

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities	
Report No:	OAS/FH/18/021	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	12 July 2018
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Robin Millar Cabinet Member for Families and Communities Tel: 07545 423782 Email: robin.millar@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officers:	<p>Davina Howes Assistant Director (Families and Communities) Tel: 01284 757070 Email: davina.howes@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Tel: 01638 719729 Email: Christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p>	
Purpose of report:	<p>As part of the "Challenge" role, Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. It is part of the Scrutiny role to "challenge" in the form of questions.</p> <p>Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee.</p>	

Recommendation:	Members of the Committee are asked to question the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities on his portfolio responsibilities, and having considered the information, the Committee may wish to: 1) Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities for his consideration; 2) Request further information and / or receive a future update. 3) Take any other appropriate action as necessary.		
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 		
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 		
Implications:			
<i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
None	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Wards affected:		All	
Background papers:		None	
Documents attached:		Appendix A – Community Chest application form and guidance Appendix B – Community Chest case studies	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As part of its "Challenge" role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. To carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall be invited to give an account of his or her portfolio and to answer questions from the Committee.

1.1.2 Last year, on 20 April 2017, Councillor Robin Millar, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities attended this committee and presented a report which summarised the areas of responsibility covered under his portfolio.

1.2 Scrutiny Focus

1.2.1 The scope of this report differs from that of last year as the Cabinet Member has been asked to prepare a report which answers the following specific questions identified by the committee members as being relevant to the housing portfolio:

- 1) **Community Chest Funding:** Have the objectives of the Community Chest Funding worked, and are there any revisions needed moving forward?

1.3 Response to Key Questions Set out in the Scrutiny Focus

1.3.1 **Community Chest Funding:** *Have the objectives of the Community Chest Funding worked and are there any revisions needed moving forward?*

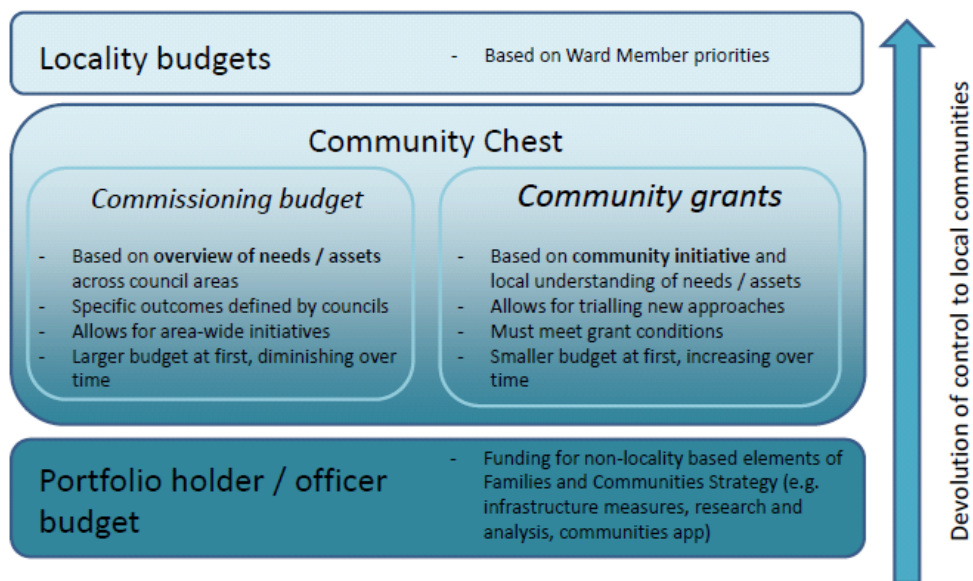
1.3.2 Community Chest funding – history and process

1.3.3 Up to 2015/16, Forest Heath DC provided on-going funding to a number of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) bodies. There was no formalised application process and the funding was managed via a service level agreement process.

1.3.4 The Community Chest grant scheme opened in 2015/16, running alongside the last year of core funding. An annual application and quarterly monitoring process was introduced, administered by the Families and Communities Team.

1.3.5 The aim of moving to a separate Community Chest budget was to enable the councils to clearly analyse and monitor the money going to communities to ensure this is making the expected difference, where outcomes are achieved and families and communities are thriving.

Families and communities - funding approach



1.3.6 The Community Chest was introduced in line with a wider review of the Families and Communities Funding approach and the above diagram shows how this is allocated. It represents a simplified mix of funding types, with differing degrees of devolution of control to local communities to ensure that, on the one hand, specific local priorities can be supported, especially where led by the Ward member in their capacity as a community leader (i.e. Locality Budgets). On the other hand, it allows the councils to address strategic priorities that emerge across West Suffolk, where our research and analysis demonstrates that action is needed at a larger geographical scale (i.e. portfolio holder / officer budget).

1.3.7 It was intended that Community Chest would be characterised by two different types of funding, depending on which is most appropriate in the circumstances:

- grant funding, where interested groups are invited to come up with proposals that help to meet the councils' priorities for families and communities. The grant applicant describes the local need and its proposed approach, including innovative approaches;
- commissioning, where outcomes are defined by the councils, in conjunction with the community, and voluntary and community groups are invited to bid for funding on the basis that they will meet the defined outcomes.

1.3.8 The commissioning route was used in the first year where we tendered a proportion of the Community Chest to ensure Financial outreach support was delivered in FHDC. At this time it was noted that there was a gap in this nature and the Community Chest was used to shape the market. The Suffolk West Citizen's Advice were successful with

their bid. Due to the success of the grant funding and range of applicants this attracted, the commissioning element has not been needed as envisioned.

- 1.3.9 Consideration of all applications for the Community Chest Grant funds and decisions about which to fund are undertaken each year by the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities under delegated powers, assisted by the Families and Communities team. Decisions are then passed to Cabinet for information and comment.
- 1.3.10 **Community Chest funding – Grant Funding allocations**
- 1.3.11 The Community Chest Grant funding application process opens annually, between July and September each year, for funding periods commencing the following April. Each year we have received feedback from the process and as a result of this small changes have been made, for example stream lining the paperwork for applicants.
- 1.3.12 There is full guidance and an application form available via the website and in hard copy (**Appendix A**). Prospective applicants are encouraged to speak to the Families and Communities locality officers and grants specialist officer prior to applying to ensure applications are fit for purpose. This approach has led to an increase in relevant, well considered approaches as well as increase in community connections.
- 1.3.13 There has been an annual budget of £185,250 for Forest Heath since 2016/17. For 2017/18 additional Public Health funding of £69,054 was secured to fund health-focused projects.
- 1.3.14 Since 2016/17, the Forest Heath Community Chest fund has received 63 applications, of which 32 have received funding. The average annual grant awarded has been £14,217. This figure includes funding to Newmarket and Suffolk West Citizen’s Advice for free information, advice and advocacy services and the commissioned MoneySmart financial awareness programme at a total of between £101,787 and £110,150 per year.
- 1.3.15 Three year funding agreements have been given to two organisations and four projects have received two year funding agreements since 2016/17.
- 1.3.16 Recent applications have highlighted a different form of funding request, which is better understood as “investment” rather than grant or commissioning. These investments typically address growth in the capacity of the organisation to capture a particular opportunity, meet a new need etc. There is typically exceptional potential, capacity and/or interest in the organisation or idea from other partners or the public.

- 1.3.17 On one hand, this diversification of funding application reflects the maturation of the local market. It points to a successful market shaping by Forest Heath that people are coming forward with more ambitious projects and ideas. However, this has also placed new challenges on our funding criteria.
- 1.3.18 Our conclusion is that, like businesses trying to grow, rather than businesses who need money for day to day operating, these are best handled in association with different funders. Our F&C officers are well placed to help such organisations develop sustainable “business” and action plans, but we have now built stronger links with Suffolk Community Foundation and other external bodies which can provide the actual investment and advice on growth and scalability.
- 1.3.19 **Community Chest funding – monitoring**
- 1.3.20 Each grant recipient is allocated an officer from the Families and Communities team who is responsible for monitoring. The allocation is based on the officer’s specialism (e.g. Families or Vulnerable Groups) or locality, whichever is deemed the best fit.
- 1.3.21 Each Community Chest grant recipient signs a grant agreement setting out terms and conditions of funding and the expected outputs and outcomes during the grant term, based on the information contained in their grant application.
- 1.3.22 The Families and Communities officer is responsible for ensuring quarterly reporting is received from each organisation in their care and that any issues are flagged and addressed. The officers often also work alongside grant recipient organisations through their specialism or locality roles to ensure optimum benefit is received by communities and links across both funded and non-funded projects can be made.
- 1.3.23 All grant recipient organisations have met or exceeded their grant agreement terms. In a few cases where unexpected circumstances have led to a change in delivery expectations, Families and Communities officers have worked with the organisations concerned and the Families and Communities Grants specialist to amend and record changes in the grant agreement and to ensure organisations meet the new terms.
- 1.3.24 Since 2017-2018 funding year, each grant recipient organisation is required to provide a case study to demonstrate the outcomes their grant funding has enabled. A selection of these are presented in **Appendix B.**

1.3.25 **Next steps**

1.3.26 As from 2018/2019 Families and Communities officers are being encouraged to work with new projects to further consider their approach to sustainability and become less reliant on smaller funding grants. This approach has led to the establishment of Community interest companies, projects understanding the benefits of a good business plan and working with officers on larger funding bids.

1.3.27 The Community Chest and wider Families and Communities Funding approach will be fully reviewed as part of arrangements for single council. This will include reviewing the governance and robustness and transparency of the process and the importance of political direction setting on funding criteria.

1.4 **Proposals**

1.4.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ask questions of the Cabinet Member following his update.