

9 June 2022

Agenda Item: 12

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES

UPDATE ON USE OF THE COUNCILLOR'S DIVISIONAL FUND

Purpose of the Report

1. To present Committee with an annual update on the use of the Councillor's Divisional Fund (CDF) for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Information

2. The CDF is a specific budget which enables each County Councillor to put forward proposals for expenditure in their electoral divisions which accord with the strategic objectives of the Council. Such payments are subject to compliance with the requirements of the agreed CDF Policy.
3. Each Councillor is allocated up to £5,000 to spend within each financial year. Any funds remaining unspent within this budget at the end of the financial year are returned to corporate balances.
4. The CDF payments that were made in 2021/22 are set out in **Appendix A** to the report (payments to individuals have been anonymised where relevant). These payments were made in line with the Policy agreed by Policy Committee on 18 July 2018.

New Policy and electronic system

5. Following an audit undertaken by Internal Audit in 2021, a revised CDF Policy was agreed by the Governance and Ethics Committee at its meeting on 10 March 2022, taking effect from 1 April 2022. Future update reports will therefore be based on the revised scheme.
6. A new hard copy application form has been developed and circulated to Members. At the current transitional point, there are still some applications being submitted using the old forms. A reminder has been sent to all members of the Council providing additional guidance on completing the new form to ensure that it contains all necessary information and to advise them that 6 June 2022 would be the cut-off point for using the old forms.
7. The new Policy was intended to be accompanied by a new electronic 'self-serve' system for Members. Officers have continued to work on this and the system will shortly be at a point where it is ready for testing. In line with previous discussions at the Committee, it is proposed

that the Committee's Members be utilised as the focus group used to test the pilot system and to feed views back in to help shape its production.

Annual Audit

8. In light of the wider audit having already been undertaken by Internal Audit in 2021, the findings of which were reported to Committee as part of the new Policy's development, Democratic Services did not undertake the normal small sample annual audit in this financial year.
9. The new electronic system will be designed to help inform next year's audit by Democratic Services, including those categories where Members have agreed additional monitoring is required (for example payments to individuals).

Other Options Considered

10. None – the report provides an update on expenditure as required by the CDF policy.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. To update the committee in line with the requirements of the CDF Policy.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee notes the CDF expenditure for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 detailed in Appendix A to the report.
- 2) That Members note the need to use and fully complete the new CDF application forms, in line with the revised Policy 6 June 2022 onwards, after which use of the old forms would not be accepted.
- 3) That, once the test site is ready, the Committee's Members be sent a link to enable them to access and test the pilot system, to help inform its development.

Marjorie Toward

Service Director, Customers, Governance and Employees

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Constitutional Comments (EKH 19/05/2022)

13. Governance and Ethics Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (RWK 19/05/2022)

14. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report. The total budget for the Councillors Divisional Fund is £329,000. Any funds remaining unspent within this budget at the end of the financial year will be returned to corporate balances.

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.

- Budget summaries of CDF payments
- CDF policy

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All