

COMMUNITY FUND 2016-17
WDA/02/16

Recommendation

That Members:

1. Approve the allocation of funding in line with Option 1 (Status Quo) as detailed at paragraph 3.2 of this report.

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Community Fund 2016-17
WDA/02/16

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the Community Fund 2016-17 options set out at paragraph 3 and agree Option 1 (Status Quo with communications savings) as recommended.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority approved the Community Fund policy framework and changes to the annual scheme for the 2015-16 Community Fund in February 2015 (Report WDA 03/15).
- 2.2 This introduced changes:
- To introduce an Expressions of Interest (EOI) first stage element of the application process which covered the output requirements (quantitative criteria) of the project and addressed due diligence issues; and
 - A second stage to invite successful applications to submit full applications including full project management plans and risk assessment (the qualitative criteria).
- 2.3 31 projects were received and the Fund was significantly over subscribed with £350,641 worth of bids for a Fund of £110,000. Projects were split between regional and district level with a maximum award of £25,000 per regional proposal and £8,000 per district proposal.
- 2.4 Members supported 10 projects in April 2015 to the value of £105,200 (Report WDA 11/15) with 3 regional projects worth £62,000 and 7 district projects worth £43,200. The remaining £4,800 of the Fund was allocated to a communications support package for the 10 projects.
- 2.5 The revised approach allowed a 2015-16 Fund launch in February 2015. This allowed payments to be made to successful applicants by the end of May 2015, in line with Internal Audit recommendations and two months earlier than the previous year. This has resulted in the period for project

delivery being extended to nine months up to 31st March 2016. The EOI stage was easier for applicants to complete which saved time and resources for their organisations. The stage also replaced the complex and intensive competitive scoring evaluation required in previous years which needed significant staff resources to undertake.

2.6 An infographic and summary of outputs from the previous 2014-15 Community Fund is attached at Appendices 1-3 which presents the successful outputs and outcomes delivered by the 14 projects that year from a total Community Fund pot of £179,629. This included:

- 743 tonnes diverted from landfill;
- 619 tonnes reduction in CO2e emissions;
- 159.8 full time equivalent jobs created or safeguarded;
- £74,300 financial savings in landfill costs (based on circa £100 per tonne combined landfill tax and indicative gate fees);
- 27,891 people directly engaged in the projects and a further 136,940 people reached through wider engagement; and
- 322 volunteers participated in projects.

2.7 These outputs demonstrate the major social benefits and positive sustainability impacts of the Fund on local communities and for the City Region. Highlights of 2014-15 include:

- 481 free packs of reused furniture provided to vulnerable individuals or families in critical need;
- Creation of an 'Inspiration Hall' as a new community venue for vulnerable women following refurbishment of a disused school hall in Birkenhead using reused materials;
- 3 vacant units owned by a Housing Association brought into use and converted into community shops for short term affordable leases to sell items for reuse;
- Community workshops held across the City Region to improve peoples' skills to repair and re-use/upcycle and sell unwanted furniture and textiles;

- Development of a Recycling Superstore in Seaforth which has provided local homeless people with housing, employment and training opportunities; and,
- 20 'Mersey Waste Munchers' cookery clubs set up with schools for local children and their families to change behaviours on food shopping and learning to cook to improve health, reduce food waste and save money.

Building on the Authority's Community Fund over the last few years these examples illustrate the potential of resource reuse to transform lives and revitalise neighbourhoods and communities. Projects have taken opportunities to work together to increase resources, exchange materials and benefit from each other's expertise. The success of the Fund was recognised at the 2015 National LARAC Awards where the Community Fund was one of three finalists in the 'Best Waste Minimisation or Prevention Project of the Year' award category. The legacy of the fund is that the projects supported continue to deliver benefits through the skills growth and behavioural change invested in residents and communities as well as gaining value to the City Region from the resources that would have otherwise been wasted and sent to landfill.

3. Community Fund Options for 2016-17

The priority themes proposed this year in options 1 and 2 remain the same as 2015-16 focusing on waste prevention, reuse and recycling of waste from households. Food waste prevention would be re-introduced as WRAP financial support through the Love Food Hate Waste 10 Cities Challenge ends in March 2016. The simplified two stage application process successfully introduced last year will continue and the Fund policy framework remains unchanged from 2015-16. All documents are available on request and the application forms will be added to the Authority website. In line with the policy framework, Members are asked to consider the options for the size and apportionment of the fund into lots. The overall Fund budget totals include Veolia's contribution of £10,000. Three options are identified below:

3.1 Option One: Status Quo (Recommended)

This option is for a budget of £100,000 plus Veolia's contribution of £10,000. As in 2015-16, this option proposes £48,000 would be awarded at individual district level up to a maximum of £8,000 for projects per district. The remaining £52,000 will be awarded to region wide projects

(covering all six districts across the City Region) with a maximum award of £25,000 per project. Any underspend of the regional pot will be reallocated to the district level projects and vice versa if necessary. It is likely that this option will result in approximately 8-10 projects being funded by the Authority.

Option Two: City Region Projects Only and Savings

This option is to reduce the Fund to £80,000 with a reduction in Authority budget by 30% to a total of £70,000, plus the Veolia contribution of £10,000. The District element of the Fund would be removed to concentrate on regional projects across all six districts which tend to offer greater value for money. This would reduce the level of grants available and fund approximately 4 projects up to a maximum of £20,000 per project. There would also be a likely saving on officer time in managing the programme and supporting projects awarded funding. Reducing the level of funding further would not deliver the high level of outputs identified in the last three years set against the amount of officer time required to administer the scheme successfully.

3.2 Option Three: End the Community Fund

This option would end the Community Fund making a budget saving of £100,000 and would free up staff resources for other areas of work. The potential economic, social and environmental benefits of projects being awarded Community Funding in local communities would be lost and this is covered in the risk implications in paragraph 4.

4. Risk Implications

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Failure to gain economic, social and environmental benefits to the community by ending the fund. In recent years the Fund has made a significant	2	5	10	The Authority will continue to engage with local communities through other programmes commensurate with available budgets and staff resources, including initiatives on waste prevention and reuse but not to the level of local

<p>contribution to increased skills development, job creation and retention for local people and additional volunteering opportunities. Projects have increased residents awareness of waste and resource issues, through activities and to dampen the level of increases in household waste arisings as the economy improves. Benefits from the 2014-15 fund are summarised in the Appendices..</p>				<p>community support and benefits to the householders seen in projects delivered through the Community Fund.</p>
<p>Over subscription to the Fund.</p>	3	3	9	<p>The EOI document should be easier to evaluate by officers and sift out ineligible applications at an early stage.</p>
<p>Making the process too complicated and deter potential applicants.</p>	2	4	8	<p>EOI stage has successfully streamlined the process for applicants but still addresses the quality of bids and maximising value for money. The two</p>

				stage process allows projects to be funded earlier in the financial year.
Under subscription to the Fund.	2	4	8	The Fund has been over-subscribed in each of the last three years through active promotion and experience in launching the scheme each year.
The Community Voluntary sector is not being supported in the right way.	2	4	8	The 2-stage application improves support to the sector through savings in time and resources to organisations not putting in full applications at the start of the process that may be rejected. It also reflects the fact that community groups may have skills and good projects but not practiced in putting together detailed plans.
Challenge by unsuccessful applicants for the grant.	2	3	6	Members approve a policy framework and output criteria to be met. This ensures assessment methodology is equitably applied to all applications, including on a spatial approach for Option 1. Members do have to consider the political implications of the geographical

				distribution of the proposed successful applications (in Option 1).
Ensure process control measures are appropriate to ensure quality and value for money and applications are awarded in order to comply with the Authority's Best Value duties.	2	3	6	The policy framework approved by Members has clear criteria, financial thresholds and delegations to officers where appropriate. Funding has been determined as part of the overall budget setting process.

5. HR Implications

- 5.1 The level of on-going resources for project management and support will be suitable to the level of funding being proposed this financial year.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 The Fund policy framework aims to deliver corporate objectives. The criteria for applications will provide clear environmental benefits in reducing waste going to landfill, maximising resource efficiency and carbon benefits.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 A Community Fund contribution of £100k, based on Option 1, is included in the proposed revenue budget elsewhere on this agenda. If the proposed budget is approved and Members subsequently approve another Community Fund option in this report, this would have an impact on the General Fund.
- 7.2 The policy and funding procedures will ensure that the control measures proposed are commensurate to the budget and risks associated with achieving value for money.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The policy and funding procedure ensure the Community Fund is in line with the Authority's Best Value and fiduciary obligations and support the Authority's statutory duty to address the Waste Hierarchy in line with regulation 12 of the Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The options put forward for Community Fund 2016-17 address the Authority's continued support for local and larger region wide projects which may offer economies of scale and environmental, economic and social benefits. The Fund needs to maintain a high standard of governance and delivery of sustainable waste management projects across the City Region which supports the higher levels of the statutory waste hierarchy i.e. increased waste prevention, re-use and recycling.
- 9.2 The Fund aims to demonstrate the added value of any financial contribution from the Authority to support initiatives by schools, communities and voluntary organisations in the City Region.
- 9.3 Option 1 (Status Quo) in paragraph 3.2 is recommended to Members, subject to budget approval. Should Members take the decision to approve another option in this report, this would have an impact on the General Fund.

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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 - Nil.

Appendix 1: Community Fund 2014-15 Outputs Infographic
Appendix 2: Community Fund 2014-15 Outputs Summary Report
Appendix 3: Community Fund 2014-15 Outputs Summary Table 1