

12 June 2019**Agenda Item: 12****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****UPDATE ON USE OF THE COUNCILLORS' DIVISIONAL FUND****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present Committee with a six monthly update on the use of the Councillor's Divisional Fund (CDF) for the period 1 October 2018 – 31 March 2019.

Information and Advice**Background**

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 CDF Policy.
3. Each Councillor receives an annual allowance of £5,000 to spend within each financial year. Any funds remaining unspent within this budget at the end of the financial year will be returned to corporate balances.
4. As part of the revised CDF Policy agreed by Policy Committee on 18 July 2018, a new requirement was introduced for reports on the use of the CDF to be brought to this Committee on a six monthly basis. This is the second such report and details of the applications received from Councillors during the period October 2018 – March 2019 are included at **Appendix A** (N.B. payments to individuals have been anonymised where relevant).

Audit of Previously Processed Applications

5. Officers from Democratic Services have recently commenced work on an audit of applications from the last financial year, in line with the requirements of the CDF Policy.
6. The officers have been guided by Internal Audit on the scope of this exercise and the Chairman of the Committee has been consulted, in line with the CDF Policy.
7. As the audit exercise is still in progress, the findings will be included in the next update report to the Committee.

New Electronic System

8. The Committee, at its meeting of 18 December 2018, supported the development of a new electronic 'self-serve' software package.
9. The new system will enable Councillors and their support officers to input applications directly and remotely in the future and will improve efficiency and administrative costs. The system also enables attachments to be added, so that correspondence from groups and other related documents can be stored electronically with the application.
10. It is recognised that some Councillors may require some additional support to move to this electronic approach. Group support officers will receive some training to enable them to assist Councillors in inputting applications.
11. The system will not impact upon the ongoing contact and relations between Councillors and relevant community groups and individuals, by which means proposals for funding are developed. Councillors can continue to request presentation cheques for use at events and ceremonies.
12. In its initial form, the system is not able to give a running record of funds available at the point of making an application but it is hoped that the functionality can be developed further in the future, with input from ICT, so that such a facility can be possible.
13. The system is currently in the final stages of testing prior to being piloted with Democratic Services Officers, Group support officers and then initially a few Councillors from the different political groups. Any concerns raised by the pilot will be considered and addressed accordingly and any unresolved issues will be brought back to this Committee for further discussion.

Other Options Considered

14. None – the report provides an update on expenditure as required in the revised CDF policy.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. To update the Committee in line with the requirements of the CDF Policy and to highlight ongoing issues and future developments.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That the Committee considers the CDF expenditure for the period October 2018 – March 2019 detailed in Appendix A and highlights any actions required.
- 2) That the outcomes of the ongoing audit exercise and progress with the development of the new electronic system be included in the next update report to Committee.

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Constitutional Comments (KK – 22/5/19)

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

Financial Comments (SES 21/5/19)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report. The total budget for the Councillors Divisional Fund is £329,000 and at the financial year end, £2,125.21 remained unspent. Each Councillor receives an annual allowance of £5,000 to spend within each financial year. Any funds remaining unspent within this budget at the end of the financial year will be returned to corporate balances.

Background Papers

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