

## Briefing paper

### ***Councillor Local Community Fund***

**For:** Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 15 March 2022

## Key facts

The Councillor Local Community Fund was open for applications from 12<sup>th</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

- 93 Applications were received (although some groups applied to more than one councillor)
- £12,493.28 of funding was awarded to 60 different groups
- 7 applications were unsuccessful
- All councillors received applications, 3 councillors did not award any funding

## Background

The Councillor Local Community Fund was launched in June 2021 to

- enable Councillors to respond to local funding needs by awarding one-off funding for grass roots community activities that enable people and shape place in their ward

It was set up as a pilot project and this briefing paper reports on a preliminary review.

Under the fund each Councillor has £300 to award to support local projects and activities which can make a positive impact in their area. Awards can be made from a minimum of £50 to a maximum of £300 with an option for applications to be made to more than one Councillor in a ward or across wards up to a maximum award of £900.

The fund is open to any community groups, unlike many other funds groups do not need to be formally constituted. A faith group can apply where the activity is open to all faiths and is not seeking to promote a faith or belief as the main purpose of the activity

The funding is aimed at:

- Projects that provide local solutions to local needs
- One-off events that benefit the local community and support community resilience
- Current projects/activities that need a small amount of support to continue or grow
- Capital items (equipment, materials etc.)
- New projects and activities that need some funding to get going
- Projects that stimulate new community activity, such as setting up new local community events and clubs

Given the amount of funding involved the scheme was intended to operate on the following basis:

- Once completed the application form goes direct to the ward Councillor(s). Applicants will be asked on the form if they have applied to any other councillors. In multi member wards Councillors should liaise with each other to ensure that a reasonable distribution is made.
- Each Councillor will decide whether or not to support the funding request in accordance with what can be funded under this fund (see page2) .If they have any concerns about potential conflicts of interest they can speak to the Monitoring Officer or the Governance Manager.
- The Councillor lets the applicant know of the outcome of their decision. If successful the Councillor forwards the application and the amount to the Community Foundation for Staffordshire who will make the payment – Successful applications should be sent to [leanne.macpherson@staffordshire.foundation](mailto:leanne.macpherson@staffordshire.foundation). If unsuccessful the Councillor advises the applicant and signposts to LDC website for other funding sources
- All awarded funding must be used for the project/ activity agreed and returned by the group if unspent.. Any funding not allocated by a councillor will not be carried forward into the next financial year.

A summary of funding awarded is attached at Appendix A.

## Issues

The key issues were:

- Members not getting/ picking up the email alerting them to the application
- Concerns about the decision resting with members and wanting more officer support
- Some members found promoting the scheme and identifying groups a challenge
- Some communication issues were fed back by the Community Foundation that they were on occasions an application by members but it was not made clear that it should be funded or the foundation were sent an approval but no application (although overall they felt the scheme went well)
- A number of organisations who were awarded funding could have applied for this funding from other sources such as We Love Lichfield
- The Community Foundation experienced challenges getting the payment details from some groups

Overall the Community Foundation reported that the process of councillors forwarding applications to them worked well, as they were able to see the original bid from the applicant and work this into their system.

As part of this review a survey was carried out with members and attached is a summary of the responses to the survey at Appendix B.

## Future actions

The following are options:

- Review the application form and set up email reminder and acknowledgement
- Look at options to support members communication with the Community Foundation
- Look at inclusion of bank details on the application form
- Assess future viability of the scheme.

## Risk

With decision making responsibility sitting with the local councillor there is clearly a risk that funding may be awarded inappropriately. However on the basis of the awards to date this does not appear to have been the case, although some groups may have been eligible for funding from elsewhere.

## Key benefits and outcomes

- Some of the funding was used to support very local community events and activities which would probably not had funding from other funding sources
- It provided an opportunity for councillors to proactively engage with their communities
- It identified some groups that don't normally apply for funding
- It offered a simple application process
- It showed that a small amount of funding can make a difference to very local activities and groups can add to funding already raised locally.

For more information contact: Susan Bamford – [susan.bamford@lichfielddc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.bamford@lichfielddc.gov.uk)