

Forest Heath District Council

(This report is not a key decision. This report has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's Access to Information Rules)

Report of the Cultural Services Manager

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 OCTOBER 2013

OAS13/440

MEMBER LOCALITY BUDGET REVIEW

1. Summary and reasons for recommendation

- 1.1 Forest Heath District Council Member Locality Budget scheme was launched in 2012. Council Members have a budget of £2,500 each financial year, to be awarded to community groups in their Council Ward. The aim of the funding is to support projects or activities that will improve the community or environment and enhance the quality of life for residents. It is recognised that this is an evolving scheme, which has great potential in supporting the new Families and Communities Strategy.
- 1.2 The Scheme has now been running since July 2012 and after identifying a number of teething problems, as reported to this Committee in October 2012, and a slow start to the scheme, the current number of projects funded to date is 62.
- 1.3 There were 39 approved projects with an expenditure of £28,070 in 2012-2013 details of which are attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 1.4 To date for this financial year 2013-2014 there are 23 approved projects with a total expenditure of £22,238 details of which are attached at **Appendix 2**.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the progress of this scheme.

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3. How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?

3.1 The establishment of Locality Budgets directly contributes to the Forest Heath District Councils Strategic Plan:

- Priority Two, Community Development – supporting stronger, more active communities.

3.2 The introduction of Locality Budgets support community action and empowerment as well as equipping Members to assist communities in achieving outcomes that local people can recognise.

4. Key issues

4.1 There have been on-going discussions between officers and members as to the application process and the information required from members to enable them to successfully complete the application process. Following these discussions there have been a number of useful outcomes including:-

- Providing some training on the scheme as part of the 'neighbourhood working' briefing sessions for members.
- Considering how administration of the scheme could be shared to ensure effective use of officer resources which has resulted in the applications now being processed by two officers.
- Clarifying the meaning of what constitutes a 'community group' and why that would make them eligible for funding.
- Clarifying to both community groups and members the meaning of 'wider benefit for the community' so that applications have broader outcomes.
- Encouraging members to join up to fund one project resulting in one application process.
- The communications team are automatically notified of each grant and there have been a number of good news stories picked up by the press. The new community development team will work closely with communications and members to ensure the scheme is widely promoted.

The scheme has proved popular with Members and Community Organisations although it is recognised that the scheme is developing.

Within the new Leisure, Culture and Community structure the community development team will have responsibility for a specific locality and directly supporting local ward members. This approach will be a considerable benefit to the scheme moving forward.

4.2 These issues and improvements have been implemented and now the scheme is running smoothly.

4.3 Members of the Committee are asked to make any further observations about the effectiveness of the scheme to date.

5. Other options considered

5.1 None.

6. Community impact

6.1 Crime and disorder impact *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

6.1.1 The scheme has built in measures to ensure funds are paid direct to community groups.

6.2 Diversity and equality impact *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

6.2.1 There is no diversity and equality impact from administration of the scheme.

6.3 Sustainability impact *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

6.3.1 None associated with this report.

6.4 Other impact *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

6.4.1 All projects supported through the locality budget scheme should have a positive community impact.

7. Consultation *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

7.1 Informal and on-going consultation with Members and the community groups is an integral part to the smooth running of the scheme. This has resulted in a better understanding of the project as a whole and in particular the type of projects and groups that are eligible for funding.

8. Financial and resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 The total annual provision for the locality budget across the current Strategic Plan is £67.5k.

8.2 In 2012-2013, the underspend from each Member’s locality budget was carried over into the 2013-2014 budgets.

8.3 The Community Development Officer responsible for delivering the scheme has now begun to share the administration of the project due to the increase in applications.

9. Risk/opportunity assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	High/Medium/Low		High/Medium/Low
The scheme could be used for fraudulent and illegal activity.	Low	Payment is made to community groups.	Low

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	High/Medium/Low		High/Medium/Low
Use of the scheme brings the Council into disrepute	Low	Officers and where appropriate the Leader of the Council review applications for paying grants from the scheme	Low
Members have a conflict of interest.	Medium	Members must declare a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest on the application form. Leader or Deputy Leader must approve.	Low

10. Legal and policy implications

10.1 Any amendments to the existing policy would require a review to ensure legal compliance.

11. Wards affected

11.1 All wards.

12. Background papers

12.1 None.

13. Documents attached

13.1 Appendix 1 – Projects 2012-2013

13.2 Appendix 2 – Projects 2013 to date