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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Full Council</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>26 February 2024</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Paula Harrison, Parish Manager</b>		
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Community Grants Report</b>		

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Since February 2017, West Swindon Parish Council has had a small grants fund to support local groups with community activities and events. The Grants Pot has been distributed in two rounds with applications being considered by Committee approval in September and February. There are no criteria for applicants other than the project specifically benefits West Swindon residents only and is within the remit of the Parish Council's responsibilities.
- 1.2 At the November Planning Leisure & Environment Committee it was agreed that the Clean and Green Fund should be discontinued and future projects funded through the Community Grants fund from 1 April 2024. Minute ref 149  
RESOLVED that the Clean and Green Fund continues in its current form up to 31st March 2024 after which time any funds accumulated are allocated to a grant pot through which groups can access any remaining funds available.
- 1.3 Historically, groups have accumulated funds that have not been spent within that financial year and have 'rolled over' into the new financial year. There is no budget allocation for the Clean and Green Fund for either 2023-24 or 2024 – 25 The summary report distributed to the February Planning, Leisure & Environment Committee is attached for reference.

## 2. Grants 2024 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the grant funding rounds for 2024 are changed to April 2024 and September 2024. The current funding available is £10,000 for the year. A proportion of the overall budget could be allocated to each round e.g. £5,000 per round.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the following groups with funds accumulated in the Clean and Green Fund are advised that from 1 April 2024 they can continue to access their pots through the Parish Council earmarked reserves but no new funds will be added:
  - Westlea Park
  - Shaw FAB
  - Peatmoor Copse
  - Greendown Copse
- 2.3 Groups or individual volunteers without earmarked funds could either have access to the other amount of Clean and Green funds or be encouraged to apply for a community grant. The Parish Council could allocate an amount of the grants budget for local small

expenditure for bulb, plants and tools e.g. £1,000 which will be spent on a first come first served basis outside of the formal grant rounds.

#### 2.4 **West Swindon Library**

The Parish Council has allocated grant funding for the West Swindon Library in the budget for 2024-25. Following a presentation to the Planning, Leisure & Environment Committee at its February meeting, it is unlikely that the West Swindon Library will be operable before the 31 March. It is expected that this will create a six month underspend on the budget for this current financial year.

- 2.5 Indications from Swindon Borough Council are that the library service will be delivered in partnership with GLL at the Link Centre. The size of the space, services offered and library opening hours are not confirmed however it highlights that grant funding from West Swindon Parish should be reviewed. The current budget allocation is £14,000. It is proposed that this funding is reallocated to the Community Grants budget and if the library service or GLL wish to apply in the next or future financial years, they could do so.

### 3. **Financial Implications**

West Swindon Parish Council could clarify in its grant application process that funding is ring-fenced to West Swindon based activities and only those that are delivered to West Swindon residents. The Parish Council could consider a cap on the turnover of an organization in order to target and support those groups and organisations that operate with fewer resources.

- 3.1 West Swindon Parish Council has funded a number of organisations in support of locally established activities including Toothill Youth Club and West Swindon Family Project. This funding consumes the majority of grant funding available. If the Parish Council is to consider funding it in future years, it should consider how much funding is available and whether to establish a service level agreement rather than an adhoc grant to support better sustainability for these projects.
- 3.2 West Swindon Parish Council should only fund projects that are benefiting West Swindon residents. Any grants should ensure that this is adhered to when allocating grants.
- 3.3 There have been many changes to the operating model of the West Swindon Library. The Council received reports at previous meetings indicating that the number of West Swindon residents using the library has been low - cost per user???. Changes to staffing which incorporated the delivery of Swindon Borough Council customer services support also impacted on whether the Parish Council was part funding another organisations service. With further changes proposed to the delivery of the library service at the Link Centre, the Parish Council should consider whether this grant funding is no longer eligible.

### 4. **Recommendations:**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Council approves
- a. New dates for Community Grant applications – 15 April 15 September
  - b. Creation of earmarked reserves from the Clean and Green Fund as at 01 April 2024
  - c. Confirms any criteria for grant expenditure and confirms the amount allocated to each round