

COMMUNITY FUND 2014-15
WDA/09/14

Recommendation

That Members:

1. Approve the allocation of funding in line with Option 4 (Regional and District Split) as detailed at paragraph 3.5; and
2. Agree the amendments to the annual scheme proposed in paragraph 4 of this report.

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COMMUNITY FUND 2014-15**WDA/09/14****Report of the Chief Executive****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the projects supported by the Community Fund for 2013-14.
- 1.2 Members are asked to approve the details of the annual scheme for the Community Fund in accordance with the policy framework. The options are set out in paragraph 3 and Option 4 (Regional and District split) is recommended.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority approved the Community Fund policy framework (Appendix 1) and the details of the 2013/14 Community Fund in April 2013 (WDA 12/13).
- 2.2 The Authority budget for the Community Fund 2013/14 was £225,986 with a £10,000 contribution from Veolia E.S through the WMRC contract. Veolia's contribution will remain at this level for 2014-15. The Authority's budget for 2014/15 approved by Members on 31st January 2014. This includes £100,000 with a further £70,000 being allocated for a Re-use Scheme. The Community Fund for 2014-15 will therefore total £110,000 and cover the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership area in line with previous years funding.
- 2.3 A series of eight workshops were held at venues in all six local authority areas by MRWA officers to engage with local organisations as potential applicants.
- 2.4 22 applications for funding were received with a total value of over £352,000 significantly over the available budget. Unfortunately despite workshops and promotion undertaken, no applications were received from Sefton and only one application from Halton and St Helens.

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- 2.5 Members supported 16 projects across Merseyside and Halton. (WDA 31/13) as listed at Appendix 2 to a maximum of £20,000 per application.
- 2.6 Organisations agreed deliverable outputs for the Projects and funding was awarded to successful applicants during October and November 2013. Authority Officers held a Communications workshop to help projects build capacity into proposed work plans to maximise publicity and improve monitoring of projects. This work has included a new Community Fund logo, the launch of a Community Fund newsletter, a new MRWA website page and project support by MRWA officers.
- 2.7 Final and interim reports are being returned for the 2013-14 fund and the successful delivery and outputs of the projects will be reported to Members in due course.
- 2.8 A survey was conducted by MRWA officers to evaluate the success of the application process for funding in 2013-14. There has been a positive response from organisations who have received community funding (see Appendix 4) and their feedback has informed the development of the proposals and criteria being put forward for 2014-15.

3. Community Fund Options for Apportionment 2014-15

- 3.1 In line with the policy framework, Members are asked to consider the options for the apportionment of the fund into lots and agree the criteria for the annual scheme against which projects will be assessed. All projects will need to meet the minimum 40% scoring threshold within the evaluation process to be eligible for funding. An evaluation panel of senior officers from MRWA and Veolia will be convened to put forward funding recommendations for Members to approve at a Meeting of the Authority.

3.2 Apportionment Option One: Merseyside and Halton wide projects only

The maximum award for an approved project will be £20,000. Applications must cover all six districts of Merseyside and Halton. This would offer benefits across all the City Region and should provide value for money, economies of scale and maximise environmental impacts but there is a risk this option would not support small scale local community initiatives.

3.3 Apportionment Option Two: General

This option retains the current funding programme which is to accept applications for projects for single districts up to regional wide projects. It is

proposed to reduce the maximum award for an approved project to £10,000 to encourage more applications for local community initiatives. Recommendations for the awards will be based on a project's ranking in the evaluation process above the 40% threshold so all applications will be in competition with each other. This option would ensure that the projects offering the best value and maximum outputs would be put forward to Members. However, there is a risk that there may be no bids that can be supported at a district level and the local area may only benefit from regional projects so more promotion work may need to be undertaken by MRWA and district officers early in the application process.

3.4 Apportionment Option Three: District Based

The fund will be split equally between each district (£18,333) and applications will be evaluated and ranked separately for each district. The maximum award per application will be £5,000. There will be a cap on applications of £20,000 per organisation in this Option to avoid duplicate submissions across all districts which could effectively result in regional projects being offered more funding than those in Option One. All projects submitted must exceed the 40% minimum threshold but by basing this option on a geographical split, members need to agree that this is appropriate especially if there are schemes in other districts that may provide better value for money. Should there be districts where there are no applications or only one project that scores below the minimum quality threshold then Members will be asked to choose to allocate the funding to other projects. This option would support local activity but may fail to support region wide projects which could offer economies of scale. This option could potentially increase competition between local organisations for funding and discourage opportunities for joint working between applicants which has been a successful output from the current year's Fund.

3.5 Apportionment Option Four: Regional and District Split

This option will split the fund with £40,000 to be allocated for up to three region wide projects with a maximum award of £20,000 for any one project. The remaining £70,000 will be to award up to £10,000 per project at individual district level. Any unspent funding in the regional projects will be reallocated to the district level projects. Following evaluation recommendations for district awards will be made spatially on the basis of the best scored for each district and then the second best until the maximum budget is spent and as long as all eligible projects meet the

minimum 40% threshold. This option provides opportunities to fund a wider spread of projects at both regional and district level. This proposed funding split gains the benefits identified in the other options, ensures a spatial distribution of awards whilst maintaining best value and should help to reduce the risk of no applications being submitted for any particular district. The Authority will also be able to continue to advise and support all approved projects to encourage further joint working.

4. Project Application Process and Evaluation Criteria

- 4.1 It is proposed to use the current application form with minor changes (dependent on the option for apportionment chosen by Members). Projects will be assessed and scored against the same ten criteria listed in Appendix 2 but there will be no individual minimum score threshold for each criterion as all projects will be evaluated.
- 4.2 In response to applicants' views in the survey, it is proposed to help simplify the application process. The form will not require details of two of the evaluation measure (cost of waste promotion activities, and calculating the CO2 reduction). This information on value for money and carbon impacts will be calculated by MRWA officers from the information provided in the submission and applicants will be advised how we intend to calculate these as part of the application brief.

5. Workshops

- 5.1 The 8 advisory workshops organised last year for potential applicants proved very successful. However, they were resource intensive and attendance was low at some events. As there will be limited changes to the application process for this round, it is proposed that, should Members approve the recommendations, two Community Fund workshop days will be held at MRWA offices and in other districts upon request where district officers have engaged with potential applicants and there is a recognised high level of demand for a local workshop.

6. Risk Implications

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating (L)	Consequence Rating (C)	Risk Value (L x C = RV)	Mitigation	Mitigated Risk Value
Over subscription to the fund	3	4	12	Ensure criteria for evaluation are appropriate and set minimum threshold for scoring to award fund.	8

Making the funding process too complicated and deterring potential applicants	3	4	12	Amend criteria to be simpler to complete applications and arrange awareness workshops.	8
Risk that there is unsatisfactory uptake or applications are not received from individual district areas.	3	4	12	Improved targeted communications and value of fund in promotions. Increase working with districts and local networks to spread message to organisations and ensure timetable meets applicants' needs.	8
The CV sector not being supported in the right way	3	4	12	Ensure the Fund is improved based on feedback from participating organisations and districts to ensure awards meet the requirements of the sector and opportunities to support are not missed.	6
Ensure process control measures are appropriate to ensure quality and value for money applications are awarded in order to comply with the Authority's Best Value duties.	3	3	9	Fund policy framework has clear criteria, delegations to officers as appropriate and minimum scoring thresholds below which awards would not be made.	3
Opportunities for working / supporting the CV sector are missed.	3	3	9	Improve communication process to signpost more CV sector groups to funding availability.	2

7. HR Implications

- 7.1 The revisions to the Community Fund will simplify the process for applicants but will increase MRWA officer involvement in the assessment and evaluation processes and require on-going resources for project management and communications support.

8. Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The Fund policy framework aims to deliver corporate objectives and all three funding options and the criteria for applications will provide environmental benefits.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The £100,000 contribution from the Authority was included in the budget approved by Members on 31st January 2014. The policy and funding procedures for the Community Fund will ensure that the control measures proposed are commensurate to the budget and risks associated with achieving value for money. These measures also ensure the Community Fund is in line with the Authority's Best Value and fiduciary obligations.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 The approved Community Fund policy framework allows for changes to be made to the annual scheme following approval of the budget and ensure control measures are in place which protect the public purse and meet Best Value requirements.
- 10.2 The 2013/14 Community Fund has proved successful and a number of good quality projects were submitted and are being delivered. Feedback from successful applicants has demonstrated the application process, funding and support by MRWA officers has been very satisfactory.
- 10.3 The proposed changes to the application form and revised methods for scoring should help to make the application process clearer for organisations to submit quality proposals and the options reflect the level of funding being made available this year.
- 10.4 The proposed options for apportionment of the fund address the Authority's support for larger region wide projects (in Options 1, 2 and 4) which may offer economies of scale and greater environmental benefits, alongside support for more local community initiatives (Options 2, 3 and 4). The Fund needs to ensure a high standard of governance and the delivery of sustainable waste management projects being undertaken across the

partnership which demonstrate the added value of the financial contribution from the Authority to support initiatives by schools, communities and voluntary organisations in the region.

- 10.5 Option 4 (Regional and District funding split) in paragraph 3.5 is recommended to Members for approval.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972:

Community Fund 2014-15

Appendix 1 Community Fund Policy Framework

Appendix 2 Community Fund Assessment 2014-15

Appendix 3 Community Fund Projects 2013-14

Appendix 4 Summary of Survey of Applicants and Interested Parties