

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES**

### **LOCAL COMMUNITIES FUND**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to:
  - a. The develop a new discretionary grant funding scheme for the Authority for 2022–2026.
  - b. Name the new scheme the ‘Local Communities Fund’.
  - c. Launch the new scheme for 2022 – 26.
  - d. Invite applications to a Talented Athletes Programme for 2021 – 22.

#### **Information**

2. At the 10th June 2021 meeting, the Committee approved the development of a new discretionary grant funding scheme as a successor to the existing Local Improvement Scheme.
3. 3 component programmes for the scheme were approved with the following key features:
  - **Revenue** - A new two-part model, the first a Large Grants element used to commission projects and activities from organisations who have a good track record of delivery. The second part, a Small Grants element featuring a rolling annual programme of grants (maximum £5k), to support innovative grass roots activity.
  - **Capital** - A new model featuring a rolling annual programme of applications, with a match funding requirement, and a maximum £20k award.
  - **Talented athletes** – An expanded programme to include up and coming athletes and providing a greater focus on those athletes with protected characteristics.

#### **Shaping the Future**

4. The Council recognises the huge contribution that the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has made to lives of residents over many years. This has been brought into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The pandemic’s impact has been keenly felt by many organisations. This has resulted in a mixed picture of what is now being delivered, and how resources are being

mobilised towards response and recovery. Creating empowered and self-sufficient local communities is a key priority for the Council and in turn supporting the VCS to grow and thrive is central to achieving this.

6. The Council's recovery plan for helping to address the impact of the pandemic provides opportunities to invest in the VCS to help support the delivery of Council Priorities. These priorities, currently being consulted, are:
  - Healthy and thriving people and communities.
  - A greener Nottinghamshire future.
  - A prosperous and growing economy.
7. Historically, the Council has provided Grant Aid funding as a contribution to services or projects delivered that contribute to the Council's priorities. The key funding principles previously used, and now proposed for the Local Communities Fund are:
  - Member led – Members take the lead for decision making on design of the scheme, and approval of awards.
  - Takes a corporate and coordinated approach – decisions are aligned to the Council's ambitions, priorities and outcomes sought.
  - Recognises the role of the sector – values the enormous contribution made.
  - Takes account of any Compact's in place that set out the nature of our relationship with VCS.
  - Is proportionate at all stages – including a simple application process, simplified monitoring etc.
  - Makes the best use of digital technologies.

## **Local Communities Fund Programme Structure**

### **Revenue Programme**

8. To achieve the Council's ambitions, it is proposed that:
  - The VCS is supported to grow, enabling residents to contribute to social and cultural opportunities.
  - Assessments of local need and gap analyses are undertaken to identify and develop effective activities.
  - Pathways to volunteering are increased to increase opportunities for individuals to contribute to their community, whilst enhancing the sector's reach.
  - There are increased opportunities available for advice and signposting for the most vulnerable residents and communities.
  - Activities are developed that help to address climate and environmental change.
  - Activities are developed that offer early help and prevention to those who most need it.
  - More support is provided to communities of interest, including rural communities, and helping those who face particular challenges.
9. **Revenue Programme – Large Grants** - To support the co-ordination of investment in priority areas, applications will be invited from county-based organisations that can:
  - Demonstrate a good track record of delivery and supporting local communities, whether by geography and/or by interest.

- Demonstrate professional standards and good governance.
10. It is proposed that applicants can apply for a contribution towards the core costs of delivering a service. Partnership bids will be welcomed when they reflect effective collaboration across service delivery.
  11. Applications will be submitted via an online platform to enable the more efficient oversight and management of the process. Once approved, it is proposed that the funding will be in place for up to 4 years, subject to periodic monitoring.
  12. **Revenue programme – Small Grants** - A rolling programme of small grants will help to fund organisations to realise ideas that address identified needs. The programme aims to:
    - Encourage local networks where people help themselves and each other to be resilient, neighbourly, healthier, and safe.
    - Encourage innovation to strengthen communities and support vulnerable residents - for example, projects could include tackling digital exclusion, good neighbourhood schemes, dementia friendly communities, food/lunch clubs etc.
  13. Eligibility will include being either a new project or building on an existing project which demonstrates that self-help or early intervention encourages is building resilience and reducing pressure on council services.
  14. Applicants can apply for a maximum of £5k in any year. The programme will ensure that revenue funding is available for groups across the 4-year cycle to apply to help with responding to emerging needs.

## Capital Programme

15. It is proposed this programme be aimed at creating opportunities that support local communities and residents to be healthier, greener, and prosperous. The new fund will support the delivery of community capital projects that help deliver the ambitions, outcomes, and objectives of the Council Plan.
16. The fund aims to:
  - Help to address local priorities e.g. improving access to new or existing services, such as sports and leisure, protecting the environment, reducing loneliness, improving physical and mental health.
  - Improve local places and spaces that are important to communities.
  - Bring people together and involve them in the design and implementation.
  - Encourage the development of assets and projects that help to address climate and environmental change, or at least, to minimise any potential negative impact on the environment.
17. The application process will be as streamlined as possible, and decisions will be made in a timely way to enable organisations to progress their ideas. There will be a two-stage process:
  - An expression of interest submitted via the relevant County Councillor for endorsement.

- Once an expression of interest is endorsed, the submission of a full worked up application will be invited which addresses all the fund's criteria.

18. Applicants can apply for up to a maximum of £20k and will be expected to have guaranteed match funding in place before any funds are released.

### **Talented Athletes Programme**

19. This will:

- Support Nottinghamshire athletes aspiring to compete or already competing at the highest level in their sporting category.
- Encourage up and coming athletes.
- Provide more support to athletes who face the greatest challenges and that the funding would most benefit by:
  - Active promotion of the programme to specialist sports organisations and through appropriate social media channels.
  - Weighting of the assessment and scoring criteria to reflect the challenges faced by the athletes.

20. The previous programme was well received over many years by supporting young talented athletes to succeed in their sport. The new programme will build on this with the ambition to be even more inclusive.

21. It is proposed that a Talented Athletes award round is held during 2021-22, and that the budget is increased to £50k per annum. This is to reflect the potential higher costs for those athletes with disabilities (e.g. may require adapted equipment, clothing, or have higher transport costs), and would also enable more support to those who may face other challenges, for example because of their financial position.

### **Implementation and Communication**

22. To launch the new Local Communities Fund and encourage, receive, assess, and approve applications, Committee is asked to approve the following timetable.

<b>September 2021</b>	Develop processes, systems, communications plan, and information for applicants
<b>October 2021</b>	Launch of 2022-26 Large Grants Revenue Programme and Small Revenue Awards Rolling Programme 2022-23
	Launch of the Capital Awards Rolling Programme for 2022-23
<b>November 2021</b>	Launch of Talented Athletes Programme 2021-22
<b>31<sup>st</sup> December 2021</b>	Applications for Large Grants Revenue Programme and Talented Athletes Programme close. First closing date for initial batch of Rolling Award applications (Small Revenue and Capital).

<b>January &amp; February 2022</b>	Applications for awards for all programmes assessed and moderated by officers.
<b>March 2022</b>	Committee reviews and approves Large and Small Revenue applications, and Capital and Talented Athletes applications.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2022</b>	4-year funding cycle for the Large Grant Revenue Awards commence.
<b>Three times per year</b>	Approvals sought for rolling award applications received in previous 4-month period.
	Monitoring reports for ongoing awards presented to Committee for oversight.

### **Other Options Considered**

23. To cease providing this type of support. The proposed Local Communities Fund would provide a clear focus for supporting people to improve their communities.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

24. Maximising the impact of the Council's discretionary funding is important to achieving the Council's ambitions.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

25. 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.

### **Financial Implications**

26. The funding allocation for this programme for 2022/23 onwards will be approved at the Council's annual budget meeting in February 2022.
27. In 2021/22, £1.69 million has been allocated from the revenue grant funding budget and £500k from the capital budget (total £2.19m) to finance the current Local Improvement Scheme.
28. For the launch of the 2021/22 Talented Athletes Programme, it is proposed that the financial allocation is increased from £21k to £50k. This can be contained within the existing funding allocation for this financial year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1) Approves the Local Communities Fund Scheme proposals, including the names, timescales and features as set out in the report.
- 2) Approves the launch of the Local Communities Fund, including a Talented Athletes element for 2021-22, based on the timetable outlined in paragraph 20 to the report.
- 3) Approves the increase of the allocation of funding for the Talented Athletes Programme to £50k for this financial year.

**Derek Higton**  
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**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Mark Walker, Group Manager, Trading Standards and Communities, 0115 915 2173

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 04/08/2021)**

29. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Communities Committee.

### **Financial Comments (RWK 10/08/2021)**

30. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report as the proposed allocation of £2.19 million for the Local Communities Fund will be met from existing revenue budget and capital programme allocations.

### **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