

Delegated Decision Report



Subject:	Priority Programme Fund Community Grants
Decision maker: Senior Officer	Rebecca Fletcher, Director of Public Health
Decision maker: Cabinet Member	Cllr Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture
Decision date:	30th April 2025
Report author:	Rachel Dyson, Community-led Prevention Lead (Public Health)
Ward (s):	All

Reason for decision

To allocate grant funding from the Priority Programme Fund (PPF) to community grants for one year (1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026).

Recommendation(s)

- To allocate grant funding for one year (25/26) to Greenacres Community Association and Oldham Credit Union as a contribution to their core running costs.
- To allocate grant funding for one year (25/26) to Werneth and Freehold Community Development Project from the Asylum Dispersal Grant

Background

1.1 The Council has, for a number of years, funded a range of voluntary, community and faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations through its Priority Programme Fund (PPF). In 24/25 the fund had two strands:

- Voluntary Sector Infrastructure
- Community Centres and Organisations

The focus of this report is the award of grant funding for Community Centres and the Credit Union. Voluntary Sector Infrastructure is subject to a separate report.

1.2 Within this report it is proposed that grant funding is awarded to both Oldham Credit Union and to Greenacres Community Association for the 2025/26 financial year in contribution to each organisation's operational costs.

1.3 **Oldham Credit Union** exists to promote greater financial equality in Oldham Borough by providing accessible, secure savings and an ethical source of credit at fair and reasonable rates of interest. It particularly benefits people who otherwise would be financially excluded and therefore have difficulty accessing mainstream financial

services and might otherwise become dependent upon loan sharks charging extortionate rates of interest.

- 1.4 **Werneth and Freehold Community Development Project and Greenacres Community Centre** provide opportunities and venues for interaction and engagement within communities and for communities to engage with other stakeholders. They provide a means for residents to engage in a range of positive and creative activities, which enhance their quality of life and provide access to opportunities to further life chances. Building strong communities and community engagement are central components of the work of the organisation. Participation by local residents in such activities supports the principle of building cohesive communities by encouraging individuals to engage and interact with others through shared common interests. Furthermore, it provides significant opportunities for local people to develop their skills and contribute to their community by partaking in a range of volunteering opportunities. Both organisations utilise the core funding to attract inward investment to deliver services (e.g., early years provision).

2 **Current Position**

- 2.2 The Council has provided core grant funding to several smaller voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, through the Priority Programme Fund, for many years. The allocations have been reviewed at regular intervals and there are now only a small number of organisations who receive funding due to budget reductions, changing Council priorities and the need to seek greater efficiencies and value for money.
- 2.3 In 24/25 grants were awarded as follows:

Organisation	Funding Allocation 24/25
Greenacres Community Association	£24,000
Werneth & Freehold CDP	£24,000
Oldham Credit Union	£36,000
Total	£84,000

3 **Proposals & Conclusions**

- 3.1 A proposal was agreed by Cabinet in September 2024 to end the ongoing investment from the Priority Programme Fund into the two community centres, Greenacres Community Association and Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project, as part of wider budget reductions. The grants are historical and were previously awarded following the completion of grant allocation processes.
- 3.2 In response to the Cabinet decision, the grant funding award for core costs to Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project will not be renewed in 25/26. However, in recognition of the specific work they undertake to provide support to residents of hotel

24/7 it has been proposed to award a grant of £16,000 from the Asylum Dispersal Grant for 25/26.

- 3.3 The grant to Greenacres Community Association will continue in 25/26 but will not be renewed after that. The proposal to continue the grant to Greenacres for one additional year is to avoid destabilising the match funding which formed part of their successful proposal to the national Community Ownership Fund.
- 3.4 The proposals to Cabinet in September 2024 also included renewal of the grant to Credit Union at the same level. However, it has also been agreed that it will be managed as part of the Council's wider financial support services in future, rather than within the Priority Programme Fund. This will increase the opportunities for effective partnership working, and consideration of the role of the Credit Union offer as part of the wider system.
- 3.5 Therefore, the total cost of the grant funding proposed under this report for 25/26 will be **£76,000**.
- 3.6 Proposed allocations are as follows:

Organisation	Funding Allocation (25/26)
Greenacres Community Association	£24,000
Oldham Credit Union	£36,000
Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project	£16,000
Total	£76,000

Alternative option(s) to be considered:

Option 1 – Do not renew any of the community grants. This is not regarded as a viable option. For The Credit Union this would represent a significant reduction in their core funding and may result in a reduction in the services they are able to offer, which provide alternative financial services to Oldham residents, in particular those in financial need. For the Greenacres Community Association, a decision to withdraw the grant at this time would potentially impact on their ability to draw in external national grant funding awarded from the Community Ownership Fund (£300k) for which this grant acted as match funding.

Option 2 – To allocate grant funding for one year (25/26) to Greenacres Community Association and to Oldham Credit Union for core costs. For The Credit Union this will provide a contribution to their core funding supporting them to continue to provide services to residents. For the Greenacres Community Association, it will support them to draw in the external grant funding from the Community Ownership Fund (£300k) by maintaining the match funding for one year. To allocated grant funding from the Asylum Dispersal Grant to Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project for their work supporting residents of Hotel 24/7.

Consultation

Consultation has been carried out with the recipient organisations and with Cabinet members as part of the wider budget reduction process.

Risks

There is a small risk that the organisations are not able to continue to deliver. The Council will carry out quarterly meetings with the recipients who will provide written updates with regards the progress of their work and key outcomes delivered in line with the Council's corporate plan.

Implications


Financial	The 2025/26 revenue budget for the Priority Programme Fund (PPF) is £306,500. Action Together have been awarded a grant of £270,500 in 2025/26 which leaves a remaining balance to commit of £36,000.		
	The report recommends renewing the following grant agreements in 2025/26 to:		
	Organisation	Funding allocation	Funding Source
	Oldham Credit Union	£36,000	Priority Programme Fund (PPF)
	Greenacres Community Association	£24,000	Corporate Priorities Budget
	Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project	£16,000	Asylum Dispersal Grant
	Total	£76,000	
	<u>Oldham Credit Union - £36k</u>		
	This grant renewal will be funded from the PPF base budget.		
	<u>Greenacres Community Association – £24k</u>		
	It was agreed by Cabinet in September 2024 to end the ongoing investment from the 'Priority Programme Fund' into 'Greenacres Community Association'.		
	However, the proposal is to continue the grant to Greenacres for one additional year. This is to avoid destabilising a match funding arrangement which formed part of their successful bid to the 'National Community Ownership Fund'.		
	Consequently, the funding of the grant for 2025/26 will be met from the Corporate Priorities base budget.		
	<u>Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project - £16k</u>		

	<p>It was agreed by Cabinet in September 2024 to end the ongoing investment from the 'Priority Programme Fund' into the Werneth & Freehold Community Development Project.</p> <p>However, in recognition of the specific work they undertake to provide support to residents of hotel 24/7 it has been proposed to award a grant of £16k in 2025/26, which will be funded from the Asylum Dispersal Grant.</p> <p>(Matthew Kearns – Finance Manager)</p>
Legal	<p>Grant funding is not governed by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and, therefore, there is no specific procedure in place to identify which organisations will continue to receive grant funding.</p> <p>The Council is required, nonetheless, to act in a transparent manner and to apply the principle of equality. In the cases of Greenacres Community Association, Werneth & Freehold CDP and the Credit Union, the funding is a continuation of previously approved awards that resulted from the completion of grant allocation processes.</p> <p>When grant monies are awarded, the Council is obliged to consider whether the funding will amount to a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.</p> <p>There are three grant awards proposed in this report, the first being to Greenacres Community Association, the second being to Werneth & Freehold CDP and finally the third being to the Credit Union. The proposed grant awards will be reviewed alongside the definition of subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 to determine if any of them fall within the definition. If a proposed grant award amounts to a subsidy, the minimal financial assistance provisions will be considered and, if necessary, the subsidy control principles will be applied. Any grant award approved under this report should be subject to a successful subsidy control analysis under which it's determined (a) whether there is a subsidy, and if there is (b) if it's a permissible subsidy.</p> <p>If the funding is approved, the grant recipients should be asked to enter into a fit for purpose grant funding agreement, which will restrict the use of the funding to an agreed purpose. The agreement will, amongst other things, also empower the Council to recover the funding in the event of a breach of agreement. Legal Services should be instructed to draft a Grant Funding Agreement for each of the recipients.</p> <p>Sarah Orrell – Commercial & Procurement Solicitor</p>
Equality impact including implications for Children and Young People	<p>No vulnerable group will be disproportionality affected from the proposals contained within this report. However, impact assessment was undertaken as part of the wider Council budget proposals in relation to Priority Programme Fund grants.</p>
Other	<p>None.</p>

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes
Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

There are no background papers for this report.

Report author sign-off	R. Dyson
Role	Community-led Prevention Lead (Public Health)
Date of sign-off	14.01.2025

Approval	
Officer approval sign-off	
Role	Director of Public Health
Date of sign-off	01.05.2025