September 2022. Whilst other staff have absorbed the work to date, to ensure the success of the new approach outlined in this report a dedicated resource is advised and funded from the current grants budget.
- 8.3** As well as supporting the Council's grant schemes, namely the civic crowdfunding and revised approach to community revenue grants, resource is needed to better support those schemes enabled by external funding – such as Household Support Fund and food group funding.
- 8.4** To achieve this improved grants capability a 0.6 FTE Grants Officer post is recommended. Activity would include organising and promoting the market place event, voluntary and community sector liaison, administration of applications, organising the panels and transparently recording decisions made.
- 8.5** Once in place, the Grants Officer would undertake regular engagement with organisations the Council enters 3-year service level agreements (SLAs) with, conducting monitoring and evaluation to assure value for money. Supported by the lead officers, they will work with our providers to evolve the activity undertaken if there are material changes to need during the life of the SLAs. They would also lead on the civic crowdfunding platform implementation and its ongoing operation and success.
- 8.6** An improved grants capability would also present the opportunity to lever in external funding to support the Council's priorities – either directly, or by greater support to the voluntary and community sector, which has proved invaluable during the pandemic and latterly the cost of living crisis.

9. A MANAGED TRANSITION

- 9.1** Given that this proposed approach to grant funding represents a significant change, all current recipients of 2022-23 community revenue grants have been informed of the likely changes. Each was appreciative of the early engagement.
- 9.2** To ensure a managed transition for all parties, it is recommended that all current recipients receive the same level of funding in 2023-24 and at the same level.
- 9.3** Recognising the main focus will be on launching the civic crowdfunding in the first half of 2023-24, it is suggested the process for inviting proposals against the four agreed lots starts in September 2023, with award made by January 2024 ready for three year service level agreements to start from April 2024.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The current budgets used to fund the community revenue grants, community facilities grants and the commissioned housing advice, welfare and debt advice services are summarised in the table below. Alongside this the new proposals are summarised. This demonstrates the proposals are contained within existing approved budgets and represent no reduction in funding. Instead, it is suggested the available funding is being used in a more effective way to achieve greater community impact.

Current budget	£	Proposed budget	£
Community revenue grants	188,000	3-year service level agreements (lots 1 – 3)	132,000
Community facilities grants	200,000	Civic crowdfunding platform fee	30,000
		Civic crowdfunding pledges	120,000
Housing, welfare and debt advice services	80,000	Improved grants capability	25,000
		Housing, welfare and debt advice services (lot 4)	150,000
		Cotswold National Landscape	11,000
TOTAL	468,000		468,000

10.2 The current £200,000 community facilities grant is a capital budget, funded from revenue contributions. The change to a civic crowdfunding approach, with pledges to projects with a wider scope than just buildings and tangible assets will include both revenue and capital expenditure.

10.3 By entering in to three year service level agreements the Council is committing to an agreed level of funding to successful recipients for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26. This commitment is covered in the 2023-24 budget approved by Council on 15 February 2023 and will need to be reflected in subsequent annual revenue budgets approved by Council, or met from reserves.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The proposals within this report all relate to the Council's discretionary grants budgets and not to any statutory schemes. The way in which this resource is invested is at the Council's discretion, subject to appropriate governance, transparency and financial safeguards. The Council's interests will be protected through its contract with the platform provider, backed up with appropriate conditions on the project initiators. Through this process, funding pledges are conditional upon the full sum necessary for a project to take place being raised, and recipients will be legally bound to deliver the stated activity or return the funding.

11.2 The government's G-Cloud Digital Marketplace allows for direct award to Spacehive using a framework agreement.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1** If the Council doesn't engage with current community revenue grant recipients, then there is a reputational risk to the Council and a potential negative impact on current providers. Well received engagement has taken place with all current recipients, many thankful for the long notice period for change, to mitigate this risk and a managed transition will be used.
- 12.2** Whilst the civic crowdfunding proposal, as an alternative to its current community facilities grants, would be a new initiative for this Council, the model is well-established and very successful in other council areas. The process whereby projects are promoted and supported is robust, with appropriate and independent verification checks undertaken at an early stage. The main risks are considered to be:
- a. Projects not signing up - For the platform to be effective, project creators and supporters will need to use it. There is a strong incentive for projects to sign up, in terms of the resource the Council will channel through this route, and the opportunity to campaign for further support. The platform will need to be promoted, by the Council and by the platform provider, to recruit individuals and organisations to pledge toward projects. However, project creators are a key ally in this task, as it is their interests to direct their own contacts to the platform.
 - b. Projects not meeting their targets - There is a risk that projects will sign up and not reach their funding target - and consequently will not draw down funds. However this is already a risk that community projects face as shown by the annual underspend on community facilities grant. Widening the scope of eligibility through the crowdfunding approach helps mitigate the risk.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 13.1** The Council is a signatory to the Oxfordshire Compact and the supporting funding code and it will wish to ensure adherence to the key provisions in this around consultation and the provision of appropriate notice around the introduction of changes. The managed transition described a section 5 allows for this.
- 13.2** The proposed approach of three year grant funding, supported by service level agreements to provide a framework for all parties on areas such as delivery, quality and agreed outcomes also accords with the Compact.
- 13.3** The proposals do not negatively impact on any protected characteristics. The new proposals increase accessibility to funding for community projects and this should enable applications from a wider cohort of applicants that have traditionally accessed our grants. Supporting a platform to help groups fundraise beyond our own contribution will open grants up to new and 'non-establishment' groups.
- 13.4** An equalities impact assessment can be found at Annex C.

14. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1** The inclusion of lots 1 and 2, with a focus on environment, climate and ecology, supported by three year service level agreements, provides good potential for a positive impact on

tackling the climate and ecological emergencies. Likewise, the crowdfunding approach paves the way for the Council to pledge funding to projects well aligned to doing the same.

15. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 15.1** Executive could choose to maintain the current system of community grants.
- 15.2** Whilst not recommended, Executive could cease grant funding. This would save approaching £470,000 each year but place the authority in an unusual position in it not offering any form of grant support and remove the scope to achieve Council Plan priority outcomes through grant funding. It would also have significant, negative community impact.


16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

None

(END)

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 July 2023
Subject	Public open space CCTV update
Wards Affected	All Carterton wards, Witney Central and Witney South Potentially Chipping Norton
Accountable Member	Cllr Geoff Saul, Cabinet Member for Housing & Social Welfare geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director – Communities Tel: 01594 812290 andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Summary	To provide a progress update on upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney (with Chipping Norton under consideration) and associated monitoring control room arrangements.
Annexes	None
Recommendations	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Endorse the continued need for public open space CCTV;</i> b) <i>Note the progress towards a shared monitoring control room;</i> c) <i>Note the camera optimisation review and provide a view on extending public open space CCTV to cover Chipping Norton;</i> d) <i>Provide a view on the options for mitigating tree growth;</i> e) <i>Note the proposed future operating model</i>
Corporate priorities	Putting residents first Enabling a good quality of life for all
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultation	Engagement with Thames Valley Police, OPCC and the other Oxfordshire Districts. Further consultation will take place with the Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils as the upgrade progresses, along with Marriott’s Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1.** West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) owns and operates a public open space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system in the district, consisting of 61 cameras – 23 covering Witney town centre, 25 in Marriott's Walk shopping centre, 11 at Woolgate shopping centre and four in Carterton.
- I.2.** The town centre public space CCTV scheme was introduced in Witney town centre in 2002 after the council successfully obtained a Home Office grant. The scheme was expanded to cover Carterton town centre in 2008; and the scheme was upgraded (digitised) and expanded to include Marriott's Walk in 2009.
- I.3.** Monitoring of West Oxfordshire's cameras takes place at Witney Police station, with the staff employed by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and a service level agreement in place with the Council. Within Oxfordshire, monitoring control rooms are also located in Oxford City, Banbury and Abingdon.
- I.4.** In late autumn 2018, WODC commissioned CDC Technical Services to undertake an independent review of the public space CCTV systems in Witney and Carterton town centres. This review concluded that:
 - i.** In general, the WODC CCTV scheme provides good coverage of the areas being monitored with overlapping camera coverage;
 - ii.** But, the current system control room and recording technology is old and, in the main, obsolete and there is a significant amount of repeated camera maintenance issues to be addressed;
 - iii.** The implementation of a digital transmission network utilising the existing private fibre network within Witney town centre is relatively straightforward, cost effective and most importantly can be done on a camera-by-camera basis as required – providing the monitoring control room technologies are compatible.
- I.5.** In setting the 2019/20 budget, Council approved £300,000 capital for investment in CCTV, subject to business case, to upgrade the cameras and replace the monitoring control room equipment.
- I.6.** In March 2020, Cabinet approved a CCTV compliance policy, ensuring we meet the Surveillance Camera Commissioner Code of Practice.

2. IS THERE A CONTINUED NEED FOR CCTV?

- 2.1.** Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to do all they reasonably can to prevent:
 - a.** Crime and disorder in their areas, including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment
 - b.** The misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances
 - c.** Reoffending in their areas
- 2.2.** The use of a CCTV system to help meet this duty includes detection; deterrence; self-discipline – by potential victims and potential offenders; and acting as a capable guardian. Routine activity theory, which looks at crime from an offender's point of view, suggests that for a crime to be committed there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable

guardian. Any act that prevents the convergence of these elements reduces the likelihood of crime.

- 2.3. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras in England and Wales. As a result, the Secretary of State, under Section 30 of the Act, issued the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The code of practice details that a CCTV system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need, which might include:
- a. national security
 - b. public safety
 - c. the economic well-being of the country
 - d. the prevention of disorder or crime
 - e. the protection of health or morals
 - f. the protection of the rights and freedoms of others
- 2.4. The [Strategic Intelligence Assessment \(SIA\)](#) for Oxfordshire shows that West Oxfordshire has the lowest total recorded crime in the county, but the greatest increase between 2018 and 2020 has been for stalking and public order offences.
- 2.5. At its October 2021 meeting, after considering a notice of motion on violence against women, Council resolved to do everything in its power to build a District free from harassment and violence against women and girls. Continued provision of public open space CCTV supports this.
- 2.6. Crime density maps, together with local knowledge, and when considered alongside the legitimate aims in the commissioner’s code and our duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, provide the evidence base to support the continuation of a CCTV system. They further suggest an extension of the system to include Chipping Norton, as well as covering Carterton and Witney, could be beneficial – a view supported by Thames Valley Police.

3. A SHARED MONITORING CONTROL HUB

- 3.1. Since 2016, there has been a collective desire between the five Oxfordshire districts and Thames Valley Police (TVP) for a shared Oxfordshire hub control room. Sharing will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring – with more ‘real time’ monitoring, no lone working, capital investment from TVP and resilience from fail over to another TVP hub with the same monitoring equipment in Buckinghamshire.
- 3.2. The disadvantages of a shared hub are potential loss of local knowledge and a small loss of local employment, depending where the hub is located. These pros and cons are summarised in the table below:

Advantages
A better working environment with no lone working, leading to greater capacity and a more resilient staffing model to improve health and wellbeing
Thames Valley Police capital contribution
Fail over to Buckinghamshire hub, supported by a common IT infrastructure providing a reliable and sustainable service which is economical to maintain for a minimum of 7 years

Compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice and other legislative requirements and best practice
One control room, plus local viewing at Witney, resulting in more productive, real time monitoring of CCTV
Single maintenance contract for all cameras and control room equipment
Technology to facilitate digitally disruptive policing models and digital evidence management
Disadvantages if not based in Witney
Loss of local knowledge
Small loss of local employment

- 3.3. Progress towards a shared hub has been hampered by a number of reasons, but in the last nine months a CCTV partnership board has been established and TVP has employed a CCTV Operations Manager to gain greater traction.
- 3.4. At the CCTV Partnership Board meeting in October 2022 Witney was confirmed as the preferred location for the Oxfordshire monitoring hub (with the potential to become a hub for the whole Thames Valley Police region).
- 3.5. On 20 October 2022 a critical failure of the monitoring, recording and control equipment at Witney police station occurred. Despite the best efforts of the appointed maintenance contractor and the current supplier a permanent repair could not be made due to the obsolescence of hardware and non-supported software version.
- 3.6. As the various component parts of the system interact to form 'one' integrated system, it was not possible to replace one or two parts and get the system up and running. Using his emergency decision making powers, the Chief Executive approved spend of approximately £44,000 from the capital programme budget to replace the CCTV monitoring control room equipment.
- 3.7. To ensure future compatibility with the proposed shared hub a contract waiver was approved by the Chief Finance Officer and the Council's Solicitor to purchase the minimum amount of Genetec equipment required to provide a basic system to meet our current needs, until such a time as the system is enhanced when the shared hub is implemented (envisaged to be from April 2024).
- 3.8. Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils have already installed new Genetec equipment in readiness for this, with a view to using a 'lift and shift' approach. The Buckinghamshire hub also uses Genetec and this would be the fail over business continuity solution for an Oxfordshire hub, and vice versa.
- 3.9. At the CCTV partnership board meeting in March 2023 a first draft outline business case was presented for the shared hub. Two options have been modelled – a 24/7 service, or one which operates 0700 - 0000 Sunday - Wednesday and 0700 - 0200 on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. For both, TVP would cover 50% of the operating cost.
- 3.10. Two cost sharing models are suggested for the remaining operating cost. The percentage of cameras or percentage share of the Community Safety Fund. Both would give WODC an approximate 11% share. For option one this equates to approximately £72,500 pa and £53,000

for option 2. In addition, for both options fibre and electricity costs would be covered locally at £14,000.

- 3.11. Total revenue costs would therefore range from £67,000 to £86,500 and this would represent a projected revenue saving of between £50,000 and £70,000.

4. CAMERA OPTIMISATION

- 4.1. Before starting a camera replacement programme and in line with the commissioner's code and our local policy, a review of all existing camera locations has taken place, for five reasons:

- a. To make sure the legitimate aim is still relevant and take account of any effect on individuals through privacy impact assessments;
- b. In addition to considering crime density maps, we can overlay reported crimes with existing camera locations and these crime 'heat maps' can help inform future camera placement;
- c. Technology and subsequent image quality has advanced significantly, meaning we may need fewer cameras to achieve the same, or better, coverage. This could reduce the ongoing costs, without compromising public safety;
- d. Changes in public realm and infrastructure may suggest alternative locations;
- e. A number of redeployable wireless CCTV cameras may be beneficial for addressing shorter-term needs.

- 4.2. This exercise was undertaken by an industry expert and provides a mapping of where and why (legitimate aim) for each proposed camera location, using the reasons listed below:

- To detect and prevent crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour
- To deter theft and criminal damage
- To help people feel safe and support the night time economy
- To assist with vehicle recognition involved in crime

- 4.3. Details captured in the review's report include:

- a. An assessment of each of the existing camera locations within the current public open space CCTV scheme, along with recommendations for each location
- b. The mapping of existing and new camera locations in accordance with available crime statistics
- c. Recommendations for improvement of coverage – including the use of additional locations, the removal of locations and/or the relocation of camera locations
- d. Existing and future technology considerations, including:
 - i. the re-use of existing camera technology,
 - ii. the requirements for upgrade of the existing transmission network,
 - iii. the requirements for control room systems upgrade,
 - iv. the different types of ANPR camera technology,
 - v. the use of redeployable cameras and considerations for using them,
 - vi. the use of video analytics and the potential use of data gathered by cameras

- 4.4. All cameras have been mapped using the online mapping tool, Scribble Maps. This tool has allowed the field of view for each of the existing cameras to be mapped to allow for easy observation of the total coverage. An example is shown on the next page.



- 4.5. The resultant recommendations of this coverage mapping suggest two cameras can be removed, six relocated and three new locations.
- 4.6. The scope of the review included investigating the requirements for the installation of public open space CCTV in Chipping Norton, with the general operational requirement to provide coverage to the main pedestrian and parking areas of the town as well as provide coverage of the main roads through the town.
- 4.7. A survey of the town was undertaken, supported by a TVP local police sergeant and identified five potential positions for new cameras that would achieve the main coverage requirements:
- Outside the front of the Town Hall at the A44 junction of New St,
 - Outside the rear of the Town Hall at the junction with High St (Top Row),
 - On High St (Top Row) o/s WH Smith,
 - On High St/A44 o/s Crown & Cushion Hotel,
 - On Market St (Bottom Row) o/s 19 Market St
- 4.8. The capital budget estimate for this work would be £50,000 and it would add around £10,000 to the annual revenue budget requirement.

5. TREE GROWTH

- 5.1. During the spring and summer months trees are a very common cause of performance issues for public open space CCTV systems and the scheme in Witney is no different, with 14 cameras significantly or severely affected. An example is provided on the next page.



- 5.2. A number of options exist to mitigate or address these issues:
- 5.2.1. **Adapt** – coverage can sometimes be improved by raising or lowering the height of a camera in its existing location to improve its coverage, or using a longer outreach bracket.
 - 5.2.2. **Relocate** – move the position of the camera to increase coverage, but this is contingent on a suitable mounting position, electricity supply and fibre cabling all being available. Cost and benefit would need to be considered.
 - 5.2.3. **Pruning** – in most instances, lifting the canopy of the trees in question will suffice and provide the visibility required for the camera, albeit for a short time until the tree grows again. Where this is the case, it is important to put in place a tree pruning regime to ensure the trees are regularly maintained. As none of the trees are in this Council’s ownership this can present a challenge. Equally, no annual budget currently exists to implement such a regime.
 - 5.2.4. **Tolerate** – research has shown that high canopy trees does not encourage crime. Even where vegetation reduces natural surveillance, residents have a higher sense of safety in areas of high density tree planting. The reason for this is that tree planting contributes to a sense of ownership and that this leads residents to care for the area. The benefits that trees provide to people's mental health and wellbeing have been widely researched.

6. CURRENT MONITORING CONTRACT

- 6.1. The contract for the current monitoring arrangements described at 1.2 expired on 31 March 2023. The option to extend has already been exercised, but following advice and opinion from legal and procurement, an exemption from contract procedure rules has been used to allow the current arrangements to continue to 31 March 2024.

7. FUTURE OPERATING MODEL

- 7.1. Under the current operating model, this Council retains direct responsibility for the public open space CCTV system and its ongoing maintenance. In early April 2022, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner tabled a report to the Police and Crime Panel outlining a new vision for CCTV. This vision recognises that CCTV exists primarily for the benefit of policing and the wider interests of community safety. Therefore it is right that policing shoulders the lion share of the responsibility for providing the capability
- 7.2. The long term vision is for CCTV across Thames Valley to be provided by Thames Valley Police. The Force would own the equipment/contracts, be responsible for maintenance and employ staff to monitor the service. This “single owner” model will help to consolidate technology, drive savings through economies of scale, improve integration with police systems and provide increased resilience.
- 7.3. Under this model, district and town councils (and commercial beneficiaries such as shopping centres) will continue to make a financial contribution using an agreed funding formula and as part of the partnership agreement local authorities would allow TVP to use appropriate street furniture for the placement of equipment.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. Council could choose to cease provision of this discretionary service.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1. Having no public open space CCTV means our duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may not be met. It could also lead to an increase in the fear of or actual crime.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 12.1. The report raises no specific implications for any particular group or individual. Any future changes to camera locations will be subject to the appropriate privacy impact assessments, compliant with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice .

13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1. No background papers have been identified.

(END)