

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

25 June 2020

Report of the Head of Transformation - A.Thomas

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All

The Members Community Fund (evaluation and protocol for relaunch).

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the performance of the Members Community Fund in its inaugural term and seek approval of the refinements to the Fund in readiness for its second term and relaunch.

Executive Summary

2. The Members Community Fund has, since its inception in June 2018, been invested across the 42 NPT Wards to address local needs and to support projects and initiatives that have contributed towards creating vibrant and sustainable communities.

The Project Development & Funding Unit (PDFU) within ELLL has successfully carried out the governance of the Fund, acting as the Grant Management Organisation.

Bids have been made for projects that enhance existing Council services, assist voluntary sector provision or form part of a larger initiative that is in need of additional financial support.

Eligible projects that have won through in the Members Fund have included those that have enriched the environment, promoted non - statutory education and learning, assisted Health & Well Being, and have promoted culture and/or recreation in all its forms.

This report evaluates the performance of the Fund in its first term (14.06.18 to 31.03.20) and provides detail on how refinements have been made to both the Fund criteria and the way in which project proposals are reported in the Fund's second term.

Background

3. The first term of the Members Fund concluded with the last of the Members project proposals being reported via Officer Urgency Action prior to the 1.04.20.

The Fund has proven to be a great success over the last 22 months:-

£634,147 or 99% of the £640,000 within the Fund has been invested by the 64 Councillors amidst 135 projects.

Timely intervention, commitment and support from the PDFU has brought an additional £668,542 in match funding to the scheme which represents a total investment across the 42 NPT Wards of £1,302,689. For every £1 invested from the Members Fund another £1.05 has been found from 28 separate grant aiding bodies.

The average value of a project developed under the auspices of the Members Fund is £9,650, with the largest project that has come to fruition being £222,000 and the smallest £523.

38% or £490,147 of the total investment has been used to improve, augment or add to amenities and facilities that are under the

ownership or custodianship of NPTCBC. Often this investment has helped to rescue a worsening situation that has been imposed by austerity measures.

£199,671 has been invested to refurbish 9 NPTCBC play areas.

£144,787 has been invested to improve woodland walks, drainage and the visitor experience within NPTCBC Parks, Country Parks and Open spaces.

20% of the projects developed by the Members Fund have promoted sporting outcomes. These investments have supported essential training equipment, floodlighting or adaptation of facilities.

10% of the projects developed by the Members Fund can be associated with the purchase and placement of life saving defibrillators. 20 individual units have been located at Sandfields East, Neath North, Margam, Aberafan, Pontardawe and Trebanos.

10% of the projects have assisted traffic calming, restricted car parking, road signage and pedestrian walkways.

5% of the projects have made better use of existing spaces within school settings. £36,838 has been invested in pre-school provision, conversion of underutilised classrooms for wider community use and adaptation of spaces for intergenerational work.

5% of the projects supported by the Members Fund have generated outcomes associated with Heritage and History with equipment and educational resources being funded for Margam Park Turbine House and Port Talbot Memorial Park. The Fund helped to commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1 with the acquisition of 'Tommys' (life size aluminium silhouettes of WW1 infantrymen).

Detail on all 135 projects supported by the Members Fund can be viewed on the hyperlink <Q:\Eloise Stanton\PDFO Work\EGG Stuff\PDFO Work\Hand Over Notes\Community Benefit Funds\Members Fund\Members Fund Grant Tracker.doc>

There have been some notable meritorious projects achieved within the confines of the Members Fund. Exemplar scenarios that have played out over the life time of the Members Fund in its first term include:-

Councillors contributing only 8% of the total cost of a project and realising the remaining 92% of the project cost from match funding (from Sport Wales, Welsh Rugby Union and the Football Association of Wales).

Projects being realised by using the Members Fund as leverage to arrive at a project that is multi - funded. Grant aid drawn in from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust, 'Awards for All Wales', Welsh Government 'All Wales Play Opportunities' Grant, Section 106 Planning Gain and the Applicants own reserves.

Environmental projects that have served multiple beneficiaries including the Prince's Trust Volunteers, Youth Engagement Team, YMCA, YGG Rhosafan, the Stroke Group and the W.I.

Six Councillors combining to each make a contribution from their Members Fund to realise the festive Port Talbot Town Centre Christmas tree and festoon lighting.

Members Fund being used to conclude and accomplish substantial capital projects that have been under preparation for some years or those that have stalled for the want of 'topping and tailing'. These include the refurbishment of Blaengwrach Welfare Park (circa £222,000), conversion of the Margam Park Turbine House to a Visitor Experience (£24,355 invested to complete the fit out and the restoration initiated by CADW), the arrival of a Bistro/sitting out area at the Gnoll Visitor Centre which could not otherwise be accomplished without Neath North Councillors contributing £9,310, and making good use of match funding from Llynfi/Afan Wind Farm to finally complete the Margaret's Terrace Play Area in Gwynfi.

Best use being made of 'in kind' contributions and 'community pay back' initiatives by way of Developers donating manpower, machinery, soil and materials to establish community gardens and junior training practice areas for Football Clubs. This has added

significantly to projects that have been core funded by the Members Fund.

Providing dedicated inclusive play equipment for profoundly physically disabled young people. Bespoke equipment for wheelchair users and apparatus that is accessible only by use of Radar keys.

Help for Self-Management Groups that have taken over the operation of the NPTCBC Bowling greens. Ground maintenance equipment has been secured by the local Councillor by contributing towards a Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm grant and a Sport Wales 'Places for Sport' grant. This has consolidated the future of the Bowls Club as they now have the means of carrying out all green keeping activities for themselves with no financial burden on NPTCBC.

The Members Fund has been used as seed corn money to boldly develop pilot projects not previously attempted. A three year 'Community Ranger' post and rapid response ground maintenance operative has been employed to assist elderly people and to develop environmental initiatives in Onllwyn. The project costing £48,699 has the full backing of DOVE and the Community Council.

In conclusion, in the first term the Members Fund has made our communities more vibrant, greener, accessible, better equipped, more cohesive and more sustainable. Quality of life has been improved. These outcomes have prompted the relaunch of the Members Fund in its second term.

The relaunch of the Members Fund in its second term builds upon experience and the interpretation of the Fund in its first term.

A new reporting arrangement has been arrived at to foreshorten the volume of paper associated with each bid tabled at Cabinet. The generic Headings associated with a typical Cabinet report (Headings numbered 1, 2, 4 to 10 and 12 to 15) will feature only the once but individual and multiple project proposals will be assigned to concise Appendices within that report. Decision on each proposal will be

made against the information contained within each Appendix and Heading 3. 'Background or Project Specifics' and Heading 11. 'Recommendations'. (Please see Appendix A attached to this report).

The 'Guiding Principles' Paper which governs the management and stipulates the new refined eligibility criteria for the Fund are attached at Appendix B.

Notable changes to the Fund include:-

A condensed time frame to make bids and to report proposals to Cabinet (launch, post Lockdown, to receive bids up until the end of October 2021).

With the deadline for submitting and seeking approval for projects being 29.10.21, the five months remaining until the 31.03.22 (when the Fund closes) to be used to spend the grant award and to bring the project to fruition.

Highways infrastructure projects must be submitted by the 31.03.21 to allow sufficient time to advertise for approval, to explore objections and to facilitate delivery of the project by 31.03.22.

Refreshed eligibility criteria to allow more school based activity.

Opportunities in the second term for Councillors to re-invest their Members Fund money in initiatives that were piloted successfully in the first term.

More insistence on realising match funding to add value to the Fund.

More specific information on ineligibilities so as to avoid confusion.

The 'Guidance Notes for Members' (at Appendix C) follows the same vein as the 'Guiding Principles' Paper but in a more condensed format.

The Members Fund Application Form at Appendix D has been simplified and reduced in size, from the version used in the first term, without compromising on its ability to capture essential information upon the project proposal.

With these refinements the Members Fund is again deemed to be 'fit for purpose' and an appropriate vehicle to be used to promote significant inward investment.

Financial Impact

4. No implications as the Members Fund is already a budget line found from the Council's Reserve Fund.

Integrated Impact Assessment

5. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010), the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in - depth assessment is not required as the summary concludes there are positive outcomes for the sustainable development principle, collaboration and involvement, with no impact on equalities or the Welsh language.

Valleys Communities Impacts

6. No implications

Workforce Impacts

7. There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

8. The delivery of the Members Community Fund will come within the purview of the Local Government Act 2000 which introduced well-being powers which enable every Local Authority to have capacity to do anything which it considers likely to promote an improvement to economic, social or environmental well-being in the area. Under section 56 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 sanction

is given for both Executive and Non - Executive Members to invest within their own Ward.

The Council's Constitution should be referred to for explicit guidance on governance.

Risk Management

9. There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Consultation

10. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

11. That the content of this report is noted and the refreshed criteria which include:-

A condensed timeframe

A submission deadline for bids being 29.10.21

Highways infrastructure bids being submitted by 31.03.21

Eligibility of school based activity

Opportunities to re- invest in initiatives that were successfully piloted

More insistence on match funding

And explicit advice on ineligibilities,

are agreed.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

12. To facilitate the governance and delivery of the Members Fund in its second term.

Implementation of Decision

13. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

14. The Cabinet Template that has been used to report Members Fund project proposals in its first term, and its modification to instil brevity in reporting in the second term of the Members Fund.

The refreshed 'Guiding Principles' Paper that will be used to govern the Members Fund in its second term.

The refreshed 'Guidance Notes for Members' that accompanies the Members Fund Application Form.

The streamlined and simplified Members Fund Application Form that will be used to capture information on bids made to the Members Fund in its second term.

List of Background Papers

15. The Members Fund Tracker which records explicit detail on all 135 projects supported by the Members Fund (14.06.18 to 31.03.20) across 42 Wards and 64 Councillors can be found on the hyperlink <Q:\Eloise Stanton\PDFO Work\EGG Stuff\PDFO Work\Hand Over Notes\Community Benefit Funds\Members Fund\Members Fund Grant Tracker.doc>

Officer Contact

16. Paul Hinder, Project Development & Funding Manager, (ELLL).

Tel: 01639 763390, email: p.hinder@npt.gov.uk

