

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

1. Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion
2. Date:	25th February, 2013
3. Title:	Members' Community Leadership Fund - request to carry forward under-spends.
4. Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

To report the current position with regard to expenditure from the Community Leadership Fund for 2012/13 and to request a carry forward of up to £1000 per Member from the remaining budget into the next financial year.

6. Recommendations

- **That Cabinet Member approves a carry forward of a maximum of £1000 per Member into the 2013/14 financial year.**

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.

The budget for the financial year 2012/13 is £63k plus a carry over from the previous financial year of £19k, resulting in a total budget of £82k.

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.

The Fund has proved to be a valuable tool for elected members. It encourages local community activity whilst promoting the leadership role of the local councillor.

The scheme is extremely popular and hundreds of projects are supported each year that contribute directly to the achievement of the Council's key priorities. Feedback received from groups supported within the last twelve months clearly emphasises that even small amounts of funding can make a big difference at a time when funding options elsewhere have been vastly reduced.

As at January 2013, 117 projects have been supported across the borough with the top three project categories being as follows:-

- Activities for young people
- Helping local events that bring the community together
- Supporting educational/learning projects

7.2 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 2011/12 79% of Members chose to carry forward monies, the majority (53%) in the £200-£300 range.

Discussion with members across the borough has highlighted that the carry forward tends to be used either for specific projects that are due to begin in the next financial year, or as a contingency fund for issues that may occur in the Ward as the year progresses.

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.

The budget for the financial year 2012/13 is £63k plus a carry over from the previous

financial year of £19k resulting in a total budget of £82k.

The total spent for the current financial year 2012/13 as at the 6th of February 2013 is approximately £39k. This figure will be updated on the date of the meeting.

Some items are still to be charged to the budget and in the previous two financial years in excess of £18k was spent during February and March. Based on this information it is therefore likely that £25k will be the approximate amount requested for carry forward into the next financial year.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

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 Community Leadership Fund contributes to all five strands of the Corporate Plan and in particular to:-

Making sure no community is left behind

Helping to create safe and healthy communities.

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 Corporate Plan November 2010
2. NAS Service Plan 2010-2013

Contact Names: Paul Griffiths, Community Liaison Officer – Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, Ext 23159 paul.griffiths@rotherham.gov.uk