

meeting County Council

date 19th May 2011

agenda item number **15**

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLORS DIVISIONAL FUND

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To propose revised arrangements for the Councillors Divisional Fund (CDF).

2. Background

- 2.1 The CDF was established by the Cabinet (as the Electoral Divisions Initiative in September 2003).
- 2.2 The scheme was established in recognition that local democracy could be strengthened by enabling members to respond speedily and effectively to issues and problems in their areas. It was envisaged that a relatively small amount of funding applied flexibly by members with local knowledge could make a significant difference. To achieve this, members were given an individual allocation to use for the benefit of their division supported by light touch administrative and decision-making arrangements.
- 2.3 The CDF has proved popular with members and beneficiaries. The range of schemes supported by members is illustrated regularly in County News. Beneficiaries are groups and individuals across the County representing a wide range of ages, interests, and needs. Over time the funding allocated has increased from the initial £5,000 per division to the current rate of £10,000 per division per annum.
- 2.4 The guidance that applies to the scheme has been reviewed and the proposed revised guidance is attached. The main changes proposed are as follows
- a) To reinforce that the scheme is not intended for employment of staff. The scheme is intended for one-off payments and not to build up potential future liabilities.
 - b) To clarify that it is not appropriate to make general charitable donations from the CDF. The scheme is intended to make identifiable and tangible differences so any organisations supported should be active within the Member's division.

- c) To remind members that the Code of Conduct applies to the CDF as to other parts of the Council's work and that they should not leave themselves open to suggestions that the scheme is conducted other than with the utmost integrity. Specifically, where a member has a prejudicial interest they must not put a proposal forward.
- d) To ensure that recipients give an appropriate level of recognition to the Council's funding. It is anticipated that this will be proportionate. So, for instance, some recipients may be able to make a permanent acknowledgement whereas others may only be able to recognise it through notes in annual reports, newsletters, on invitations or verbally.
- e) To transfer responsibility for administering the scheme to Democratic Services which should be more convenient for members seeking advice.

3. **RECOMMENDED**

It is recommended that

- I. The revised guidance for the Councillors Divisional Fund be approved.

Jayne Francis-Ward
Assistant Chief Executive

Service Director (Finance) Comments (MA 10/052011)

The revisions to the scheme and the associated transfer will be contained within existing budgets

Legal Services Comments (SLB 10/05/2011)

County Council is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Nil

Electoral Divisions Affected

All