

# Overview & Scrutiny Task Group

## Meeting Notes



<b>Review topic</b>	<b>Date of Meeting</b>
Councillor Community Fund	11 May 2022

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>Members:</b> Eagland (Chair) Warburton  <b>Apologies</b> M. Wilcox D. Robertson H. Tranter  <b>Cox (Cabinet Member)</b> <b>Officers:</b> Susan Bamford Christine Lewis <b>Witnesses:</b> None	Virtual

<b>Areas Discussed</b>
<b>Declarations of Interests</b> There were no declarations of interests.  <b>Scoping Document</b> The Task Group noted and agreed the scope of the work required and also noted that there would be a more comprehensive review undertaken at the end of the two year pilot of the scheme. The Task Group received the original Cabinet report and briefing paper sent to the O&S Committee to aid discussions.  <b>Issues and Concerns</b> As well as the key issues noted in the Briefing Paper, the Task Group fed back the following issues and concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There were not as many applications as expected and feel there should be more done in the way of marketing the scheme</li></ul>

- There was confusion on which Ward Member had picked up applications and some had been considered by third party organisations. It was felt that there should only be one route for applications.
- There was confusion as to when Councillors should wait until the end of the application timeframe to forward the application to the Community Foundation for Staffordshire (CFFS) and this led to some almost missing the deadline.
- There was no way of checking the validity of applications.
- It was not clear what the process was if a Cllr was a trustee or involved with a project and if they could support an application for that same group.
- Why did Cllrs have to wait until the end to know if an application had been awarded or declined as this would have given a clearer view if what funds were available and potentially more grants awarded. It was noted it should have been the case that once a Cllr had passed on the application to CFFS then it would be paid. It was recognised that getting payment details from some applicants had been difficult.
- There was a lack of communication from the CFFS regarding the need to confirm the award.

There was discussion regarding checks and balances of the scheme and issues experienced recently at another Authority and it was agreed that risks were lower at Lichfield especially with the amount of grant available. Reputational risks of perceived inappropriate awarding were discussed however it was not considered a substantial concern as there had not been any problems in the first round of applications and details of awards given by each Councillor to people along with details of purpose had been published and open to the public. It was reiterated that any concerns about potential conflicts of interest, Members could speak to the Monitoring Officer and any inappropriate awards would be dealt with via the Code of Conduct process. The Task Group recognised that the aim of the Fund was to be a light touch approach to take into account resources available and to reach those small grass roots community activities that Ward Councillors would know more about far better than Officers.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

It was not felt that another meeting was required.

### **Outcomes**

The Task Group felt the following changes would help the scheme going forward

- That there be a question on the application form stating if the Councillor knew and were ok with the application.
- That there be an option for Cllrs to declare if they have involvement in the project/activity
- That the application form include payment details for the applicant to speed up getting funding paid.
- That communitive donations with other Ward Councillors be highlighted more on the form and in communications about the scheme to encourage larger grants.
- That all successful awards given with details of applicant, purpose and the Cllr awarding it continue to be published to give full transparency and any concerns of inappropriate awarding be dealt with under the Members Code of Conduct.

- That the next round of funding be changed to July – Nov to allow any changes to the application form.

**Further Work Required/Next Steps:**

Amend the application form.

Complete a fundamental review after the second year of the pilot.