

COMMUNITY FUND 2020-21 PROGRESS, 2021-2022 PROGRAMME
WDA/08/21

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note the progress of the 2020-21 Community Fund Projects.
2. Note the programme for Community Fund 2021-2022.

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COMMUNITY FUND - 2020-21 PROGRESS AND 2021-2022 PROGRAMME
WDA/08/21

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the progress of the 2020-2021 Community Fund projects.
- 1.2. Members are asked to note the programme for the 2021-22 Community Fund.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Community Fund budget for 2020-2021 was agreed at the 7th February Authority Meeting, (WDA/03/20), at £150,000 and together with Veolia £15,000 contribution, gave a funding pot of £165,000
- 2.2 Funding for 2020-21 was allocated between regional and district level projects, with a maximum award of £30,000 for a regional project, covering at least 3 district areas, and a maximum of £8,000 for a district project.
- 2.3 The Community Fund 2020-2021 was launched on 17th February 2020 with a submission window of four weeks and applications returned by 15th March 2020. Thirty five organisations submitted applications.
- 2.4 The assessment of the 2020-2021 Community Fund coincided with the first Covid-19 lockdown period issued by Government on 23rd March 2020. At that time, with the consequences of the pandemic unknown, the assessment process continued, and applications assessed in line with the approved criteria. There was a follow up consultation with the Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) applicants to review and consider measures for Covid-19, and to determine ability to deliver projects.
- 2.5 At the June 2020 Authority meeting Members approved the Urgent Decision (WDA/10/20) taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson. This decision progressed support for the 2020-2021 funding.

- 2.6 The recommended projects considered the outcome of the review and noted the increased risks to the Fund due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members also agreed the 2020-21 project delivery time be extended by 3 months until June 2021.
- 2.7 To minimise the risk of financial default, Members agreed that awards would be made by two or three interim stage payments, paid in advance, with further interim payments being dependent upon ongoing progress of a project.
- 2.8 Initially, 15 projects were allocated funding of £151,854; that was 4 Regional projects funded with £78,238. and 11 District projects with £73,616.

3. 2020-2021 Progress

3.1 As mentioned in 2.6 above, 2020-2021 project delivery will not be completed until June 2021, Organisations will submit a final project report by 28th July 2021. The final outcomes and outputs for the 2020-2021 programme will be reported to the Authority at the November Authority Meeting.

- 3.2 The payment of funding was delayed until after the first lockdown period and stage 1 interim advance payments were made in July 2020. Project monitoring determined sufficient progress was being made and stage 2 interim payments were made in October 2020.
- 3.3 By the end of January 2021 13 Organisations had sufficient progress to receive the final interim payment. In total £135,051 was paid in funding. i.e. 3 regional projects totalling £67,941 and 10 District projects totalling £67,110
- 3.4 Two projects did not make sufficient progress to receive further interim payments. United Giving suspended the 'United Together' Regional furniture project due to the first national lockdown. The project was reviewed in November 2020 when it was hoped that project delivery would resume in January 2021. Due to the 3rd lockdown the project could not go ahead. United Giving returned the stage 1 payment of £3,432 to the Authority in March 2021.
- 3.5 In December 2020 Emmaus Merseyside repaid £2167 funding, the initial stage 1 payment, for 'The Reuse Crafting Courtyard' as the project did not go ahead due to staffing issues.
- 3.6 England has been placed in national lockdown three times since the start of the pandemic which has severely restricted the CVS ability to progress

projects as initially planned. Covid-19 restrictions will continue to impact as national unlocking is not anticipated until after 21st June 2021 at the earliest, just as projects should be completing.

- 3.7 Organisations continue to deliver projects to a revised plan in these exceptional times, many have adapted delivery methods e.g. hosting training and skills sessions digitally. Progress for six months, July to December 2020, is shown in the output table below. Further detail for the second quarter covering Oct-Dec is shown in Appendix 1.

	Original Output	July – Dec 2020	% achieved in 6 months
Tonnage Diverted	826	89	11%
Direct Engagement	41,939	7,755	0.2%
Volunteer Hours	26,071	6,356	18%
Community Events	90	39	24%
Training Sessions	546	227	43%
wider engagement	0	22,448	

- 3.8 The direct engagement output appears low, mainly due to restrictions on face-to-face activities, but wider engagement has been increased due to contact on digital platforms and social media. It should be noted that food waste prevention tonnages will be collated at the end of project delivery in June 2021.

Positive activities of note.

- Media coverage has been good with some positive news articles and radio appearances on BBC Radio Merseyside.
- Projects are being creative on YouTube and zoom, and some good skills-based sessions have taken place on these platforms.
- Some Organisations have seen increased donations of textiles and furniture, assumed as a result of 'stay at home' sorting.
- Centre 63 won the Echo Charity of the Year award for their work with vulnerable young people.
- There has been some good collaborations between CVS and other Organisations e.g. working with emergency support services

providing crisis furniture, food packs, textiles for the homeless, and sewing face masks and other items for vulnerable adults.

- 3.8 The impact, outcomes and meaning created through the Community Fund 2020-21 in terms of social value should not be underestimated. Understanding the true performance and value delivered will be reported to Authority after project completion in June.
- 3.9 It is clear that social value impacts have strong connections for the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals. Significant social value learning will come from the 2020-21 programme. Going forward, social value accounting will be incorporated into the Community Fund Policy Framework to embed this into the principals of the programme.
- 3.10 Three lockdown periods, social isolation, and containment measures has significantly impacted the CVS' ability to achieve original outputs. Organisations have again expressed thanks to the Authority for continued support during this pandemic. All 13 Organisations are using best endeavours to complete projects by June 2021.

4. Community Fund 2021- 2022

- 4.1 Members approved the Authority budget at the 5th February 2021 Meeting, with £150,000 allocated to the Community Fund 2021-2022, together with a £15,000 contribution from Veolia giving a funding pot of £165,000.
- 4.2 The Community Fund 2021-2022 was launched on 8th February, with a five-week application period until 14th March 2021. The application and guidance documents have been made available to Members.
- 4.3 The Community Fund process for 2021-22 will again make payment of funding in stages, with interim payments made in advance. Continued payments will be subject to ongoing progress of projects.
- 4.4 As in recent years, projects in 2021-2022 will be allocated between regional and district level with a maximum award of £30,000 for a regional application and a maximum of £8,000 for a district proposal.
- 4.5 Members may note that for the 2021-2022 Funding 48 applications have been received, that is 12 Regional projects and 36 District specific projects. A list of applications and the funding requested is shown in Appendix 2. As in previous years, the fund was oversubscribed. The cost to support all the

projects submitted would have required a budget spend of £421,184 i.e. 2.6 times the available £165,000 budget.

- 4.6 It is hoped that the assessment process and due diligence of applications will be completed by mid-April. Subject to the current Community Fund Policy Framework, the Chief Executive will continue with the procedure of consulting Members on the final list of preferred projects. After which the Chief Executive will use delegated powers, in consultation with the Chairperson, to approve the projects to receive funding in 2021-2022.
- 4.7 Stage 1 payment of the funding will be made in May and projects will commence by June 2021, to give Community Organisations 10 months in which to deliver and complete projects. Members should be aware that there could be changes to the programme dates dependent upon any necessary response to ongoing Covid-19 measures.
- 4.8 The projects to be taken forward in 2021-2022 will concentrate on the Authority's core values to manage waste sustainably within the waste hierarchy (waste prevention, re-use, and recycling) and focus on four priority materials, Food, All types of Plastics, Textiles and Furniture. Projects may also, in addition to the priority materials, include other household waste materials e.g. paper, card, metals. Priority materials must form the majority of the project outputs. The targeting of these materials also provides Carbon (CO₂) equivalent reduction in emissions.
- 4.9 Performance monitoring will measure progress for stage payments and to determine outputs and impacts. Community Organisations will provide regular information on agreed project outputs, monetary spend and evidence of social value impacts. The final outcomes for the programme will be reported to Authority at a later date in 2022.
- 4.10 At the 7th February 2020 Authority Meeting, Members asked the Chief Executive to host a celebration event to showcase and highlight the success of Community Funded projects. During early 2020 an event programme was in development. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, progress on the event was postponed. At an appropriate time, when a celebration can be held Covid safely, the Chief Executive will progress this event.

5. Risk Implications

5.1 The following risks have been identified for the 2021-2022 Community Fund Programme; these include risk associated with the continuing pandemic.

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23rd April 2021

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Over subscription to the Fund, the proposals in this report may encourage more applications	5	2	10	The application process is rigorous in project evaluation. After assessment the highest scoring submissions, who have demonstrated robust projects, will be offered funding
The Community and Voluntary Sector are not being supported in the right way to make it easier to participate in the funding process.	2	4	8	Officers can offer advice on the process (not project ideas or detail) if requested by applicants during the submission period. Guidance Notes are available to accompany the application paperwork. Expressions of Interest can be submitted by Organisations, prior to a full submission, and Officers will advise if project ideas can meet the necessary criteria for evaluation.
Projects are not awarded in every district.	2	3	6	Regional projects should support and benefit all district areas, as a minimum a regional project must work in at least 3 District areas equitably. Promotion of the funding, the application process, and the supporting paperwork sets out to attract CVS projects from across all Districts.
Projects under perform in terms of value added.	2	3	6	Continue to evaluate outputs and outcomes prior / post award. Stage payments made only on demonstrating sufficient progress.
Challenge by unsuccessful applicants for the grant	2	2	4	Members have approved a policy framework and the funding criteria that must be met. This process has also been verified by audit. This ensures the evaluation process is equitably applied to all applications. Feedback will be offered to unsuccessful applicants.
Under subscription to the fund	2	2	4	Promotion and communication of the Fund will endeavour to attract CVS applications from across all Districts.
COVID-19 Risks				
lockdown continues in 2021 and into 2022.	4	3	12	Applicants continue with preparation /adjustments for project delivery during lockdown, using best practice and lessons learnt.
				Applicants have flexibility within timescales for delivery to later in year when necessary.
Resurgence due to measures ending too soon	4	3	12	Project delivery will maintain regular handwashing and PPE provision, sanitiser, gloves & masks available and will comply with social distancing measures in accordance with Public Health England and Government guidelines.
Project Lead and/or Volunteers, facilitators become unwell / die from virus	4	3	12	Could stop or significantly delay project until replacement can be in place (if possible). Most applicants indicate that teams will deliver projects and others would cover absences.
Virus resurgence	4	4	16	Government is on target to achieve first dose of a covid-19 vaccine to all adults in the UK by the end of July 2021
				Measures can be put into place quickly to stem the effects of resurgence of virus. Advice will be guided by Public Health England and Government guidelines. Review project progress at such time and explore alternative delivery mechanisms e.g. digital platforms.
Projects don't complete by March 2022	4	4	16	Flexibility in timetable to make up time aiming to complete as close to March 2022 as possible.
Projects accept funding but projects don't go ahead or significantly complete	3	3	9	Funding released in interim payments with next stages dependent on progress completion to revised plan.
				There is an improved service level agreement. If it becomes necessary a % of funding could be retained/clawed back, determined by amount of progress achieved.
Difficulties in Projects attracting Volunteers	3	3	9	Additional support for volunteers (telephone, zoom, mental health resilience, etc) and Volunteers are keen to go on as normal as soon as safely possible.
				CVS intend to use multiple communication methods to attract existing Volunteers back and recruit new Volunteers.

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
				MRWA/Veolia will support with CF Communications programme.
Projects that depend heavily on movement / travel, will be affected	3	3	9	Successful vaccination programme and other measures could see national lockdown lifted by 21 st June 2021.
				CVS will use communication methods and digital software (e.g. zoom, Microsoft Team Meetings) to hold online workshops, training, events etc. Many CVS are experienced in being creative with small resources.
Authority suffers loss of reputation if funding is suspended or withdrawn	3	2	6	There could be negative media if funding is /suspended withdrawn. CVS /Volunteers have been providing support (e.g. food banks, food / medical deliveries etc) during the pandemic. Suspending funding could damage the Authorities reputation.
				There is risk that suspending funding will negatively impact on any future uptake of Community Funding.
				There is a risk that other behavioural change initiatives (circular economy club, reuse network) could lose future support from CVS and SMEs.

6. HR Implications

- 6.1 The Authority has sufficient staff resource to ensure the delivery of the 2021-2022 Community Funding programme.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The projects that will be awarded funding in 2021-2022 will contribute towards the Authority's response to the declaration of climate emergency, which Members declared in 2019.
- 7.2 CVS Organisations will deliver projects in line with Authority corporate objectives. They will offer clear environmental benefits for sustainable waste and resource management by reducing, reusing, and recycling materials and improving the quality of materials presented for recycling.
- 7.3 There is potential to encourage wider environmental benefits in terms of reducing litter, reducing fly-tipping and improve environmental quality in neighbourhoods.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The budget for Community Fund 2021-2022 was approved at the Authority Meeting on 5th February 2021.
- 8.2 To minimise the risk of financial default, awards will be made by interim stage payments, paid in advance, and released dependent upon the successful progress of a project.

8.3 The Community Policy Framework and funding procedures will ensure that control measures are commensurate to the budget and the risks associated with achieving value for money.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Community Fund Policy Framework and funding procedure supports (1) the operation of the Community Fund being consistent with the Authority's Best Value and fiduciary obligations and (2) the Authority's statutory duty to address the Waste Hierarchy in line with Regulation 12 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

10. Conclusion

10.1 Members are asked to note the output progress achieved by projects, July to January, for the 2020-21 Community Fund.

10.2 Members are asked to note the programme for 2021-22 Community 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.