

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER**

<b>1. Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Community Development, Equality and Young People's Issues</b>
<b>2. Date:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> March 2012</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>	<b>Members' Community Leadership Fund - Flexibility to Carry Forward Under-Spend.</b>
<b>4. Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

**5. Summary**

The Community Leadership Fund budget for 2011/12 is likely to be under spent. In previous years the Fund has remained as flexible as possible by allowing individual Members to carry forward under spend with a maximum carry forward of £1000 for each Member.

**6. Recommendations**

That Cabinet Member notes:-

- The current expenditure position of the Community Leadership Fund for 2011/12
- Considers options for the carry forward of any unspent monies

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **7.1 Background**

The Community Leadership Fund was established in 2003 to enable Members to address local priorities, support grassroots groups and quickly instigate changes in response to local opinion.

It places members at the heart of local neighbourhood arrangements and adds value to their role as community leaders.

Each Member currently has £1000 per year to spend, at their discretion, on issues both within their local Ward or on borough wide initiatives that benefit local people. This can be on stand alone projects or match funding with other partners for example, the Police, Youth Services and Tenants' and Residents' Associations.

More recently the coalition government has published the Localism Bill which clearly identifies the importance of grassroots local activity, democratic engagement and decentralisation all of which reflect the key principles of the Community Leadership Fund.

### **7.2 Community Leadership Fund Budget 2011/12**

The budget for the financial year 2011/12 is £63k plus a carry over from the previous financial year of £23k resulting in a total budget of £86k.

### **7.3 The Carry over Facility**

The principle of the carry over facility was approved by Cabinet during 2007 and has operated each year since. This flexibility gives Members the option to carry forward up to £1000 each into the next financial year to purposely 'save' their allocation to spend on larger projects or have a contingency fund to react quickly to any urgent issues that may arise within their Ward.

It has proved to be a popular option. At the end of the financial year 2010/11 82% of Members chose to carry forward monies, the majority in the £200-£300 range. However some Ward members carried forward their full allocation to be used on specific projects. For example the Swinton Members carried forward £2975 to be put towards the Dunn Street Play area project.

### **7.4 Current expenditure**

The total spent for the current financial year 2011/12 as at the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2012 stands at £55k representing 63% of the total budget available to Members.

It should be noted that evidence from previous years' shows that spend is very high in the last two months of the financial year. During 2010/11 members spent £25k during February and March. Based on this information it is therefore likely that £10-11k will be the approximate carry forward figure requested for carry forward into the next financial year.

All Members have received six monthly and new year reminder statements detailing their spend to date and the latest spending position is available to them on the internal intranet pages.

## **7.5 Alternative options to the carry forward**

Previous reports have been submitted to the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel detailing options to change the current carry over facility including:-

- Ending the facility to keep expenditure within the financial year
- Imposing a cut off point during the final quarter of the financial year allowing all Members to 'bid' for any unspent monies.
- Requesting project proposals to be submitted prior to financial year end in order to secure specific funding to be carried forward.

However after consideration the Panel recommended at that time that no changes be made to the arrangements for the Community Leadership Fund.

## **8. Finance**

Members currently have an allowance of £1000 per year equal to a total budget pot of £63000. The budget is managed and administered by the Neighbourhoods Partnerships team within the Housing and Neighbourhoods service.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

A moratorium on applications will be put in place six weeks prior to the local elections in May 2012 and the closing date for applications will be the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. Members will need reasonable and timely notice if carry forward arrangements are to differ from previous years in order that money is not lost to local communities or any planned future projects put in jeopardy.

Recent feedback from Members suggests they are receiving an increasing number of requests for assistance from the Fund at a time when national, regional and local funding to many projects and groups is being reduced or withdrawn.

Any reduction in funding will potentially have a negative impact on the community leadership role of individual ward councillors and their advocacy of the value of local democracy and active citizenship.

Feedback from projects clearly demonstrates that even small amounts of funding can have a large impact.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The breadth and diversity of projects supported by the Fund contributes to all five strands of the Corporate Plan and in particular to:-

- Helping to create safe and healthy communities.

The Fund contributes towards the key Corporate strategic theme of:-

- Rotherham Proud.

This key theme is reflected within Strategic Objective 5 of the NAS Service Plan 2010-13:-

- We will ensure that Citizens are satisfied with their community as a place to live.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

1. The Localism Bill: Department of Communities and Local Government January 2012
2. The Coalition: Our Programme for Government May 2010
3. Minutes of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel September 2010

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