



Notes

Community Projects Fund Working Group

Date:	21 September 2018
Venue:	Reception Room, Town Hall, St Annes.
Present:	<u>Councillors</u> Karen Buckley Richard Redcliffe John Singleton Sue Fazackerley MBE <u>Officers</u> Tracy Manning, Jo Collins, Ian Brookes
Note Taker:	Sharon Wadsworth

1. Background

The Community Projects Fund (CPF) was previously financed from legacy funding earmarked for this purpose by the former Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This legacy fund ended in 2016/17 upon which the then mayor, Councillor Akeroyd, made a request to the Budget Working Group for an annual budget in the region of £25k to be provided directly by the council. In 2017/18 the F&D Committee allocated an annual budget of £20k to the CPF and set up this working group to consider the principle and criteria of the CPF before releasing any future funds.

The current process and criteria for the fund has continued from when it was part of the LSP. Jo Collins has been involved in the administration of the fund since LSP, Tracy Manning became involved in the last five years and Ian Brooke's role has been working with community groups and as such has been involved in a number of funding requests.

Applications for the fund itself are determined by a group of individuals comprising the Community Projects Fund Panel. The membership of the Panel is covered in more detail below.

2. Principle of Fund

Councillor Buckley posed the following question for debate "Do we want to provide a fund for community groups to bid for?"

Feedback from the group was that the funding was a lifeline for smaller groups, good for one off projects, has a positive impact on the local communities and was good for the Council to be seen to be helping small community groups in the area.

It was concluded that in principle the CPF should continue.

3. Criteria of Fund

There are two elements to the fund:-

- 1) Smaller fund for Non-Match Funded Grants – up to £300
- 2) Larger fund for Match Funded Grants - £300 to £2000.

Both funds require an application form to be completed.

Applications to the smaller fund can be made at any time and is decided by panel members remotely. Time scale for the smaller fund is approximately one week.

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Applications to the larger fund are only dealt with during bidding rounds (3 per year). Evidence is required including constitution of the group, bank account and funds held. Shortlisted applications are invited to present their request to the panel.

There is a list on the council website giving examples of what may be funded and what will not be funded. There may only be one application made per year per community group/project and the panel's decision is final. There is no weighting applied to any of the types of criteria.

It was considered that the criteria should tie in with the council's Corporate Plan. These are mentioned on the website but suggested that they are reworded to reflect those in the plan and also to link the section to the plan itself. All requests must also meet the criteria for value for money.

The Working Group discussed the appropriateness of town/parish councils being on the list *excluding* them from applying for the fund. The group agreed that this was appropriate. This would not exclude community groups operating within localities that had their own constitution and used their respective town/parish council as an accountable body, but should exclude applications direct from Town and Parish Councils as the fund was directed at community based groups.

4. Panel Members

The panel has mainly remained unchanged from when it was the LSP and comprises:

Bernard Whittle – Independent (Community Safety Partnership Chair), Michele Scott – Community and Voluntary Sector, Inspector Mick Jones – Lancashire Constabulary, Mayor of Fylde and Tracy Manning – Fylde Council.

Consider – Are panel members representative of the community?

The group discussed the panel and considered that the existing panel members offered a broad spectrum of experience. Some panel members had been involved since the inception of the Panel and with this came wisdom of experience in understanding what had gone before in terms of applicants and applications. It was agreed that the panel should remain comprised as present but the general consensus was that it would be invaluable to have a representative from the health sector. It was noted that the clinical commissioning group had previously been panel members but due to changes they were unable to provide consistent representation. Ian Brookes offered to approach Active Lancashire for representation for the health sector.

(Following the meeting Mr. Brookes approached Active Lancashire and received confirmation that Sarah Dunne, Relationship Manager for this area, was happy to be on the panel).

5. Audit and Feedback on Process

An internal audit had been undertaken on the CPF process. Feedback from the audit was positive and the Audit Team were satisfied with the process. The Audit Team suggested that regular (annual) reporting on the CPF could be made to the parent committee, Finance and Democracy, and this was agreed.

Applications for the larger fund are presented to the panel face to face. The panel discuss the requests following the presentations. If the application is refused the reasons are always given and if applicable advice is given for future bids.

Ian Brookes had received feedback from some applicants stating that they felt nervous presenting to the panel face to face.

Although the process is made as informal as possible it was acknowledged that not everyone would feel entirely comfortable in making a face-to-face application.

Following discussion, and in conclusion, members

Members felt the larger fund applications should still be presented to the panel face-to-face with the panel members taking an informal approach as possible during presentations. It was suggested that applications could be circulated to a relevant group of internal officers (i.e. those involved in parks, sports, tourism, and health) for them to offer assistance and feedback to the groups and panel on the merits of the application. They would also be in a position to help groups locally with signposting. Consideration was also given to the introduction of a scoring matrix for the panel. An example of areas to be considered was attached to the agenda. The pros to introducing a matrix system would be that it was objective, provide better feedback and transparent. The group were in agreement with the potential introduction of a matrix so long as it was not going to be onerous and

would still enable and promote a discussion between the panel members. The matrix could be completed by Jo Collins as administrator and be based on the panel's final discussions.

It was agreed that the suggestion of a scoring matrix be put to the panel members for their trial and comments.

Finally, feedback had been received from applicants that the window for submitting applications is restrictive. The group discussed the alternatives and suggested that the window for submitting applications could be removed. This would mean that applications for the larger fund could be submitted at any time. There would still be 3 panel meetings per year and there would be a cutoff date for final submission of applications for each sitting. Any applications received after the cutoff date would go forward to the next panel meeting. If a large number of applications was received in an intervening period, consideration could be given to holding an additional panel meeting.

6. Publicity

Publicity for the fund was discussed, with options considered of how to better raise awareness of its availability. Options to better publicise the fund were identified as:

- use of social media
- tourist trailer
- Poster/flyers for town/parish councils to display and disseminate information in their communities.
- gathering and using feedback from projects that had received funding – monitoring forms are sent after six months for the larger fund.
- community morning – annual event for group to come and showcase their achievements.
- bi Annual audit
- encourage groups to accredit the Council/ CPF for funds received.

It was agreed that publicity via social media and flyers would be used in the first instance, and the opportunity could be taken to attend any relevant networking events to promote the fund.

7. Recommendations

Summary of recommendations:-

- The Community Projects Fund should continue going forward
- Criteria should link in with the council's Corporate Plan including value for money
- That annual reporting on the CPF be made to the Finance and Democracy Committee
- Sarah Dunne, Relationship Manager with Active Lancashire to be appointed to the join the Community Projects Fund Panel, which should remain comprised as present.
- A group of internal officers to offer assistance and feedback to applicants and panel members on applications
- A draft scoring matrix to be put to the panel members for their trial use
- That the window for submitting applications be removed, but retain a closing date for submissions
- Publicity options be pursued via a social media campaign supplemented by written information and attendance at events as appropriate

Documents



Working Group
agenda.doc
