

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	2 NOVEMBER 2021	4
GRANTS SCHEME TO RESIDENTS AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC EVALUATION			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

Members will recall a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £74,155 was approved at Council at its meeting on 19 October 2020 to fund a scheme through the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) to support local vulnerable residents as a result of the pandemic. The funding from this initiative was a result of funding from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) passported via Lancashire County Council (LCC). The grant was to be used to support people who were struggling to afford food or essentials, or required other support, as a result of the pandemic.

This scheme successfully ran through 2020/21 and as a result, a further funding allocation was made within the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) allocation. The CVS has indicated its willingness to continue with this initiative in the latter part of 2021/22, subject to satisfactory independent evaluation being undertaken of the initial programme, to consider the need for a further bidding round/rounds, together with evaluating the work undertaken thus far.

This report provides an overview of the project evaluation undertaken by Trueman Change. A full copy of the evaluation is attached as an appendix. Sarah Geatrell from Trueman will be attending the committee remotely to present an executive summary of the report and a summary of the Fylde case studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the success of the community grants scheme and the allocation of a further sum of funding from the Contain Management Outbreak Fund, up to £20,000 which has been agreed by the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, in accordance with the decision of the Committee made on 15 June 2021.
2. That thanks be passed to the Council for Voluntary Services for its partnership working with the council to deliver projects to support vulnerable residents as a result of the pandemic.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Council - 19 October 2020 - fully funded budget increase approved to fund a scheme with the Council for Voluntary Services to support residents due to the pandemic.

Environment, Health and Housing Committee - 15 June 2021 - noted that there was an independent evaluation of the 2020/21 grants scheme run on behalf of the Council by the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) underway with the outcome to be considered by the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, prior to embarking on a further round of grants to be administered by the CVS in 2021/22.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	√
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	

REPORT

EMERGENCY FUNDING AWARD

1. Members will recall a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £74,155 was approved at Council at its meeting on 19 October 2020 to fund a grants scheme to be administered through the CVS to support local vulnerable residents as a result of the pandemic. The funding for this initiative was a result of funding from DEFRA, passported via LCC.
2. This scheme successfully ran in 2020/21, and as a result, a further funding allocation was made within the COMF. The CVS has indicated its willingness to continue with this initiative in the latter part of 2021/22, subject to satisfactory independent evaluation being undertaken of the initial programme, to consider the need for a further bidding round/rounds together with evaluating the work undertaken thus far.
3. This report provides an independent evaluation of the project, undertaken on behalf on the council, by Trueman Change.

GRANT SCHEME OVERVIEW

4. The grant scheme was run in partnership with:
 - Fylde Borough Council (Fylde Council)
 - Wyre Borough Council (Wyre Council)
 - Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Council of Voluntary Services (CVS)
 - NHS Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS CCG)
5. The grant scheme allowed local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFS) organisations to bid for funds to support vulnerable residents. An amount of £60,000 was provided by this council and was matched by Wyre Council. In later bidding rounds, both the Fylde and Wyre CCG together with the Blackpool CCG also contributed funds.
6. VCFS organisations were invited to bid for funds from a minimum of £300, up to a maximum of £5,000 for projects that:
 - *Met the immediate need of residents who were struggling to afford food and essentials due to Covid-19;*
 - *Provided advice and information to residents affected by Covid-19 to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits, debt advice or employment support;*
 - *Provided emotional and mental health support;*
 - *Helped address social isolation; and*
 - *Demonstrated how significant numbers of residents most affected by Covid-19 would benefit from the funds, and which geographical areas and issues were being addressed.*
7. The grant scheme was run over four bidding rounds, where applications from VCFS organisations were evaluated by a panel of representatives from Fylde and Wyre Councils, Blackpool CVS, and NHS Blackpool CCG.

GRANT SCHEME OVERVIEW

8. Trueman Change undertook the project evaluation on behalf of the partners. The evaluation focused on four key themes as follows:



Impact in the community



Working with others



Awards and Process



Future work

Following these themes, the key findings of the review are set out below.

IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY



9. It was found that the grant scheme met its own aims, successfully delivering support to vulnerable residents in the Fylde and Wyre and wider areas in a timely way through the channel of local VCFS organisations.
10. Groups who received money from the grant scheme reported that the scheme was pivotal in keeping recipient VCFS groups running during the pandemic.
11. The grant funding made a timely, direct impact in the community through supply of provisions, equipment and support to those who needed it most. It allowed these groups to move people in the community away to hunger, isolation and fear towards social belonging, connection and optimism for the future.
12. The funding also made a timely, direct impact on the VCFS groups themselves, allowing them to begin to generate 'volunteer capital'. Groups were able to set up new infrastructure and equipment, build the strength of their volunteer teams and, in some cases, evolve the reach and scope of their service delivery in the pandemic period, enabling them to become more sustainable in the longer term.

WORKING WITH OTHERS



13. Fylde and Wyre Councils, Blackpool CVS and NHS Blackpool CCG worked effectively in partnership with each other to deliver the scheme's aims.
14. Effective partnership working allowed the scheme to deliver its aims successfully, injecting funds at speed into high-need parts of the local community.
15. The VCFS network has grown in strength because of the grant scheme funding, as groups have started to make new connections with each other. Councils and partners can benefit in the long term from the strength of the network.

AWARDS AND PROCESS



16. Fylde and Wyre Councils and NHS Blackpool CCG collectively spent £176,723.08 on 58 awards in the local area during the scheme.
17. Fylde Council spent £49,069.24 on 25 grant awards across 4 bidding rounds.
18. The grant scheme was delivered with a quick, 'on-the-ground' process that was simple, clear, and fit for purpose.
19. Groups awarded funding were very positive about their experiences with the scheme and felt that it has been a fundamental catalyst in the delivery of support in the community during times of highest need in the Covid-19 pandemic.

FUTURE WORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS



20. VCFS groups report that the Covid- 19 recovery period is just beginning - there is more to do.
21. Groups and grant scheme panel members identified a timely opportunity to help groups develop sustainability for the longer term of the pandemic recovery.
22. Future grant scheme funding should be given, where possible, in a further grant scheme bidding round.
23. This further bidding round should focus on helping VCFS groups to support themselves in the longer term, drawing on their resources and networks, and further developing volunteer capital.
24. The grant scheme panel should be adapted to include representation from social prescribing teams and GP surgeries for their on-the-ground local knowledge and connections.
25. It was noted that beyond a further round of grant scheme funding, the Community Fund Project at Fylde Council will be able to provide some continued support to VCFS groups in the longer term and the support of this from the CVS in promoting the Community Projects Fund will be helpful.

CONCLUSION

26. At the Environment, Health and Housing Committee meeting, held on 15 June 2021, it was noted that there was an independent evaluation of the 2020/21 grant scheme underway, to consider the need for a future bidding round. This evaluation has concluded that the grants scheme was a success and that there should be a final bidding round. This bidding round should focus on helping VCFS groups to support themselves in the longer term, drawing on their resources and networks, and further developing volunteer capital.
27. Having had the opportunity to consider the evaluation report, the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, has allocated £20,000 to be funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund budget. This amount of funding will be added to a remaining £10,000 from the previous bidding rounds already banked with the CVS, making a total final bidding round allocation of up to £30,000. Wyre Council has indicated its willingness to also enter a final bidding round.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report allocated £20k from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund 2020/21 utilising the support for vulnerable allocation a Community Grants Scheme. It adds to £10k already banked with the CVS which was underspent in previous biddings rounds. This will provide a total funding package of up to £30k. The COMF award for 2020/21 has previously been added to the revenue and capital budgets, in line with the decision made by the Chief Executive using emergency powers.
Legal	The council needs to put in place accountable and transparent arrangements in relation to its decisions on how the fund is used.
Community Safety	There are no implications.
Human Rights and Equalities	There are no implications.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	There are no implications.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	There are no implications

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
N/A		

Attached documents

Appendix 1 - Trueman Change - Fylde Borough Council Grant Scheme Evaluation