

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

<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>2nd of February 2015</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Members Community Leadership Fund - Flexibility to Carry Forward Under-Spend.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

**5. Summary**

To report the current position regarding expenditure of the Community Leadership Fund 2014/15.

To request a carry forward of funding into the financial year 2015/16.

**6. Recommendations**

- **That Cabinet Member approves a carry forward of a maximum of £1000 per elected member into the financial year 2015/16.**

## **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 current financial year 2014/15 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 Councils key priorities.

Feedback received from groups supported within the last twelve months clearly emphasises that even small amounts of funding are valuable and can make a big difference at a time when funding options elsewhere have been vastly reduced. The fund has also been used as a match to lever in external funding or in kind funding activity.

At the beginning of January 2015 134 projects have been supported across the borough.

During the first half of the financial year a particular focus has been evident on tackling issues relating to:-

- Sustaining work carried out by local charities and voluntary groups covering such wide diversity as disabilities, illness, recycling, foodbanks and anti-violence. (27 projects)
- Tackling Social Isolation particularly amongst the elderly in the form of events, classes, trips and raising awareness of services available to older people (19 projects)
- Activities for young people involving support for junior sports clubs, equipment for youth groups and childrens centre activities (13 projects)

A full report on the impact of Community Leadership Fund activities will be provided to the Cabinet Member during the course of the new financial year.

### **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.

Members have indicated that it is used in the main for specific projects that are due to begin in the next financial year or as a contingency fund for issues may occur within their ward as the year progresses that may require a quick response

It has proved to be a popular option. At the end of the financial year 2013/14 80% of Members chose to carry forward monies, the majority between £200-£300.

At the end of the last financial year the following criteria for carry forward was applied:-

- That any underspends above £1,000 at 2013-2014 year-end be removed unless a proposal for their use is submitted and approved before year end.
- Any individual Elected Member's Community Leadership Fund underspends below £1,000 at year-end be approved to be carried forward.
- That any underspend amounts lost from individual Elected Member allocations be recovered into a One Town One Community small grants panel that organisations could submit bids towards.

## **8. Finance**

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

Please see **Appendix 1** for the current position of expenditure by each councillor (**latest expenditure list to be provided at the meeting**)

## **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 are valuable and can have a large impact.

However the scheme has not been reviewed for a number of years. Going forward it may be useful to carry out a review looking at the current operation of the Fund and the viability of continuation in its current format

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

The Community Leadership Fund is a key component in promoting the role of the local councillor and contributes to encouraging sustained community based activity across all areas of Rotherham.

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

1. Report to Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion February 2014
2. Community Leadership Fund Expenditure 2013/14

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