

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LEADER****DATE: 6 OCTOBER 2014****LEAD OFFICER: JANE LAST, PROGRAMME MANAGER AND LEAD MANAGER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIP****SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS FUND – PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To consider the recommendations of the Community Improvements Fund Panel (17 September 2014) and agree which projects will be funded from the Community Improvements Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council approves the proposed grant funding set out in Annex 2 from the Community Improvements Fund budget, and notes the position of the applications agreed within the previous budget 2013/14.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approval of the proposed grant funding will enable the Community Partnerships Team to progress with facilitating the grant payments.

DETAILS:

1. The aim of the Community Improvements fund is to give local groups the chance to improve their areas, make a real difference to people's lives and strengthen the ability of residents to independently enhance where they live. Bids are invited for one-off capital schemes for community improvements (in exceptional circumstances bids for start-up revenue projects are considered).
2. The Community Improvements Fund budget for 2014/15 is £500,000. One project agreed in 2013/14 is not proceeding, so its funds, along with small underspends carried forward from previous years have been added to this to give a revised fund total for 2014/15 of £567,750.
3. For 2014/15 the decision was taken to accept bids in a single round. Bids were invited from 1 April to 28 June 2014 for amounts between £10,000 and £30,000. A total of 62 bids were submitted, totalling £1,476,495.
4. Bids to the Fund were submitted via the Community Partnerships Team and considered by a Community Improvements Panel consisting of members supported by officers. Member representatives on the Panel are Nick Skellett (Panel Lead), Pat Frost, Peter Hickman and Fiona White. The Panel considered all bids submitted against the evaluation criteria outlined in Annex 1. Following the evaluation, which included site visits where appropriate, the Panel met on 17 September 2014 to form their recommendations to the Leader. These

recommendations, along with recommended conditions for the funding, are set out in Annex 2. There are 23 recommended projects, which total £568,786.

Update on the bids agreed in 2013/14

5. In 2013/14, bids to the Community Improvements Fund were considered in two rounds, with a total of £1,002,977 allocated to 32 projects. A summary of the progress on the bids is attached at Annex 3.
6. Of these 32 bids, eleven of the projects have been completed, and fifteen of the projects have had payment and are in the process of completing the works.
7. One of the organisations has met their conditions and has been sent a funding agreement form, which when returned, funds will be released. The conditions set for four of the bids, which include relevant planning permission and remaining funding being in place, have yet to be met. Officers are in contact with these organisations on a regular basis to review progress against the conditions and will release the remaining funding as soon as the conditions are satisfied.
8. One of the projects will not be proceeding, and the funds have returned to this year's fund budget.

CONSULTATION:

9. The Leader of the Council introduced the scheme and Members appointed by the Leader sat on the Panel alongside the Community Partnerships Manager. The Community Partnerships Team liaised with applicants in developing their bids by providing guidance regarding the criteria.
10. Local Members and Local Committee Chairmen were consulted on the bids in their areas. Where bids had an implication on Surrey County Council services, officers within these services were asked to provide objective comments on the bids.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

11. There are no identifiable negative risks attributed to the processing of the Fund. The Council needs to ensure that the payments are processed in a timely manner and for the projects approved. Each of the successful projects will be asked to report back on the outcomes of the funding within twelve months.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

12. The cost of funding the projects identified within Annex 2 will be £568,786. This is £1,036 over the total funding budget. The Leader will need to decide whether to reduce the level of grants to match the funds available or to allocate the whole amount.
13. Given the requirement for grant recipients to meet specified conditions before funding is released, it is likely that a proportion of the allocated funding will not be paid within the current financial year. This will be requested as a budget carry forward into 2015/16 in order to meet the committed funding.

14. All of the bids are subject to the standard condition of – Subject to all funding and receipt of three competitive quotes. Any additional conditions are included in Annex 2.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

15. The Section 151 Officer's representative has considered all applications listed in Annex 2 and has attended meetings with the advisory panel to provide objective financial advice in relation to the proposed projects.
16. The Section 151 Officer confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed.
17. The grants proposed total £1,036 more than the funding available. However, given the likelihood of some grant payments being delayed until 2015/16 this is not considered material.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

18. The Scheme of Delegation includes reference to the Fund and authority has been allocated to the Community Partnerships Manager to process the approved funding. There are no further legal or legislative requirements relating to this Fund.
19. These grants are being made by the Council in accordance with its general powers of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, under which it is empowered to do anything that individuals generally do and this includes the power to do things for the benefit of persons resident or present in its area.

Equalities and Diversity

20. The Fund is open to groups (not individuals) who are applying on behalf of the community, but is not restricted to any specific groupings within the county.
21. The Community Partnership Team is currently reviewing progress of all projects successful in securing funding in 2012/13. As part of that review the Community Partnership Team will request feedback from applicants on how they felt the funding process worked to identify better methods of communicating with hard to reach groups.
22. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on criteria and process for applying for this Fund. It is available online for viewing.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

23. Applicants will be informed whether they have been successful and if so what course of action they need to undertake to receive the funding that has been allocated. This will include asking successful applicants to provide a copy of relevant quotes, where these have not been provided as part of the application. Where bidders have been unsuccessful, then they will also be informed of the decision, and will be offered feedback on their application.

24. Each of the successful applicants will be asked to provide evidence within 12 months of expenditure and the achievement of the outcomes set out within the bid form. This will then be included in a future report for the Leader.
25. Information on successful bids are included on the Council's website – www.surreycc.gov.uk/communityimprovementsfund.
-

Contact Officer:

James Painter, Community Partnerships Manager
Tel: 01372 832539 Email: james.painter@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

Nick Skellett (Panel Lead), Pat Frost, Fiona White, Peter Hickman and Susie Kemp (Panel Members).

Service Officers where appropriate and other agencies where appropriate.

Annexes:

Annex 1 - Criteria and Guidance for Community Improvements Fund

Annex 2 - Community Improvements Fund Panel Recommendations

Annex 3 – Summary of Successful Bids from Previous Years.

Sources/background papers:

- Community Improvement Fund Application Forms
- Community Improvement Fund Criteria and Guidance
- Community Improvement Fund Assessment summary documents