

5 November 2020**Agenda Item:6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE & COMMUNITIES****LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME: CAPITAL FUND 2020 - 2021****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Members' 'approval in principle', to the award of capital funding for projects that meet the Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund 2020-21 criteria.
2. To confirm that all successful grant applications are subject to the terms and conditions of the Local Improvement Scheme Agreement (Deed) which has been drafted in consultation with Legal Services.
3. To seek approval to change the project completion date from 30 June 2021 to 31 December 2021, for successful applications.
4. To endorse the offering of practical support and / or signposting through the Communities Team in proportion to the availability of resources, to organisations that have not been successful with their application.

Information

5. The Local Improvement Scheme is a discretionary financial contribution awarded by Nottinghamshire County Council to support the delivery of non-statutory capital projects that help to achieve the Council's priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2017-21.
6. Applications for Local Improvement Scheme capital projects should also demonstrate how they contribute to the Local Improvement Scheme strategic aims which are to encourage and support local communities to be strong, vibrant and resilient, to encourage and support volunteering and to seek wider funding opportunities.
7. The Local Improvement Scheme is a member-led process and as such, all applications for funding must have the support of a Nottinghamshire County Councillor.
8. On 15 November 2017, the Policy Committee approved the opening and launch of a new Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Programme and Strategy 2018 to 2021.

9. At the Communities and Place Committee in September 2019 Elected Members approved the opening of the Capital Funding round in November 2019. The closing date for applications was 28 February 2020, making this the third of three annual capital funding rounds as part of the Local Improvement Scheme 2018 to 2021.
10. Due to the COVID-19 emergency response, the application process for the Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund 2020-21, was paused to allow for the Council resources to be focused where most needed to support communities and to set up, manage and administer the Nottinghamshire COVID-19 Community Fund and the Government Local Authority Emergency Assistance Fund.
11. At July Committee Elected Members agreed to 'un-pause' the Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund 2020-21, with a view to approving applications that meet the criteria at a Communities and Place Committee later in the year.

The Criteria

12. To be eligible for Local Improvement Scheme capital funding, the proposed capital project / assets must be available for public use and / or leave a legacy for at least three years after the asset has been purchased and installed. The guidance that was published during the application window provided examples of what the funding can and cannot be used for.
13. Local Improvement Scheme funding is a *contribution* to the delivery of a project, therefore the funding is not intended to cover the full project costs. Organisations were encouraged to secure at least 50% of required funding from other sources (i.e. match funding).
14. Capital funding can be used to help with the initial cost of the project / asset, however it cannot be used for ongoing maintenance. Therefore, organisations must ensure that they have plans and funds in place to maintain the project.
15. To achieve best value for money and enable the Council to support as many much-needed community-based capital projects as possible, the criteria for the Capital Fund 2020 to 2021 was refreshed. The key changes were:
 - a) The maximum application amount / award was adjusted from £50,000 to £30,000.
 - b) More focused criteria for organisations that are eligible to apply so that the funding could be targeted at those organisations that need it most. The published guidance outlined who can and cannot apply for Local Improvement Scheme Capital Funding 2020-21.
 - c) Organisations will have up to 12 months to spend the grant to ensure that the projects are completed within the strategic timeframe for this Fund. Had it not been necessary to 'pause' this Fund, the original timeframe would have resulted in projects completing by 30 June 2021.

The Launch, Promotion and Guidance for Applicants

16. The Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund 2020-21 was launched in December 2019. As from January 2020, promotion of the Scheme was wide-ranging throughout the County, as agreed with the Corporate Communications and Marketing department.

17. Communications and Marketing supported the launch and promotion of the Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund through various channels including press-releases, social media (which included regular Twitter feeds) and banners on the Council's public website. Interested organisations were encouraged to sign up to the Council's 'Email Me' service to receive updates and reminders.
18. Information about the new capital funding round was sent directly to all Nottinghamshire County Council Elected Members, as well as to all the Parish and Town Councils.
19. Promotion of the Scheme was also supported by a number of cross-departmental colleagues who shared the launch information with their own contacts.
20. During the application window, the application form and guidance documents could be accessed from a dedicated webpage on the Council's website. Guidance included information about the criteria, governance and publicity requirements, along with guidance and typical costs for some of the most standard, eligible capital items, such as village gateway signs, brown tourist signs and information boards.
21. The year 2020 sees the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower to the United States. Nottinghamshire has a close association to this historic event. Therefore, applications for capital projects that commemorate this significant anniversary and that help to promote community engagement continued to be particularly welcome.
22. Applications from partnerships of voluntary and community organisations seeking to deliver countywide activities / projects were also encouraged.

Applications Received and Assessment Process

23. A refreshed, robust application form and assessment process was designed and implemented which involved:
 - a) Training all assessors, moderators and business support colleagues.
 - b) Contacting applicants as appropriate to gather missing information and / or to clarify the information provided in the application form.
 - c) Carefully reviewing each application against the published criteria.
 - d) Moderating a sample of applications to ensure consistency of assessment approach.
 - e) A review of all applications by the Team Manager, Communities.
24. The following factors were also considered as part of the recommendation process:
 - a) Whether or not the organisation has previously received capital and / or revenue funding from the 2018-21 Local Improvement Scheme;
 - b) The number of applications submitted by each organisation, the financial cost and potential benefit / impact of each application;
 - c) The proportion of match funding confirmed.
25. For applications that have been recommended, the recommended funding may be less than the amount requested. For those unsuccessful applications (subject to the availability of resources), the Communities Team will endeavour to offer practical support and / or signposting.

The Recommended Applications

26. There are 70 applications recommended in principle, totalling up to £432,054. Applications are recommended from all seven Nottinghamshire County Districts. Appendix 1 to this report lists the recommended applications and includes:
- The name of the organisation
 - Summary of the project / asset
 - The amount of confirmed additional (match) funding
 - The recommended amount
27. There are some applications still being assessed to establish whether they meet the criteria and match-funding requirements. Those that are found to do so will be recommended in principle at the next available meeting of this committee.
28. Approved awards would normally have 12 months, within the financial year to complete their projects, given the pause in approving awards for 2020/21 it is recommended that successful applicants are given until December 2021.

Terms and Conditions for Approved Applications

29. Approved projects will be subject to the terms and conditions of the Local Improvement Scheme Agreement (Deed), which has been drafted in consultation with Legal Services. Therefore, in summary, organisations must:
- a) Satisfy governance requirements (e.g. where appropriate, provide a copy of their governing document and a copy of written confirmation that any required planning permission has been granted).
 - b) Provide the requested supporting information as appropriate to the project (such as approval from Highways for gateway signs, for example).
 - c) Confirm match funding as relevant to the proposed project in order to fulfil the terms and conditions of the Agreement.
 - d) Agree to follow the Council's publicity guidance and agree to cooperate with publicity requests to promote and celebrate how the Council funding, through the Local Improvement Scheme, is contributing to the Council priorities. Note that publicity plans and guidance may change in response to COVID-19 regulations and as advised by the Corporate Communications and Marketing department
 - e) Agree to submit a photograph of the asset in situ and provide invoices / receipts to confirm the actual amount spent on completion of the project. The Council reserves the right to adjust the final payment or to request a reimbursement if the actual amount spent is less than the amount awarded, as stated in the funding Agreement (Deed).

Other Options Considered

30. All the applications received have undergone the Council's rigorous assessment and moderation process.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

31. The applications recommended for funding as listed in Appendix 1 to this report meet the published criteria and priorities for the Local Improvement Scheme Capital fund 2020-21 and therefore these projects contribute to the wider strategic priorities of the County Council. The recommended applications cover all Nottinghamshire districts and have the support of a Nottinghamshire County Councillor.
32. The Council is accountable for public funds and therefore the requirement for organisations awarded funding to comply with the Local Improvement Scheme Agreement (Deed) will help to:
- Ensure that the Council is managing the Fund in line with good governance advice and arrangements.
 - Provide a reference point for both parties.
 - Meet key stakeholder requirements.

Statutory and Policy Implications

33. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

34. The Local Improvement Scheme Capital Fund 2020-21 has been administered in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Nottinghamshire County Council Local Improvement Scheme Privacy Notice (as published on the Council's website), explains how the Council uses information about grant applicants and how we protect their privacy. All applicants were asked to confirm that they have read and accept the Local Improvement Scheme Privacy Notice and this requirement is reiterated in the funding Agreement (Deed).

Financial Implications

35. The cost of funding these recommendations is £432,054.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

36. The Council has taken steps to advance equality of opportunity, for example by encouraging Countywide participation through the Communications Strategy.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

37. Organisations in receipt of Local Improvement Scheme Funding are required to adhere to the terms and conditions of the funding Agreement (Deed), which includes a provision for safeguarding.

Implications for Service Users

38. Nottinghamshire residents across all Districts will benefit from the various capital projects for at least three years.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

39. A criteria for Local Improvement Scheme capital funding is that assets be available for public use and or leave a legacy for at least three years after the asset has been purchased and installed.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

- 1) Members approve in principle the capital funding for the projects as stated in appendix 1 to this report for all 70 organisations.
- 2) Approved projects are subject to the terms and conditions of the Local Improvement Scheme Agreement (Deed) which has been drafted in consultation with Legal Services.
- 3) Organisations awarded Capital Funding 2020 to 2021 have until 31 December 2021 to complete their project and that this is reflected in the funding Agreement (Deed).
- 4) The Council offers practical support and / or signposting through the Communities Team in proportion to the availability of resources, to organisations that have not been successful with their application.

Derek Higton
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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Cathy Harvey, Team Manager, Communities, T: 0115 97 73415

Constitutional Comments (AK 05/10/2020)

40. The report falls within the remit of Communities and Place Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments [GB 02/10/20]

The funding to support the 2020/21 Local Improvement Scheme is already approved within the Communities and Place capital programme and expenditure against this budget will be monitored through the usual capital forecasting process

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 'None'

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- 'All'

