

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted – *None declared*

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: *LEGAL AND COMMUNITY*

1. DECISION TAKEN

To approve a Community Investment Fund Policy/ procedure for the use of the allotted £100K in the Councils 2023/24 budget (as appended as A).

2. DECISION TAKER

Elizabeth Dennis, the Leader in consultation with Jeanette Thompson, Service Director – Legal and Community

(NB consultation on the proposed Policy was also undertaken with the Executive Member for Finance & IT, the Executive Member for Community & Partnerships, their deputies, the Deputy Leader and the Service Director: Resources prior to being finalised).

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

14th August 2023

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 To provide a Policy that establishes the basis and process for the funds identified and approved in the Council budget 2023/24.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 No alternative options considered appropriate, given a policy provides an appropriate governance and auditable process for the fund.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

- 6.1 As indicated above, consultation has been carried out with the Executive Members, deputies and officers. The Shared Internal Audit Service's (SIAS) Head of Assurance, have also been incorporated, has also seen and made comments on the Policy prior to approval.

7. FORWARD PLAN

- 7.1 This decision is a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 13 July 2023.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 As per the information above, the Council at its meeting on 23 February 2023 (item 189 revenue budget), the Council approved an additional investment fund (resolution 8) as follows:

(8) *Approved an additional revenue investment (for 2023/24 only) to create a Community Wealth Fund of £100k to support the local community in delivering projects that have wider community benefits.*

The relevant report and decision page can be accessed [here](#). This Policy therefore sets out the basis for and the approach to be taken to allow groups to apply for such funding.

- 8.2 The fund will be directed towards supporting community groups in North Hertfordshire to capacity build in order to enable wider and long-term community benefits. This is time limited funding; however, the Council will look to see if there is any other external funding sources for subsequent years to continue providing this benefit, if possible.
- 8.3 Community groups provide many important services to the local community. The events of recent years, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have affected community groups' resources and ability to conduct their operations, while also increasing the need for their services amongst the community. There is a need for local community groups to be able to build their capacity and improve the long-term sustainability of their operations and services.
- 8.4 Capacity building is when organisations and communities develop and/or strengthen their skills, knowledge, abilities, processes, or resources in order to do new activities or improve the things they already do. It can help them adapt to changes they are experiencing, get into a better position to apply for other funding opportunities, and sustain their operations on a long-term basis.
- 8.5 The capacity building activities should ultimately enable the group or organisation to further deliver community value. This value could relate to economic support and opportunities, social opportunities, wellbeing, or environmental protection and improvement.
- 8.6 The Community Investment Fund Policy therefore seeks to improve the lives of individuals and enable responses to local challenges by improving the capacity of local organisations and community groups.
- 8.7 Grants will range from a minimum value of £5000 up to a maximum value of £20,000.
- 8.8 Full details of the Policy and criteria can be found at Appendix A: Community Investment Fund Policy and Criteria. Assessment of the grants will be done in accordance with Section 5 of the Council's [Community Grants Policy](#).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Approval of this Policy is an Executive Function as per section 9D Local Government Act 2000 (as are approval of subsequent grants). This Policy would ordinarily be presented to Cabinet; however, given the desire to proceed with the allocations, and the next meeting being 19 September (and call in post leading to the first possible Grant Panel considerations to be after 27 September), the decision has been taken by the Leader as per 14.6.16.1 *"The scope of the Leader's responsibilities spans all Portfolios, ensuring co-ordination and a coherent approach to the Council's decision making. The Leader can make any decision which is delegated to any Executive Member."* and the statutory basis of this being section 9E(2) discharge of functions generally, *"(2) The senior executive member—(a) may discharge any of those functions,"*. The senior executive member being the Leader.
- 9.2 It should be noted that a wide internal consultation on the proposed Policy was undertaken with relevant Executive Members and their deputies as indicated, in any event.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The grants will be funded from a budget of £100k that was allocated as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process. The grants are generally expected to be revenue. But given the amounts could be up to £20k there is the potential for them to be capital funding. The Council is allowed to fund capital expenditure from revenue budgets.
- 10.2. This particular decision does not provide a Subsidy to any organisation (as part of the Subsidy Control Act) – as this is the Policy approval. The intention is that this scheme will provide grant funding to small organisations and they will be asked to confirm that they fall under the threshold for Minimal Financial Assistance. If there are any concerns, then advice will be sought before the decision to award the grant is made. Grants will not be awarded where they could contravene the Subsidy Control Act.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Approval of the policy/process will ensure there are appropriate governance arrangements in place for the allocation of funds. It will also help to remove a potential reputational risk of delaying support to community groups, by ensuring we are able to allocate funds earlier than if we went to Cabinet for a decision.
- 11.2 The risk of receiving too many applications is mitigated by setting the minimum grant amount at £5,000. The risk of not receiving enough applications due to the criteria set can be mitigated through working with organisations. Risks around determining the best use of the funding is mitigated by the potential to utilise Shared Prosperity Funding in 24/25. The risk of difficulties in assessing the outputs and outcomes achieved by the support will be mitigated by working with applicants to co-design appropriate measures.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 The Community Investment Fund looks to improve the lives of those within North Hertfordshire by building the capacity of community groups to deliver important services.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this decision.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. As stated under the criteria at Appendix A, action to restore natural environments or tackle climate change could be examples of community value.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Staff resource impact will be amongst the Community Partnerships team who will assess the applications. It is expected that the minimum grant value of £5000 will prevent the team from becoming overwhelmed by applications, as well as helping ensure that applications are focused on meaningful capacity building activities.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 [The Community Grants Policy](#)

17. APPENDICES

17.1 Appendix A – Community Investment Fund Policy and Criteria

NOTIFICATION DATE


18 August 2023

Signature of Executive Member (the Leader)



Decision Taker

Signature of the Service Director Legal and Community



Date ...3.8.23.....

Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Community Investment Fund Policy

1.0 The Fund

- 1.1 A Community Investment Fund was approved initially as part of the Council's Revenue Budget 2023/2024 at the February 2023 Council meeting. The fund will be directed towards supporting the local community to capacity build in order to enable wider and long-term community benefits. The Council will potentially look at other external funding sources for subsequent years to continue providing this benefit, if possible.
- 1.2 The Fund supports the [Council's Priorities](#): All allocations of the Fund should pertain to at least one of these priorities.

People First – Putting people at the heart of what we do.

Sustainability – Delivering sustainable services (financial sustainability; environmental sustainability).

A Brighter Future Together – Planning for the long-term to ensure the best outcomes for North Hertfordshire and its communities.

2.0 Grants

- 2.1 The funding allocations from the Community Investment Fund are defined as 'grants', in that payment is not being made in return for goods or services to the Council, but rather to enable the beneficiary to invest in themselves with the aim of enabling wider community benefits.
- 2.2 Grant values will range from a minimum of £5000 to a maximum of £20,000.
- 2.3 In order to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, those seeking grants must confirm on their application form that their organisation will not receive grant funding of more than £315k over a three year period from any Public authority (such as Central or Local Government sources).

3.0 Criteria

- 3.1 The Fund is designed to result in a benefit or value for the community/communities of North Hertfordshire. This benefit or 'community value' should be achieved through capacity building.

3.2 Capacity Building

- 3.2.1 Capacity building is about organisations and communities developing and/or strengthening their skills, knowledge, abilities, processes, or resources. Doing so allows organisations and communities to do new activities or improve the things they already do.
- 3.2.2 Capacity building can help community groups get into a better position to apply for future grants and funding opportunities.

3.2.3 Capacity building should enable the organisation or community group to operate on a long-term basis. It will often help groups to increase their resilience and adapt to changes they are experiencing. Applicants must therefore explain how capacity building will enable them to sustain their projects and services.

3.2.4 Capacity building activities could include:

- Training or mentoring for staff, volunteers, and trustees to fill skills gaps.
- Creating or improving a 'business plan'.
- Doing more work in the community or engaging with a wider audience.
- Purchase of equipment or other resources (e.g a database, new IT systems)
- Activities to improve staff/volunteer retention or to attract more volunteers.
- Building a network of contacts who you could work with, engage in peer support with, or receive funding from.
- Developing your financial resources – exploring new ways of fundraising (e.g asset transfer, selling your skills, finding new grant opportunities).
- Improving your standards on safeguarding or equalities.

3.3 Community Value

3.3.1 Community Value is when the community benefits from positive value. This value could relate to economic support and opportunities, social opportunities, wellbeing, or environmental protection and improvement.

3.3.2 Projects which deliver community value could include:

- Helping people access employment.
- Educational or training activities.
- Activities which encourage civic engagement or community cohesion.
- Activities which alleviate poverty.
- Support for mental or physical health.
- Measures to address climate changes and impacts, reduce impact on the environment, or restore/improve natural environments.

3.3.3 Ultimately, community value is about improving the lives of those within the community and finding solutions to local challenges. All applications to the Fund should have the ultimate aim of delivering community value.

3.4 Proposed projects should pertain to at least one of the Council's three Priorities: *People First; Sustainability; A Brighter Future Together*.

3.5 The award of the grant must provide additionality. You are providing additionality if your capacity building activities would not have been able to occur without award of the grant.

3.6 Inclusions: The Fund is open to volunteer-led groups or those who operate on a not-for-profit basis. Please see our [Community Grants Policy](#) for examples of what this includes.

3.7 Exclusions: The Fund is only available to not-for-profit organisations. It is not available to any organisation who has received more than £10,000 from other North Herts Council grants over the last 12 months. The Fund is also not to be used for

duplicating existing funding for services. For a full list of ineligible activities, please see section 3.1 of the [Community Grants Policy](#).

- 3.8 To comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, organisations must confirm on the application form that they will not receive grant funding of more than £315k over a three-year period from any Government/Local Government source.
- 3.9 The Fund will be assessed according to the Assessment Criteria at Section 5 of the Council's Community Grants Policy. The Terms of the Award at Section 6 will also apply.

1.0 Applications

- 4.1 The Fund will be open to applications which should be made using the Community Investment Fund application form.
- 4.2 As part of the application form, applicants are asked to define the intended outcomes of the activities for which they are applying for funding, and to outline how they will measure these outcomes. Applicants are also asked to indicate a timeframe for completion of their activities. This will enable the Council to review the success of the funded activities and will help us shape future Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding opportunities.
- 4.3 All applications will be robustly reviewed to ensure there is evidence that grants will result in a benefit to the community and that projects will be sustainable long-term. As such, applicants should explain how their capacity building activity will enable them to sustain their projects or services, and the community value this will produce.
- 4.4 Organisations who have not received money previously under the Area Forums (or previous Area Committee) process will be considered favourably. Partnership working will also be considered favourably.
- 4.5 *Note that Community grants can still be applied for and considered in the normal manner [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/grants/community-grants>], and the fund will not impact on the overall budget of Area Forums. Area Forum grants will be considered and approved by the Area Forum or the Executive Member for Community & Partnerships and Service Director Legal and Community in the normal way.*
- 4.6 Applications will be considered by the District wide community facilities capital & revenue grants panel, with decision made by the relevant Executive Member in consultation with the Service Director following the Panel's recommendation.