

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME - AN INTEGRATED FUNDING STRATEGY****Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the opening and launch of a Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Programme and Strategy 2018-21 to provide support to help Nottinghamshire communities to be vibrant and sustainable.

Information and Advice

2. In line with the Council's strategic priorities – to put local people at the heart of everything it does and enable vibrant and supportive communities to grow – the Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Programme and Strategy 2018-21 (Appendix 1) will contribute to supporting communities to be strong and resilient by:
 - Focusing on helping people to help themselves through encouraging volunteering and involvement in local organisations and charities,
 - Working in partnership to protect communities from crime and anti-social behaviour so people can be more confident about their safety,
 - Promoting healthier lifestyle choices,
 - Protecting and developing the local environment and heritage.

Background

3. Grant Aid funding is a contribution to services/projects delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) that contribute to the Council's priorities. The County Council adopted a Corporate Grant Aid Strategy in 2011 to set out a transparent framework for engagement with the VCS, the allocation of Grant Aid and to:
 - Be Member led – ensuring that Members take a strategic lead on decision making,
 - Take a corporate approach – decisions are aligned to the Council's priorities,
 - Recognise the role of the VCS – valuing the enormous contribution made across the county,
 - Have centralised administration – a streamlined process for the administration of Grant Aid across the Council,
 - Be proportionate at all stages – simple application, 1 or 2 payments each year, simplified monitoring,
 - Make better use of IT – application and monitoring processes,

- Have longer agreements – where possible awards to be for a period of 3 years to enable the VCS to forward plan,
 - Ensure that grants should contribute towards provision, not to directly purchase key services – making Grant Aid distinct from commissioning.
4. As agreed by Members, the strategy has been refreshed over the years to reflect changing corporate strategic priorities, including measures to address the budget situation. This has resulted in improved effectiveness and efficiencies.
 5. The current Corporate Grant Aid programme has proven to be successful, with a wide and varied range of voluntary and community organisations having received funding and officer support. This 3 year programme ends 30th June 2018, providing the opportunity to review the strategy and also bring the following pots of money; Corporate Grant Aid, Supporting Local Communities Fund, and Community Safety Commissioning and Initiatives Budget which the Council uses to support local communities, together into one place. The new amalgamated fund will bring together aspects of the above.

Shaping the Future – Approach

6. The County Council has a strong record in supporting voluntary and community groups across Nottinghamshire and is committed to supporting local communities to help people help themselves and their communities. Building on this, the Council is bringing together its available discretionary funding in order to maximise existing resources and provide important opportunities to support local communities in making Nottinghamshire a great place to live, work, visit and relax.
7. The new Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Strategy will consolidate the Council's approach to investing in and supporting local communities to be more resilient through encouraging active community support, volunteering and seeking wider funding opportunities. Consolidating these funds will remove any duplication and will ensure that targeted support for communities is provided in a single coherent strategy by:
 - Encouraging a more streamlined approach for the administration of discretionary grant funding,
 - Building on the importance to communities and people of the value and reach of this financial support,
 - Helping local people to feel more in control of work taking place to improve our communities through having a single point of access for funding opportunities as well as specifically targeted support, help and guidance,
 - Supporting Members in their roles as community leaders to respond to local ideas that bring community and economic benefit to Nottinghamshire.

Key Features

8. The appendix attached to this report provides a strategy to support the best use of these funds, delivering value for money through outcomes-focused approaches which help to deliver the Council's priorities. The new Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding

Strategy, in addition to maintaining good practice as outlined in paragraph 3 of this report, will:

- Provide opportunities for communities to apply for capital and revenue funding.
- Set a maximum per year for applicants for capital funding of £50,000 and £30,000 for revenue funding, with a minimum of £1,000 for each.
- Maintain a 3 year funding commitment for revenue funding, subject to satisfactory monitoring outcomes.
- Maintain an annual application process for capital funding, with an agreement that funding needs to be spent within 2 years of an application being awarded.
- Offer an annual small grants fund to maintain support to talented athletes, with support from external clubs, and also provide opportunities for commemorating significant events for the communities of Nottinghamshire, globally, nationally and locally.
- Encourage applications from partnerships of voluntary and community organisations seeking to deliver countywide activities/projects.

Implementation and Communication

9. To launch the new Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Fund and encourage, receive, assess and approve applications, Committee is asked to approve the following timetable:
 - November 20th 2017 – Launch of 2018-21 Local Improvement Scheme Revenue Funding Programme and 2018-19 Capital Programme,
 - Applications for both programmes closes on 8th January 2018,
 - February 2018 – Annual Council Budget Meeting approves Fund allocation,
 - April 2018 – Communities and Place Committee considers applications for funding,
 - April 2018 – All applicants notified of decision. Unsuccessful applicants offered programme of support.
10. Appropriate communication of the Council's approach to supporting local communities and inviting applications for funding will be carried out.

Other Options Considered

11. To cease providing this type of support; however the Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Strategy will provide a clear focus for working with people to improve their communities by being part of well-networked communities and having the right support to play an active role in their neighbourhoods.

Reasons for Recommendations

12. Maximising the impact of the Council's discretionary funding is important to achieving the Council's Strategic Priorities' ambitions.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. 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

14. The value of providing discretionary investment through grants for Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is important in supporting a diverse sector which plays a significant part in providing important services to individuals and communities across the county. The level of investment contributes to helping people to live in vibrant and supportive communities where they can be empowered to be creative, resilient, healthier and live independently for as long as possible.
15. Final funding allocations for this programme will be approved at the Council's annual budget meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve the Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Funding Strategy 2018-21 (see Appendix 1).
2. To launch the Local Improvement Scheme Integrated Fund, based on the timetable outlined in paragraph 9.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the Council

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 17/10/17)

Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SES 18/10/17)

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

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