

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LEADER**

**DATE: 14 NOVEMBER 2013**

**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 recommendation of the Community Improvements Panel following a site visit to The Woodland Trust – Marden Park on Tuesday 8 October 2013 and agree that the Woodland Trust receive funding from the Community Improvements Fund.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council approves the proposed grant funding of £17,000 to The Woodland Trust from the Community Improvements Fund Budget as set out in Annex 3.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

**DETAILS:**

**Business Case**

1. On 12 February 2013, an increased Community Improvements Fund of £1 million for 2013/14 was announced for further investment in local projects, making a real difference to people's lives and help residents independently enhance where they live.
2. Bids for between £10,000 and £50,000 were invited for one-off capital schemes for community improvements (in exceptional circumstances bids for start-up revenue projects would be considered) between 1 April and 28 June 2013.
3. A total of 94 bids were submitted via the Community Partnerships Team and considered by a Community Improvements Panel consisting of Nick Skellett (Panel Lead), Pat Frost, Peter Hickman and Fiona White.
4. The Panel considered all bids submitted against the evaluation criteria outlined in Annex 1 and made recommendations for funding to the Leader.
5. At the Leader Decision meeting on 11 September 2013, the recommendations from the Panel were approved with the exception of The Woodlands Trust bid (Annex 2). The Leader requested additional information relating to the project be

submitted to the Community Partnership Team and a site visit to the project be arranged prior to the approval of any funds being released.

6. The Lead Member on the Member Advisory Panel (Nick Skellett) and the Community Partnerships Manager accompanied by the Divisional member for Caterham Valley Mrs Sally Marks attended a site visit to Marden Park on the morning of Tuesday 8 October 2013 arranged by the Woodland Trust.
7. The visit confirmed that Marden Park was a much valued local asset, accessible to all, which is widely used by a large cross section of the local community for educational and recreational purposes.
8. The Woodland Trust representatives were able to demonstrate the importance of Marden Park as a site in relation to bio diversity and habitat protection. The visit highlighted the importance of the Woodlands Trust bid to the site as this project will further enhance access to and awareness of this Woodland habitat for the benefit of all residents through the provision of waymarked routes and an enhanced car park.
9. The outcomes of the site visit were considered by members of the Community Improvements Fund advisory panel on the afternoon of Tuesday 8 October, where the Panel recommended that £17,000 be awarded to The Woodlands Trust for the capital elements of the project which most closely met the criteria of this specific fund, this included car park re-grading, French drain, signs, posts and interpretation boards as set out in Annex 3.
10. Additional comments were sought from the Divisional member for Caterham Valley Mrs Sally Marks, who has confirmed support for the project.

### **Background**

11. In December 2011, the Leader of Surrey County Council announced the introduction of a Community Improvements Fund of £750,000 to be allocated to community projects in Surrey in 2012/13.
12. The aim of the fund was 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. In the first year of operation, the fund proved extremely popular with approximately 200 bids submitted and over 30 community groups successful in their applications.

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| <b><u>CONSULTATION:</u></b> |
|-----------------------------|

13. The Leader of the Council introduced the scheme, and Members appointed by the Leader sat on the Panel alongside the Assistant Chief Executive. The Community Partnerships Team liaised with applicants in developing their bids by providing guidance regarding the criteria.
14. 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:**

15. 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**

16. The cost of funding the project identified within Annex 3 will be £17,000. There is £443,750 remaining in the Community Improvements Fund Budget for the 2013/14 financial year. This proposal is within the agreed revenue budget. The Panel will be making recommendations on the second round of bidding for decision early in the New Year.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

17. The Section 151 Officer confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed.

### **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. The applicant 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.

24. 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 bidders are included on the Council's website – [www.surreycc.gov.uk/communityimprovementsfund](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/communityimprovementsfund).
  26. A further report will be brought to the Leaders Decision Making Meeting in January 2014 on the Community Improvements Fund following the closing of the second round of funding bids on 24 October 2013.
- 

**Contact Officer:**

James Painter, Community Partnerships Manager  
Tel: 01372 832539 Email: [james.painter@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:james.painter@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Consulted:**

Nick Skellett (Panel Lead), Pat Frost, Fiona White and Peter Hickman, 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 – Woodland Trust application

Annex 3 - Community Improvements Fund Panel Recommendations Woodland Trust

**Sources/background papers:**

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