

COMMUNITY FUND 2017-18
WDA/26/16

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; and
2. Delegate powers of the Authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, to approve projects subject to the Community Fund being apportioned as above.

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Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the Community Fund 2017-18 options set out at paragraph 3 and agree Option 1 (Status Quo) as recommended.
- 1.2 To confirm Members agreement to delegate powers of the Authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, for approval of the projects to receive final awards for funding.

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). This included the introduction of a two stage streamlined application process that has now operated successfully for two years.
- 2.2 In the 2016-17 scheme 32 project Expressions of Interest (EOI) were received, one more than in 2015-16. Again, the Fund was significantly over subscribed with £314,523 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.
- 2.3 Members supported 10 projects in April 2016 to the value of £107,690 (Report WDA 10/16), although the total reduced to £104,420 after one project reduced its grant request by £3,270 in light of work completed prior to the final award decision. Of the 10 projects there were 3 regional projects worth £63,690 and 7 district projects worth £40,730. The remaining £5,580 of the Fund was allocated to communications support for the 10 projects.
- 2.4 The 2016-17 Fund was launched in February 2016. Grant payments were initiated to successful applicants before the end of May 2016 giving recipients at least nine months to 31st March 2017 to deliver their projects. The EOI stage introduced in the 2015-16 scheme again

succeeded in making the application process simpler for applicants to complete and for officers to evaluate.

2.5 All 10 projects from the 2015-16 year were successfully delivered and overall outputs are summarised below:

- 680 tonnes diverted from landfill;
- 763 tonnes reduction in CO2e emissions;
- 71 full time equivalent jobs created or safeguarded;
- £68,000 financial savings in landfill costs (based on circa £100 per tonne combined landfill tax and indicative gate fees);
- 24,256 people directly engaged in the projects and a further 279,530 people reached through wider engagement; and
- 253 volunteers participated in projects contributing 61,126 voluntary hours.

2.6 These outputs demonstrate the major social benefits and positive sustainability impacts of the Fund on local communities and for the City Region. Highlights of 2015-16 include:

- Community workshops held across the City Region to improve peoples' skills to repair and re-use/upcycle and sell unwanted furniture;
- Sewing courses to improve peoples' skills in textiles repair and reuse and production of 8 Community Patchworks out of recycled materials telling the stories of different cultural groups in Wirral;
- Creation of a permaculture garden from reused materials with schoolchildren in Haydock promoting practical ways to reduce waste and a new community allotments site in Billinge;
- Bicycle refurbishment training for young adults and the wider community with monthly sales of repaired bikes in Huyton and growth of a community cycling business providing affordable reused bikes for residents in Kensington;
- A programme of home visits across the City Region providing waste prevention, reuse and recycling help and advice making homes safer for elderly and vulnerable residents;

- Development of a Recycling Superstore in Seaforth to provide local volunteers and homeless people with housing, employment and training opportunities.

2.7 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. The projects have delivered a wide range of activities which have utilised waste resources and nurtured the growth of a circular economy knowledge and skills base in the City Region. This has facilitated upskilling of the wider community and provided them with the tools to save money, prevent waste and reuse resources. Projects have taken opportunities to work together to increase resources, exchange materials and benefit from each other's expertise. 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 2017-18

3.1 The priority themes proposed this year in options 1 and 2 below remain the same as 2016-17 with a broad focus area of waste prevention, reuse and recycling of waste from households. The two stage application process will continue and the Fund policy framework remains unchanged. All documents will be 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:

3.2 Option One: Status Quo (Recommended)

This option is for a budget of £100,000 plus Veolia's contribution of £10,000. As in 2016-17, 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 £62,000 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 9 -11 projects being funded by the Authority.

3.3 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 recent years set against the amount of officer time required to administer the scheme successfully.

3.4 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 5.

4. Community Fund Approval Process

- 4.1 It is proposed to change the timetable for the Fund in 2017-18 to allow grant payments for successful projects to be issued earlier in the year. If approved, the Fund would be launched and opened for EOIs from early January 2017 which is a change from the current early February launch timescale. Subject to budget approval, it is proposed that delegated powers are given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, for approval of projects to receive final awards for funding. Final outcomes from the 2016-17 round and projects receiving funding in the 2017-18 round would be reported to the Authority at a later date. Grants would be issued during April rather than the current end of May / early June timescale. This would give projects an additional 4 – 6 weeks and a total of 11 months for project delivery with projects completing by end March 2018. If a decision was taken in February 2017 not to approve the budget then the application process could be terminated at the EOI stage before significant time had been invested in the process by either the Authority or applicants.
- 4.2 If Members agree to the changes which delegate the administration of the fund to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairperson, it would

be subject to the Chief Executive only agreeing projects which meet the policy framework and the apportionment of the fund to be agreed at this meeting. The policy framework and apportionment would be reported each year for Members to determine.

5. Risk Implications

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Launching the Fund but not receiving subsequent budget approval.	2	5	10	The Fund application process could be terminated after the EOI Stage if the budget was not approved. This would halt the process before significant time had been invested by either the Authority or applicants and before any grant payments had been made or committed.
Failure to gain economic, social and environmental benefits to the community by ending the fund. In recent years the Fund has made a significant contribution to increased skills development, job creation and retention for local people, additional volunteering opportunities	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 community support and benefits to the householders seen in projects delivered through the Community Fund.

and increased residents awareness of waste and resource issues.				
Over subscription to the Fund.	3	3	9	The EOI document is easier to evaluate by officers and sift out ineligible applications at an early stage.
Under subscription to the Fund.	2	4	8	The Fund has been over-subscribed in recent 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.
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.

6. HR Implications

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

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 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.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Community Fund proposals set out in this report will be subject to budgetary approval being forthcoming when the Authority considers the overall budget in February 2017.

9. Legal Implications

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

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The options put forward for Community Fund 2017-18 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 Option 1 (Status Quo) in paragraph 3.2 is recommended to Members. This option is for a budget of £100,000 plus Veolia's contribution of £10,000.
- 10.4 The report seeks to streamline the approval process granting authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, to make final payments, allowing further time for successful applicants to deliver their project. The decision as to the policy framework and apportionment will continue to be the subject of an annual report to Members.

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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.