

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LEADER****DATE: 29 OCTOBER 2015****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 (9 October 2015) and agree which projects will be funded from the Community Improvements Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- (i) approves the proposed grant funding set out in Annex 2 from the Community Improvements Fund Budget, and
- (ii) notes the position of the applications agreed within the previous budget 2014/15.

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 2015/16 is £500,000. One project agreed in 2014/15 is not proceeding, so the funds that had been allocated to the project have been added to this, to give a revised fund total for 2015/16 of £550,000.
3. For 2015/16 the decision was taken to accept bids in a single round. Bids were invited from April to July 2015 for amounts between £10,000 and £30,000. A total of 65 bids were submitted, totalling £1,507,182.
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 Pat Frost (Panel Lead), Margaret Hicks, 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 9 October 2015 to form their recommendations to the Leader. These recommendations, along with recommended conditions for the funding, are set out in Annex 2. There are 27 recommended projects, which total £550,000.

Update on the bids agreed in 2014/15

5. In 2014/15, bids to the Community Improvements Fund were considered in one round, with a total of 23 recommended projects, which total £566,286. A summary of the progress on the bids is attached at Annex 3.
6. Of these 23 bids, 11 of the projects have been completed, and three of the projects have had payment and are in the process of completing the works. A total of £333,396 has been paid out to organisations, leaving £232,890 to be paid.
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 eight 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.

CONSULTATION:

8. The Leader of the Council introduced the scheme, and Members appointed by the Leader sat on the Panel alongside the Community Partnerships Team Leader and the Senior Principal Accountant for Customers and Communities. The Community Partnerships Team liaised with applicants in developing their bids by providing guidance regarding the criteria.
9. 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:

10. 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 12 months.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

11. The cost of funding the projects identified within Annex 2 will be £550,000. This matches the amount available for the fund.
12. 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 2016/17 in order to meet the committed funding.
13. All of the bids are subject to the standard conditions i.e. all funding for the project being confirmed and receipt of three competitive quotes. Where the grant is funding one element within a larger project, the project commencement relates to

the element being funded, to be assessed by officers. Any additional conditions are included in Annex 2.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

14. 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.
15. The Section 151 Officer confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed. Where commentaries have been provided to the Panel, quoted shortfalls are based upon position subject to receipt of the Community Improvements Fund grant.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

16. 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.
17. 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

18. 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.
19. The Community Partnership Team is currently reviewing progress of all projects successful in securing funding in 2014/15. 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.
20. 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:

21. 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, they will also be informed of the decision, and will be offered feedback on their application.
22. 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.
23. Information on successful bids are included on the Council's website – www.surreycc.gov.uk/communityimprovementsfund.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Pat Frost (Panel Lead), Margaret Hicks, Peter Hickman and Fiona White.
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

Sources/background papers:

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