

## **AGENDA 12, Enc xi) Grants Working Group — Small Grants Proposal**

### **Background**

The small grants scheme has seen persistently low numbers of applications received in recent years, a pattern noted in 2024/25, again in 2025/26 and in the first round of 2026/27, where only three applications were received against a possible ten awards. The criteria and application process are necessarily in place to ensure proper practice, financial due diligence, and compliance with the Council's financial regulations — funding decisions are open to scrutiny and eligibility protocols are essential. The application process is not onerous and officer support is available to applicants. The Working Group's view is that the low uptake is not a reflection of the process but of the maximum award available, and that £500 no longer represents a sufficiently meaningful sum to attract applications from groups seeking to deliver community activity.

### **Proposal**

The Grants Working Group proposes that the maximum award available under the small grants scheme is increased from £500 to £1,000 per application with effect from the second funding round, launching 15<sup>th</sup> July 2026. Applicants who applied in the first round of 2026/27 would also be eligible to apply in the second round.

### **Review Point**

The third funding round opens on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2026. The Working Group proposes that the volume of applications and the cumulative budget position are reviewed in advance of that round to assess whether the increased award level can be sustained for the remainder of the year, and to inform any further recommendations to the Finance and General Services Committee.

### **Recommendation**

The Grants Working Group recommends an increase in the small grants maximum award to £1,000 per application from the second funding round (15<sup>th</sup> July 2026), subject to review of the budget position ahead of the third round on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2026.