

**CABINET- 29 March 2022****COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT, & HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE****SCRUTINY OF:**

- Your Fund Surrey

**Date Considered: 8 March 2022**

As part of regular scrutiny and monitoring process, the Community, Environment and Highways Select Committee received a Your Fund Surrey (YFS) update report. YFS is the County Council's flagship fund, focused on bringing community led and initiated projects to life which benefit the wider community and leave a lasting legacy. £100 million of funding is available over a five-year period to support capital, one-off costs, for projects that have the support of the local community and fit with the aims of Surrey's Community Vision 2030.

The fund opened on 1 March 2021. Just over one year into a five-year scheme, it has prompted 1,278 ideas which have been placed onto the interactive Your Fund Surrey map, with those ideas being further discussed and developed. Until recently, a total of 222 applications had been submitted and there are currently 152 live applications with funding awarded to four projects so far totalling £632,863. Each application is subject to a rigorous assessment process by officers, to ensure any proposed project meets the aims and published criteria of the fund.

In overviewing the progress of the YFS and after careful deliberation, the Select Committee is of the view that the number of Your Fund Surrey approvals has been disappointing in contrast to the ambitions expressed in the July 2020 Cabinet Report. Consequently, the Select Committee agreed its recommendations which are outlined below for Cabinet to consider.

**RESOLVED:**

Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee expresses its concern that the number of Your Fund Surrey (YFS) approvals has been disappointing in contrast to the ambitions expressed in the July 2020 Cabinet Report. The Select Committee:

- i. Strongly advocates that the rate of progress dramatically accelerates in the next two years and calls on the Cabinet to institute immediate action to ensure delivery with an update report (in 9 months) to the Select Committee.
- ii. Expects the process for small bids to be 'short-form' in scope to encourage applications as intended in July 2020 and expediate the entire process so intended delivery gathers space.
- iii. Urges improvement in Member engagement by YFS team and the Council (including proactive communication with local Divisional Members about projects/applications in their area including relevant boroughs and districts).

**Cabinet Member Response:**

Your Fund Surrey (YFS) is a ground-breaking “first” for this authority and a crucial component of the Council’s commitment to Empower Communities, delivering a lasting investment for our residents.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee (CEHSC) for scrutinising an update report on Your Fund Surrey at their session on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 and for allowing me to address the panel, participate in the session and answer questions raised by the panel, in consultation with officers.

I note that the Select Committee proposed several recommendations to improve the operation of the fund and efficiency with which applications are addressed. Below are the responses to the identified areas.

1. *(CEHSC) Strongly advocates that the rate of progress dramatically accelerates in the next two years and calls on the Cabinet to institute immediate action to ensure delivery with an update report (in 9 months) to the Select Committee.*

Your Fund Surrey (YFS) is designed to harness the positive visions from our communities, to help deliver resident’s big ambitions, to be inclusive, to stimulate conversations, and improve wellbeing for every local area and group in Surrey.

The fund is now into its second year and is gathering momentum, it was launched during unprecedented times with Covid and further communications to residents is planned for the coming Summer.

Funding has already been granted to several projects that are going to make a real difference in their communities. In the past month alone, a further three communities’ projects have been approved with applications amounting to £813,500, with awarded funding now totalling £1,446,363 across seven projects.

Intentionally, and in response to feedback received from stakeholders, there are no established targets for the spending or number of projects to be approved set for the fund. At this time there are tens of millions of pounds worth of projects logged on the system, with applications underway at various stages, and our excellent project team working through to support them. The YFS team are now working to a 3 to 6-month turnaround for full applications and it is expected that current outstanding projects will be processed in the coming months.

An update report will be brought before the committee in nine months.

2. *(CEHSC) Expects the process for small bids to be 'short-form' in scope to encourage applications as intended in July 2020 and expediate the entire process so intended delivery gathers space.*

A central premise of the fund is that it has one open clear transparent application process which is open to all communities. The use of new tools such as Commonplace has ensured broad and wide-ranging awareness and access to the fund in line with the fairness, proportionality and no one left behind objectives.

The fund is open 24-7 for applications and designed without funding rounds or deadlines for applicants so as to ensure applicants can apply at a time of their choosing. YFS officers are in constant communication with applicants to help them and keep them updated, supporting them with the process. All applicants are offered regular 1-2-1 meetings and weekly Q&As to discuss their projects.

A key design principal of the fund is its iterative design, the team are constantly looking to improve all aspects of the fund based on feedback. The team are conscious to find the right balance of being prudent and responsible with public money, while stimulating big ideas and simplifying the process for applicants.

A process review into the operation of the fund is currently underway with the assistance of Officers in Transformation and IT & Digital, to identify further areas to streamline the application process, improve the customer journey through YFS, and to develop a toolkit for best practice. The insights from this review are being implemented into the assessment of smaller bids to ensure that these are expedited in an appropriate and timely manner.

The YFS Team are also developing a further suite of information for applicants following learning from year one including introducing more detailed and specific guidance on the process, specific areas such as procurement, and templates and case studies based on projects funded to date.

*3. (CEHSC) Urge's improvement in Member engagement by YFS team and the Council (including proactive communication with local Divisional Members about projects/applications in their area including relevant boroughs and districts).*

It is recognised that Members play a crucial role in relation to Your Fund by supporting the development and promotion of ideas in their communities.

The YFS Team have ensured that a high degree of timely information is provided to all members on Your Fund, via the provision of comprehensive regular monthly reporting via the Member Portal. The portal also hosts information and resources on the fund. Access to this information has been enhanced through the launch of the new "Customer & Communities Channel" in the Member's Portal, which will ensure information is available in an easily navigable format.

Member Seminars have been held to set out the role of Members in relation to the fund. A number of Your Fund question and answer sessions are being programmed for spring, providing an opportunity for all Members to speak with the YFS Team and ask any questions they may have in relation to the operation of the fund. The YFS Team are always available to answer questions that Members may have in relation to the fund, and we actively encourage Members to keep in contact with the Team for updates on applications in their area.

**Mark Nuti**  
**Cabinet Member for Communities**  
**29 March 2022**

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