

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, 12th February, 2014**

**3.00 pm**

~~**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County  
Hall, Maidstone**~~

**Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall,  
Maidstone**







## AGENDA

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, 12th February, 2014, at 3.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County**  
**Hall, Maidstone**  
**Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall,**  
**Maidstone**

Ask for: **Anna Taylor**  
Telephone: **01622 694764**

#### Membership

Conservative (6): Mr R J Parry (Chairman), Mr J E Scholes (Vice-Chairman),  
Mrs S V Hohler, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr L B Ridings, MBE and  
Mrs P A V Stockell

UKIP (2) Mr M Baldock and Mr C P D Hoare

Labour (2) Mr G Cowan and Mr R Truelove

Liberal Democrat (1): Mrs T Dean

Church Mr D Brunning, Mr Q Roper and Mr A Tear

Representatives (3):

Parent Governor (2): Mr P Garten and Mr G Lawrie

*Refreshments will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting*

*Timing of items as shown below is approximate and subject to change.*

*County Councillors who are not Members of the Committee but who wish to ask questions at the meeting are asked to notify the Chairman of their questions in advance.*

#### Webcasting Notice

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

By entering the meeting room you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you do not wish to have your image captured then you should make the Clerk of the meeting aware.

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

#### **A - Committee Business**

- A1 Introduction/Webcast Announcement
- A2 Substitutes
- A3 Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

#### **B - Any items called-in**

- B1 Decision 13/00088, Revision of 13/00062 - New Combined Member Grant Scheme (Pages 5 - 12)

#### **C - Any items placed on the agenda by any Member of the Council for discussion**

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Peter Sass  
Head of Democratic Services  
(01622) 694002

**Tuesday, 4 February 2014**

*Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.*

By: Peter Sass: Head of Democratic Services  
To: Scrutiny Committee – 12 February 2014  
Subject: New Combined Member Grant Scheme – 13/00088  
(Revision of 13/00062)

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Summary: Notification of a call-in of decision number 13/00088 was received from Mr C Caller, Mrs T Dean and Mr R Latchford on 31 January 2014. This report sets out the reasons behind the call-in and sets out the options for the Scrutiny Committee.

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## **1. Background**

1.1 On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014 the Leader took a decision to introduce a single Member Grant Scheme consisting of £25k per Member (£2.1m in total) and to cease the following grant schemes:

- Member Grants
- Local Schemes Grant
- Capital Scheme Grants
- Member Highway Fund

The new Member Grant Scheme will take effect from 1 April 2014.

## **2. Reasons justifying the call-in – from Mr C Caller, Mrs T Dean and Mr R Latchford.**

2.1 The record of decision does not confirm that the Leader had knowledge of or regard to the comments made at both Cabinet Committees where it was shown to be of serious concern to Members – in addition the Leader was not present at either committee. Appendix 4 part 6, paragraph 6.36 (f) states that the record of decision should include “any comment received when the matter was considered at the cabinet committee”. Although no formal comments were made, the spirit of that rule means that the fact that the Committee’s support was not unanimous should have been clearly stated. In addition, the details of the vote taken at the Environment Highways and Waste Cabinet Committee should have been set out. This would be in line with 7.15 (d) of acceptable reasons for call-in

2.2 That a proposed record of decision was not published to all Members only having been included in the relevant Cabinet Committee papers, but as this affects all members, due consultation was not undertaken, therefore not in line with Article 12 (2) and meeting call-in criteria 7.15 (c)

2.3 That additional consultation should have taken place, over and above Cabinet Committees – criteria as above (Article 12 (2) and 7.15 (c))

**3. Witnesses**

3.1 Mr M Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Mr D Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment will attend the meeting to answer Members' questions on this item.

**4. Options for the Scrutiny Committee**

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee may:

(a) make no comments

(b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision

(c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in the light of the Committee's comments or;

(d) if the decision is deemed to be contrary to the Policy Framework or Budget, require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending consideration of the matter by the full Council.

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**Contact:** Anna Taylor      Tel: 01622 694764

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

Paul Carter - Leader

**DECISION NO:**

13/00088 – revision of  
13/00062

**For publication**

**Subject:** New Combined Member Grant Scheme

**Decision:**

As the Leader of Kent County Council, I agree to introduce a single Member Grant Scheme (MGS), consisting of £25k per Member (£2.1m in total) and to cease the following grant schemes:

- Member Grants
- Local Schemes Grant
- Capital Scheme Grants
- Member Highway Fund

The new Member Grant Scheme will take effect from 1 April 2014.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

Currently Members have access to £3.52m of delegated grant funds and in light of the real financial pressure the Authority faces, there is a commitment to deliver a more pragmatic and cost effective grant scheme, while continuing to allow Members to react to local priorities that perhaps do not form part of the Council's core focus.

The new Member Grant Scheme's budget will be £2.1m which is an annual saving to KCC of £1.42m.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision has been considered and endorsed by the Environment, Highways and Waste, and the Communities Cabinet Committees.

**Any alternatives considered:**

None

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

None



Signed:

Date :

23 / 1 / 14

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From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services  
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment  
Amanda Honey, Corporate Director, Customer & Communities  
Mike Austerberry, Corporate Director, Enterprise & Environment

To: Paul Carter, Leader

Date: January 2014

Decision No: 13/00088

Subject: **New Combined Member Grant Scheme**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All Divisions

**Summary:**

This report sets out the proposal for a new combined Members Grant Scheme that will deliver annual base savings in the region of £1.42m.

**Recommendation:**

Following Cabinet Committees for Environment, Highways & Waste on 13.12.13 and Communities on 17.12.13, the Leader is asked to agree to the introduction of the new combined Members Grant Scheme with effect from 1 April 2014.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In light of "Facing the Challenge" and the transformation agenda, there has been discussion between Cabinet Members with regards to a new combined Members Grant Scheme (MGS) for Kent. The proposal intends to ensure that demand is managed downward, that a more integrated approach is adopted and that value for money is a primary focus given the current financial climate the authority finds itself within.
- 1.2 This paper takes forward this proposal and sets out a range of principles, financial implications, benefits, risks and the next steps for implementation, which is currently scheduled for April 2014.
- 1.3 Currently members have access to £3.52m (see 1.4) of delegated grant funds and in light of the real financial pressure the authority faces, there has been a commitment to deliver a more pragmatic and cost effective grant scheme, while continuing to allow members to react to local priorities that perhaps do not form part of the council's core focus.

1.4 The proposal is to cease the four current grant schemes:

- Member Grants - £840k
- Local Schemes Grant - £400k
- Capital Scheme Grants - £500k
- Member Highway Fund - £1,780k (after top slicing)

These total £3.52m. The proposal is to then introduce one single Member Grant Scheme (MGS), consisting of £25k per member (£2.1m in total).

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The new Member Grant Scheme's budget will be £2.1m which is an annual saving to KCC of £1.42m.
- 2.2 Once implemented, the new Member Grant Scheme would offer all Members financial parity in the grant funding available to them, as previously, some elements of the grant were not allocated on a pro rata member or district basis e.g. Local Scheme Grants.

## **3. New Scheme Overview**

- 3.1 The new Member Grant Scheme will be managed and administered through the Community Engagement Officers (CEOs), who will work with local residents and continue to support Members.
- 3.2 All applications will initially be discussed with Members by the CEO, who will provide advice in terms of funding availability, as well as any queries in relation to the application and criteria for the scheme.
- 3.3 If the application is for a community based project, the CEO would liaise with the applicant and Member from the point of receiving the application to payment being made.
- 3.4 If the application is for a highways related project, the application (once verified and accepted by the CEO as above) will be passed to a dedicated Highways team for feasibility and technical support and this Highways officer will then be the point of contact for Members. The Highways Team and the CEO will then liaise in the background to ensure the governance is correct.
- 3.5 A refreshed single application process and performance management system will be implemented and it is intended that it will be predominantly based on the current online Member Highway Fund process, as well as incorporating some of the information required as part of the current Member Grants process.
- 3.6 The current criteria for three of the grant schemes stipulates that projects where KCC has withdrawn funding in the past are not eligible for Member grants and given the future transformation, outsourcing and potential down-sizing of services, it is imperative that this remains for the new Member Grant Scheme. The criteria will be refreshed and distributed in advance of the implementation date.

- 3.7 Managing demand is an essential part of “Facing the Challenge” and currently Members can request feasibility studies for a multitude of projects that their £25k Member Highway Fund could never afford, with one in seven (approximately) being abortive. There are also currently no parameters stipulated around scope of the projects to be assessed.
- 3.8 A menu of costed Highways project options will be developed in consultation with members of the Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee in early 2014 in order to give guidance on the potential costs of a range of Highways based projects. This would not prohibit the ability of Members to explore other projects, but make it simpler when deciding how to allocate funds and what projects to prioritise.
- 3.9 There may be some initial costs in adapting the Member Highway Fund IT systems to ensure it is compatible with the requirements of the new Member Grant Scheme. It is proposed that any underspend in 2013/14 is used to support the transition process and fund the IT upgrade.
- 3.10 Consideration needs to be given to the sign off arrangements, allowing both the relevant Cabinet Member and a Senior Officer to act as the designated approval / sign off method.

#### **4 Benefits**

- 4.1 The most obvious benefit of this proposal is an annual saving to KCC of £1.42m. This is a clear message to staff and residents that every budget within the organisation is under scrutiny and as this proposal clearly links with the principles of the transformation project and seeking to do things differently.
- 4.2 The proposed new Member Grant Scheme aims to provide a more joined up and flexible scheme for Members, with the opportunity to use funds in a way that meets local community needs without being restricted on specific funding stream criteria.
- 4.3 There will inevitably be further savings to be extracted if demand is legitimately reduced as each abortive project has a financial implication.

#### **5. Impact**

- 5.1 The obvious impact of 4.1 is that less funding will ultimately be available to members.
- 5.2 Resources currently supporting the existing schemes will be reviewed in line with the demand for the new scheme.

#### **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 Officers who currently manage both the Member Highway Fund and the other Member Grant Schemes are all very supportive in the establishment of the proposed new scheme, which as detailed will deliver considerable savings for KCC, will bring greater consistency to the current disparate processes and provides a more flexible pot for Members to access.

- 6.2 The scheme will be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. To aid with this constrained timetable, it is proposed that all final applications for the existing four grant schemes are submitted before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014. This will allow time for the old systems to be completed and ensure there is time to get new systems in place.
- 6.3 Once completed, a full set of criteria, a clear flow chart for the new Member Grant Scheme and a copy of the new application form will be circulated to Members and the intention is for user testing prior to implementation.

**7. Recommendation(s):**

- 7.1 Following the Cabinet Committees for Environment, Highways & Waste on 13.12.13 and Communities on 17.12.13, the Leader is asked to agree to the introduction of the new combined Members Grant Scheme with effect from 1 April 2014.

**Officer Contact details**

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