

Council

27 April 2022

Report of Director of Community and Environmental Services

LOCAL PROJECTS FUND

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the success of the Local Projects Fund and grants awarded since its inception in October 2015 and consider examples of the projects supported in the 2021/2022 financial year and to review the terms and conditions for the award of funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Local Projects Fund be continued in the 2022/2023 financial year, with all spend to be committed by December 2022 to avoid the pre-election period in the spring of 2023.
3. That the terms and conditions of the Local Projects Fund detailed at Appendix 3 be approved.
4. That, on this occasion, the underspend on the Local Projects Fund in the 2021/22 financial year be carried forward to contribute to funding for the events and projects in the district associated with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

WARDS AFFECTED

District-wide

STRATEGIC LINK

The Local Projects Fund enables councillors to be more proactive in their role as community leaders and, in doing so, supports all of the District Council's aims and objectives.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Projects Fund was introduced on 1 October 2015 with the aim of enabling all Members to administer a small budget and distribute funds to worthy causes within their ward.
- 1.2 Applications can be made by local groups and individuals that are based within the Derbyshire Dales area providing that they can demonstrate that the funds will be used to benefit the community. Town and Parish Councils are able to apply for this funding for specific projects. Groups and organisations can apply for funding for both revenue (on a one-off basis) and minor capital projects.
- 1.3 The initiative commenced in October 2015 with each Member having a yearly funding allocation of £1,000. This figure was reduced to £900 in the 2017/18 financial year, as a 10% reduction in line with cuts to other revenue grants associated with the District Council.

2 REPORT

- 2.1 At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, officers determined that the Local Projects Fund would continue during 2020/21 under delegated emergency powers. At that time an amendment was made to the criteria in order to provide funding to individuals and groups who were actively supporting the community response to COVID-19. The decision at that time was:
 - The funds remain as is, £900 allocation per councillor, with no carry forward of underspends at the end of the financial year
 - Minimum grant of |£100 and a maximum of £1,000
 - Current criteria to remain, but to exclude grants for individuals (except for Coronavirus support work)
 - Bids should be focused on outcomes that benefit the wider community where possible rather than just small sections of communities
 - It should be possible for the same organisation to receive a grant each year, but not guaranteed
 - Emphasis on the District Council being acknowledged in any publicity and coverage of the project as a condition
- 2.2 In 2021/22 the total amount awarded from the Local Projects Fund was £33,588 to 101 local projects benefitting our local communities. Details of the allocations and projects are set out in Appendix 1. The overall allocation of funds represents an underspend of £1,512 in the 2021/22 financial year.
- 2.3 All grant awards are subject to the District Council being recognised in any promotional material. Dales Matters has featured examples of grant awards during 2021/22 and a snapshot of recent grants is provided within Appendix 2, along with photographs and feedback from the beneficiaries of the funding.
- 2.4 The Local Projects Fund remains a popular source of funding for groups and organisations across the district and serves as a lever of community leadership for Members in their wards. Whilst provision has been made in the revenue budget agreed by the Council in March 2022 for the continuation of the fund, it is recommended that

the Council consider formal approval of the continuation of the Local Projects Fund in the 2022/23 financial year.

- 2.5 In recommending that the scheme continue, it is also considered appropriate to introduce a deadline for the allocation of funds by Members because the Council will enter a pre-election period in March 2023. It is therefore recommended that the deadline for the 2022/23 financial year be 31 December 2022 for the timely allocation of funds. This will avoid any issues in respect of publicity well before the purdah period for the elections commences in March 2023.
- 2.6 It is recommended that the terms and conditions associated with the Local Projects Fund in 2022/23 be approved. This document makes clear how decisions will be made and the expectations in respect of probity and transparency. A change has been proposed to clarify what will happen in the event that a Member fails to respond to requests to confirm their views on applications for funding. In the case of single Member wards, where there is failure from a Member to communicate with a group or with the responsible officers at the Council, the matter will be referred to the Community and Environment Committee for determination. This is made clear within the terms and conditions set out in the Local Projects Fund Guidance for Councillors, which is enclosed as Appendix 3.
- 2.7 At its meeting on 23 February 2022, the Community and Environment Committee resolved that any underspend in the Council's Local Projects Fund budget for the 2021/22 financial year be utilised to enhance the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Fund and be made available to enable Members to encourage and support applications for funding from Parish Meetings across the district. Such awards of funding to Parish Meetings would be made up to a limit of £250 per Platinum Jubilee Celebration event. As this decision represents a change to the Council's budget, it requires the endorsement of the Council and is recommended for adoption.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

Legal

- 3.1 The legal risk associated with this report is assessed as low.

Financial

- 3.2 The Council's revenue budget for 2021/22 included £35,100 for the award of monies from the Local Projects Fund. A total of £33,588 was awarded in 2021/22, resulting in an underspend of £1,512. As indicated earlier in this report, it was recommended by the Community and Environment Committee that an exception should be made to the usual policy and for the Council to approve the carry forward of the underspend of

£1,512 to the 2022/23 financial year to be utilised for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee funding.

3.3 The financial risk is assessed as low.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

5.1 Emma Mortimer, Community Development Officer, 01629 761392 or localprojects.fund@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 None

7 ATTACHMENTS

7.1 Appendix 1 – Schedule of Grants awarded by Members during 2021/22

7.2 Appendix 2 – Examples and Case Studies of projects funded through the Local Projects Fund

7.3 Appendix 3 – Local Projects Fund Guidance for Councillors