



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

23rd October 2018

Subject: Councillor Initiative Fund

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

Continuation of the Councillor Initiative Fund

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Members approve Option 1: Continue Councillor Initiative Fund aligned to 4 year political term with £4,000 available to each Member, noting the introduction of the maximum award cap.
2. Members recommend to Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for financial approval and allocation of budget from General Fund reserves.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Grant funding agreements approved by Legal Services. All schemes comply with necessary legal regulations and same requirements are placed on projects and organisations funded.

Financial: FIN/119/19

The creation of a new Earmarked Reserve for the Councillor Initiative Fund was approved by Corporate Policy & Resources 12 May 2016 - £108k over 3 years from 2016/17 to 2018/19, funded from 2015/16 year end surplus.

The extension of this scheme for 4 years would require an increase in the Earmarked Reserve of £144k, to cover the 4 year period 2019/20 to 2022/23.

This would need to be funded from General Fund reserves. The current balance of the uncommitted General Fund Balances is £2,525,295.

Staffing:

Management of this scheme shall continue to be in-house by the Enterprising Communities Service and administrative support from Central Support.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Grant funding activity will be delivered in accordance with WLDC equality and diversity policies. Organisations receiving funding will be required to meet the same standards.

Risk Assessment:

None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Background

- 1.1 The Councillor Initiative Fund has been running since 2006. Since its creation the fund has enabled Members to support local community projects and initiatives with small to medium sized grant awards.
- 1.2 In addition to supporting projects with funding, the fund is a key tool that facilitates greater engagement between our Members and local residents, community organisations, and parish/town councils.
- 1.3 The current delivery of this fund is operating with a budget to cover from 2016 to 2019. The funds for the current delivery were allocated from Council reserves and approved as part of a re-launch of the Council's Community Grants Programme in 2015/2016.
- 1.4 The current budget for 2016 to 2019 is £108,000. This gives each Member an allocation of £3,000 to award to projects during this 3 year time period.
- 1.5 The current budget for this fund will end in March 2019. Any remaining funds will go back into the Council's reserves.

2. Impact of the Councillor Initiative Fund

- 2.1 Over the last 2 years the fund has supported hundreds of community projects right across the district. The fund is still running until the end of 2018/2019 so any impact figures quoted in this report are subject to increase.
- 2.2 The following table demonstrates the impact of the fund over the last 2 years:

	2016/2017	2017/2018	Total so far
Total number of grants awarded	102	62	164
Total amount awarded	£39,912	£28,041	£67,953
Total match/levered funding	£235,960	£72,680	£308,640

APPENDIX A – Community Grants Impact Report 2016-2017

APPENDIX B – Councillor Initiative Fund Grants 2016-2017

APPENDIX C – Community Grants Impact Report 2017-2018

APPENDIX D – Councillor Initiative Fund Grants 2017-2018

3. Corporate Plan Themes

3.1 The Councillor Initiative Fund as part of our wider Community Grants Programme helps support our Corporate Plan Themes. Any options to continue delivery of the fund will continue to support the following themes:

- Theme 1: Open for Business
- Theme 2: People First
- Theme 3: Asset Management
- Theme 5: Partnerships/Devolution
- Theme 6: Excellent Value for Money Services

3.2 Our Community Grants Programme has provided high profile recognition of the support the council can give to community projects. Members are directly involved either making final award decisions or taking part in decision making panels.

4. Issues and challenges

4.1 The council continues to face financial pressures in delivering services. To continue the Councillor Initiative Fund a suitable delivery budget needs allocating.

4.2 The loss of regional and national community funding sources has continued over the last 3 years. For example all community grant schemes previously available from Lincolnshire County Council have been closed and funders such as WREN now have a drastically reduced grant fund available for projects across the country.

4.3 In addition the Council undertook some re-structuring of the Community Grants Programme in 2017/2018 which resulted in no longer providing a Small and Large Community Grant. The continuation of the Match Funding Grant for a further 5 years continues to support larger community projects. The continuation of the Councillor Initiative Fund is seen as essential in order to continue supporting smaller scale community projects.

4.4 The need for community involvement and/or ownership is increasing as many communities look to provide services and functions that have been reduced or ceased from Public Sector organisations. For example community facilities may now be providing library services and Parish Councils are taking on areas of public land such as parks and footpaths.

As a result local communities can't take new responsibilities on without the correct resources, skills and finance. Many organisations will be seeking grant funding to help support community service provisions and local enhancements.

5. Councillor Initiative Fund Options

5.1 There are 3 options to be considered:

OPTION 1: (RECOMMENDED OPTION)

Continue Councillor Initiative Fund aligned to 4 year political term with £4,000 available to each Member

Total funding required: £144,000 over 4 years

This option would align the delivery timescales of the fund to that of the Council's political term. The benefit of this is that the fund allocations per Member are in sync with a full term.

This option continues with the current allocation to Members of £1,000 per year. The full £4,000 would be available for Members to award with no year to year restrictions.

It is proposed to introduce a maximum grant award cap of £1,000 per project. This is to prevent organisations approaching Members for larger grant awards and to direct projects seeking larger grant amounts to the Council's Match Funding Grant scheme.

No changes to the criteria of delivering this fund are proposed.

Benefits	Disadvantages
Continue to support small to medium community projects	Requires significant financial budget to deliver
Synchronised to the Council's political term period	On-going management and administration requires staff resource
Continue to be a quick to access small grant scheme	

5.2 **OPTION 2:**

Continue Councillor Initiative Fund aligned to 4 year political term with increased allocation to each Member

This option is the same as OPTION 1 but with an increased allocation to each Member. The increase is a variable within this option that is open to discussion by Members on the Prosperous Communities Committee.

It should be noted that any final approval to allocate funds must be made by the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee.

The following demonstrates the total budget implication depending on the allocation increase:

Allocation per Member (over 4 years)	Total Funding Required (over 4 years)
£5,000	£180,000
£6,000	£216,000
£7,000	£252,000
£8,000	£288,000

Benefits	Disadvantages
Continue to support small to medium community projects	Requires significant financial budget to deliver
Synchronised to the Council's political term period	On-going management and administration requires staff resource
Continue to be a quick to access small grant scheme	Increased budget may impact on other Council spending decisions
Additional funds to further enhance community projects	Increased administration costs due to processing more grant awards

**5.3 OPTION 3:
Do not continue the Councillor Initiative Fund**

This option would see the Councillor Initiative Fund end in March 2019 and not continue. Other schemes within the Council's Community Grants Programme would be unaffected.

The closure of the fund would remove any on-going financial pressure to allocate a budget. This option represents a high value gain in terms of removing a financial pressure but would result in a loss of community benefits and high risk of reputational damage to the Council.

Benefits	Disadvantages
No financial pressure to allocate a budget	Loss of any community impact the fund is able to achieve
Financial saving to the Council	Lack of small grant availability for projects in the district
Reduce management and administration requirements	Negative public reaction and reputational damage
	Reduced opportunities for Members to engage with residents and groups

6. Recommendations

- 6.1** Members approve Option 1: Continue Councillor Initiative Fund aligned to 4 year political term with £4,000 available to each Member noting the introduction of the maximum award cap.
- 6.2** Members recommend to Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for financial approval and allocation of budget from General Fund reserves.