

COMMUNITY FUND 2021-22 OUTCOMES AND 2022-23 PROGRAMME
WDA /17 /22 REPORT (SEPTEMBER 2022)

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note the outcome of the 2021-22 Community Fund Projects.
2. Note the projects supported with Community Fund for 2022-2023 as approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, under delegated powers of the Authority.
3. Agree to the undertaking of a best practice review of the Community Fund 2024/2025.

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COMMUNITY FUND 2022-23 FUNDING ALLOCATION
WDA/17/2022

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the 2021-22 Community Fund programme.
- 1.2 Members are asked to note the projects supported with Community Fund for 2022-2023 as approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, under delegated powers of the Authority.
- 1.3 Members are asked to note that during 2022 the Chief Executive intends to conduct a review of the Community Fund programme to ensure best value, determine if improvements can be made to support the Corporate objectives of the Authority, attract quality applications, and maximise the collaboration with the Community Voluntary Sector (CVS).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Community Fund supports MRWA's Corporate Plan 2021-23 "To ensure that we reduce the impact of our actions on climate change and improve the sustainable management of waste and resources". The Community Fund is also a key part of the Authority's Behavioural Change Programme and contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outputs.
- 2.2 The Authority approved the Community Fund Policy Framework and the annual scheme in February 2015 (Report WDA 03/15).

3. 2021 -22 Community Fund Programme outcomes.

- 3.1 Members approved allocation of £150,000 Community Fund budget for 2021-22 at the Authority Meeting on the 5th of February 2021. Together with the £15,000 contribution from Veolia, it gave a funding pot of £165,000.
- 3.2 17 Organisations received funding, supporting 5 Regional projects with £83,557.38 and 12 District projects with £81,442.00 a total spend of

£164,999.38. There was at least one project in each District area of the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership.

- 3.3 The Community Voluntary Sector provided £ 93,321.73 of in-kind equivalent support, giving a total package value of £258,321.11.
- 3.4 Projects again concentrated on four priority materials, Food, Furniture, Plastics and Textiles. The reuse or recycling of these materials provided Carbon (CO₂) equivalent reductions in emissions.
- 3.5 2021-22 projects finished on 30th March 2022. Tables in the Appendix detail the Community Fund 2021-2022 years' projects, achieved outputs, and outcomes of the programme.
- 3.6 The table below summarises the outputs of the 2020-21 Community Fund projects.

Outputs	Target	Actual	% Achieved
Tonnes Diverted	574	652	113.45%
CO _{2e} equivalent reduction	754	714	94.64%
Direct Engagement	22,231	28,513	128.26%
Volunteer Hours	36,399	46,394	127.46%
Community Events	147	170	115.65%
Training Sessions	405	476	117.53%
Wider Engagement (no target is set)	0	14233	

The tonnage of materials achieved is broken down as

	Target tonnes	Achieved tonnage
Food Waste Prevention	402.54	487.84
Furniture Repair / Reuse	41.91	35.75
Plastics	45.25	52.08
Textiles Repair/Reuse	76.46	61.66
Other	8.2	14.3
Total	574	652

See Appendix 1, Table 1 – “Summary of all outputs for projects 2021-22”, which gives further details of these outputs, and Table 2 – “2021-22 project outputs and achievement against target”, showing comments for each of the 17 projects. The end of project reports for each of the Organisations funded can be viewed by request.

3.7 Media Coverage

Media coverage generated by the 2021-22 projects included 33 media articles, including national and local press, trade press, web-news, and radio appearances, the value of this press coverage being equivalent to £23,231 paid for coverage. This added value has been included in 3.9 below.

3.8 Added Value

The impacts achieved through the 2021-22 projects have been measured using metrics based on the average cost of waste diversion, the DEFRA metric for carbon reduction, information from studies conducted by WRAP¹ and on proportions of the national Living Wage. This estimates the level of financial investment that would otherwise have been required to achieve these impacts. Appendix 1, Table 3 “Summary of the Added Value for 2021-22 projects”, shows the equivalent ‘added value’, expressed in monetary terms.

3.8.1 This ‘added value’ can be considered in terms of return on investment. The 2021-22 Community Fund spend of £164,999.38 achieved an added value of £10.05, giving a return on investment (R.O.I) of 1: 10 i.e. for every £1 pound of investment the funding realised £10.05 in equivalent value.

3.8.2 If the ‘in-kind support’ and CVS contribution of £93,321.73, see 3.3 above, is also included the added value is £10.62. This gives a R.O.I of 1:10.6 i.e., for every pound of funding, projects realised £10.62 in equivalent value.

4. 2022 -2023 Community Fund.

4.1 The Community Funding 2022-23 was launched on 14th February 2022, and was open for submission for 5 weeks, closing on 20th March 2022. 44 bids

¹ WRAP – The Waste Resources Action Programme - WRAP works with governments, businesses, and communities to deliver practical solutions to improve resource efficiency.

were received and the assessment process, using the approved criteria, is complete.

- 4.2 The Chief Executive continued with the policy of consulting all Members on the final list of preferred schemes on the 26th of April 2022. After this, in consultation with the Chairperson, under delegated powers of the Authority the Chief Executive approved 16 projects for support, 6 Regional and 10 District specific projects.

Regional Projects	Supporting Projects
All the Region	4
3 areas – Knowsley, Liverpool & Sefton	2

District Specific	Supporting Projects
Knowsley	1
Liverpool	4
Sefton	1
Liverpool / Sefton	1
St Helens	1
Wirral	2
There were no applications from Halton	0

- 4.3 Funding offers were issued to the approved projects in May. After funding offers had been made, a miscalculation was discovered, incorrect funding amounts had been allocated to three projects. This did not affect the evaluation of the submissions and the projects recommended remain as approved.
- 4.4 The funding amounts were adjusted, resulting in an overspend of £18,712.00 to the original £165,000. The Chief Executive rectified this error by using his delegated powers via an Admin Decision, to effect a virement from the Behavioural Change Budget to cover the value of the overspend. This will ensure CVS Organisations can progress projects to their submitted budget.
- 4.5 Going forward, if Members approve budget for Community Fund in the future year there will be no overspend and the Authority budget will remain at £150,000.
- 4.5 2022-2023 projects again address one or more of the four priority household waste materials: Food, Furniture, Textiles, and all types of Plastics. Some projects also include other household waste materials e.g., paper, card, metals. Overall, priority materials form the majority of the project outputs.

See Appendix1, Table 4 -Community Fund 2022-2023 (current year) Projects and Target Outputs.

- 4.6 The financial practice of issuing the grants in stage payments, with funding being paid in advance, will continue for 2022-23 projects. Each subsequent stage will be dependent on the successful ongoing progress of the project.
- 4.7 In terms of monitoring performance and the impacts of the 2022-2023 projects, Community Organisations will be required to provide regular information on the project key outputs, monetary spend and evidence of the social value impacts achieved during the delivery of projects.
- 4.8 The final outcomes for those receiving funding in 2022-2023 will be reported to the Authority in 2023.

5 Community Fund 2023-24

- 5.1 The data from the 2021-22 Waste Composition Analysis show that the priority materials for Community Fund for 2023-24 should change to include
 - Food
 - Furniture
 - Textiles
 - WEEE (Waste electrical and electronic equipment)

This is a change from the previous key materials, introducing WEEE and removing plastic. This recommendation is based on the most recent waste composition analysis. Food and textiles are materials that are regularly disposed of in residual waste in large quantities. Furniture and WEEE are items well suited to community reuse and repair projects and are often wasted resources containing valuable components and are not easily recycled.

- 5.2 Work has started to look at improvements to the application process. This includes an option for the CVS to apply for funding using an on-line electronic application portal. If this option proves viable it is suggested it will be used for the 2023-24 Community Fund programme. If this new system is adopted, hard paper copies of the application will also be available.
- 5.3 The Chief Executive intends to conduct a review of the whole Community Fund process to ensure the programme offers best value for the Authority

and Community groups. Any recommendations for improvements will be provided to the Authority at a later date.

5.4 Any recommendations for changes to the community fund will apply to Community Fund 2024-25 to allow sufficient time to develop the proposal and make recommendations and implement.

6 Risk Implications

6.1 The following risks have been identified for the 2022-2023 Community Fund Programme.

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Projects under perform in terms of value added.	2	3	6	Continue to monitor and evaluate outputs and outcomes prior / post award. Provide support and assistance to projects. Hold a networking event so that CVS can share best practice, lessons learnt and ideas.
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 when requested.
Projects accept funding but projects don't go ahead	3	3	9	Funding released in interim payments with next stages dependent on progress completion to revised plan. Parties agree to a service level agreement. If it becomes necessary a % of funding could be retained/clawed back, determined by the amount of progress achieved.
Project Lead and/or Volunteers, Facilitators unavailable	4	3	12	This could stop or significantly delay project until replacement can be in place. Most Organisations work in teams to deliver projects and others will cover absences.
Difficulties in Projects attracting Volunteers	3	3	9	Additional support for volunteers (telephone, zoom, mental health resilience, etc). CVS intend to use multiple communication methods to help existing and recruit new Volunteers.
Projects don't complete by March 2023	4	4	16	Where possible revise timetable to make up time aiming to complete as close to March 2023 as possible.
Community Fund review will not lead to improvements to the programme	3	3	9	Suggested improvements will be based on other Funders best practice and research. Improvements will be robustly tested with appropriate staff and CVS before being introduced to the programme.
Ongoing COVID-19 Risks in 22-23				
Resurgence of virus mutations	4	3	12	Project delivery will comply with measures in accordance with Public Health England and Government guidelines.
				Due to lessons learnt, measures can be put into place quickly to stem the effects of resurgence of virus.
				Review project progress at such time and explore alternative delivery mechanisms e.g. digital platforms.
Projects that depend heavily on movement / travel, being affected	3	4	12	CVS will use communication methods and digital software (e.g. zoom, You-Tube, Microsoft Teams) to hold online workshops, training, events etc. if travel becomes difficult.
Authority suffers loss of reputation if funding is suspended or withdrawn	3	3	9	There could be negative response if funding is suspended or withdrawn, risking damage to 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.

7 HR Implications

7.1 The Authority has sufficient internal staff resources to ensure the delivery of the 2022-2023 Community Funding programme.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 The policy framework 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) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

9 Environmental Implications

9.1 Projects that are awarded Community Fund make an important contribution towards the Authority's response to the 'declaration of a climate emergency', which Members stated in 2019. Projects will demonstrate progress against the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

9.2 Projects awarded funding in 2022-23 will deliver against the Authority's corporate objectives. They will offer clear environmental benefits for sustainable waste and resource management by reducing, re-using, refurbishing, and recycling more material and increasing the quality of recyclates. There is potential to encourage wider environmental benefits including reducing litter, fly-tipping to improve environmental quality in neighbourhoods.

10 Financial Implications

10.1 The Chief Executive has used his delegated powers via an Admin Decision, to affect a virement from the Behavioural Change Budget to cover the value of overspend to the 2022-2023 Community Fund.

10.2 To minimise the risk of financial default, awards will be made by interim stage payments, paid in advance, and released dependent upon continued successful progress of projects.

- 10.3 The policy and funding procedures will ensure that the control measures proposed are commensurate to the budget and the risks associated with achieving value for money.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 Members are asked to note the outcome of the 2021-2022 Community Fund projects.
- 11.2 Members are asked to note the projects supported with Community Fund in 2022-2023 as approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, under delegated powers of the Authority. Projects will provide waste prevention, re-use and recycling activities, and will deliver core objectives and best value outcomes.
- 11.3 The Community Fund will maintain a high standard of governance and delivery of sustainable waste management projects across the Region and will make a major contribution to solutions for the Authority's behavioural change programme, Sustainable Development Goals, and to the declaration of a climate emergency (2019).
- 11.4 The final outcomes for projects funded in 2022-2023 will be reported to the Authority in 2023.
- 11.5 Members are asked to note that the Chief Executive intends to conduct a review of the Community Fund programme to establish best value, determine if improvements can be made to support the Corporate objectives of the Authority, attract robust quality applications, and maximise collaboration with the Community Voluntary Sector.
- 11.6 Any future decision on changes to the policy framework and apportionment of the funding will continue to be the subject of a 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