

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

21 July 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor J Mutton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of People

Ward(s) affected:

Binley & Willenhall

Title:

Transition Fund Award

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

As part of the 2015/16 budget setting process the Council agreed to establish a one-off £500k Transition Fund to support work with residents and communities in developing new approaches to delivering Council services. Following a merger of this fund with the Community Grant Fund, the Transition Fund was increased to £525k.

The Transition Fund is a key enabler for delivery of the Connecting Communities approach.

Connecting Communities is an ambitious and wide reaching approach to radically redesign services through co-production and collaboration with local communities. The approach focuses on how services might be delivered differently in the future in the communities and neighbourhoods where there is most need, and within the resources available.

Criteria for final award of Transition Funding includes the need for a clear plan for the proposal to deliver long-term cost savings to the Council as well as being required to fit with the principles of the Connecting Communities programme approach.

Initial expressions of interest in the Transition Fund were sought during the consultation process on Phase One of Connecting Communities.

Following expression of interest and business case evaluation processes, officers sought approval for one award from the Transition Fund to the total value of a maximum of £20,000. This award will enable the delivery of one proposal that formed a part of Phase One of Connecting Communities, as agreed by Cabinet on 23 February 2016.

The award will support Willenhall Community Forum Limited to accommodate alternative library provision, following Cabinet decisions to end delivery of library services at Willenhall Library.

A Cabinet decision of 26 November 2015 gave delegated authority to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to take decisions on Transition Fund awards where the matter is urgent or where lower risk/value opportunities are identified.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is recommended to:

- (1) Note a decision that the Executive Director for Resources has already made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources, under delegated authority, to make an award from the Transition Fund to Willenhall Community Forum Limited up to the value of £20,000.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

Connecting Communities – Cabinet Report – 26 November 2015
Connecting Communities – Cabinet Report – 23 February 2016

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Transition Fund Awards

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The original one-off £0.5 million Transition Fund was agreed as part of the 2015/16 budget-setting process. It was envisaged as a way of enabling communities to:
 - be involved in delivering alternative service models
 - mitigate the impact of City Council service reductions in local areas.
- 1.2 The aim of the fund is to provide an opportunity to think innovatively about how services could be delivered differently, providing some transition support to kickstart, empower and enable communities and partners to run services in new ways, on a sustainable basis.
- 1.3 It is expected that the fund will support a wide variety of projects, with the common factor being support to groups and organisations that need one-off funding to get their projects off the ground. Key criteria for final award includes the need for a clear plan for the proposal to deliver long-term cost savings to the Council as well as alignment with the principles of the Connecting Communities approach.
- 1.4 Initial applications to the Transition Fund were invited in parallel with the consultation on the ten proposals that formed Phase One of Connecting Communities. Organisations and groups were asked to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) with an initial deadline for submission of 22 January 2016, by providing high level information on potential ideas.
- 1.5 37 EOIs were received from 26 different groups/organisations. The EOIs were reviewed against set criteria and shortlisted to a final list of seven. Shortlisted groups were invited to submit a Business Case to provide further detail regarding their proposal. Four Business Cases were received and reviewed by a panel of officers.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Following initial review, clarification was sought on all Business Case submissions to properly inform decisions on recommendations for award.
- 2.2 At this stage, the review panel recommended one Transition Fund award relating to the following Phase One Connecting Communities proposal approved for delivery by Cabinet on 23 February 2016:
 - To end delivery of library services by not renewing the lease from the current Willenhall Library facility and to continue engagement about the potential delivery of a reduced library service to be provided in the Hagar Centre building by September 2016.
- 2.3 The Business Case relating to the award that is proposed is summarised below:

2.3.1 Willenhall Community Forum Limited (WCFL)

WCFL requested £20,000 to enable a community library to be provided within the Hagar Centre following the closure of Willenhall Library from September 2016. The Transition Fund award will contribute to a wider construction project benefiting the

Hagard Centre and the Library. It will support the costs of relocating the café facility within the Hagard Centre and making good the area vacated so it is suitable for a library service. Structural work is needed to maximise the publicly accessible space and repairs are needed to flooring and decoration. The Transition Fund will pay for the cost of relocating the café within the building, whilst the Council will fund the works to install the library in the space vacated by the café.

The total anticipated cost of the project is £70,000, to be funded as follows:

- £20,000 Transition Fund (café relocation).
- £50,000 Coventry City Council Corporate Property budget (library install and fit out)

The day-to-day operation of the library, once it has been relocated to the centre, will be managed by the Library Service and the service will be delivered by library staff. The co-location of the library into the centre creates the potential for closer collaboration and the joint recruitment of volunteers in the future, and the sharing of resources to promote the range of activities which take place at the centre.

A separate Business Case for the Transition Fund, from Holbrooks Community Care Association, and also relating to the delivery of Phase One of Connecting Communities proposals is currently under review as a consequence of an unsuccessful third-party grant application.

2.4 Review Panel Recommendations

The Business Case Evaluation Panel recommended the approval of one Transition Fund award, as detailed below.

Willenhall Community Forum Limited: An award of up to £20,000.

It should be noted that WCFL has requested that the City Council manages all building alterations funded through the Transition Fund proposal. On this basis, the group has also requested that the City Council manages payments for works required. An internal transfer of funds would occur in this instance and the organisation itself would not receive any funding directly

2.5 Results of consultation undertaken

- 2.5.1 An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken in relation to the ten proposals that formed phase one of Connecting Communities between 7 December 2015 and 1 February 2016. The consultation was public and was undertaken using a variety of methods to ensure that stakeholders were able to share their views with the Council.
- 2.5.2 During this consultation period, initial Expressions of Interest (EOIs) in the Transition Fund were invited from groups and organisations, with an initial deadline of 22 January 2016. 37 EOIs were received.

3 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 3.1 Following approval of the awards, officers will continue to work with WCFL to adapt a model Grant Aid Agreement, which will be used as the formal framework for making Transition Fund awards.

- 3.2 Funding will be released in stages as the project progresses, up to the maximum amount approved and based on costs to be incurred, with organisations required to invoice the Council for specific costs.
- 3.3 The Library Service and Corporate Property are already working with WCFL on a provisional basis to plan for implementation of the proposed library provision and it is expected that new services will open before the end of September 2016.

4 **Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

4.1 Financial implications

The Transition Fund represents one off funding for the purposes outlined in this report. The balance of the fund is £525k. The recommendations in this report will utilise £20k from this fund. The remaining £505k of the Transition Fund remains ring-fenced for the purposes outlined in this report. Further opportunities will be provided for groups and organisations to receive financial support from the fund to initiate projects and activities relating to the future Connecting Communities programme.

WCFL require additional capital funds to complete the works. These (one-off) funds have been made available from re-profiling programmed capital works. This £50k will be funded by corporate property.

Ongoing costs of running the services will be met from existing budgets and have no impact on the achievement of the Connecting Communities target.

The recommended award will enable the delivery of one proposal that forms part of Phase One of Connecting Communities, as agreed by Cabinet on 23 February 2016, achieving £1.2 million of savings overall.

4.2 Legal implications

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 creates a duty upon local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons. In fulfilling its duty local authorities should have regard to the desirability of securing adequate stock and encouraging people to make full use of the service. The relocation of the Willenhall Library will contribute to providing a more cost effective library and helping to preserve library facilities within the community.

The Council will be required to enter into a sub-lease with Willenhall Community Forum limited in respect of the proposed transfer of library services.

5 **Other implications**

5.1.1 **How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

Alternative library provision to mitigate the impact of the ending of library services in Willenhall Library will make a positive contribution to the council's priorities, particularly in relation to: citizens living longer, healthier, independent lives; making Coventry an attractive

and enjoyable place to be; ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution; encouraging a creative, active and vibrant city; developing a more equal city with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods.

5.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through Council risk management processes and frameworks and the Connecting Communities project risk register.

Monitoring arrangements will be agreed with the grantee as part of the Grant Aid Agreement. The Council will monitor delivery progress against a project plan, developed with the organisation. Monitoring will provide the necessary assurances to the Council but will not be unduly burdensome to the group/organisation.

The Grant Aid Agreement contains the provision to claw back funding to protect the Council against reputational risk and provide assurance that funding is not misused or lost.

The Council will procure the works to the Hagard Centre on behalf of Willenhall Community Forum Limited and the Council as a single contract to minimise disruption and guarantee delivery.

5.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The Fund will support the mitigation of the impact of reducing Council resources by offering the opportunity for community groups and organisations to develop new service delivery and support solutions. It is anticipated that Transition Fund awards will provide local residents with alternatives to Council provided services.

5.4 Equalities / EIA

A full analysis of the equality impacts of each of the proposals that formed Phase One of Connecting Communities was completed out and reported to Cabinet on 23 February 2016 to support decision-making. Work to explore potential alternative provision of library services in Willenhall formed part of the proposal approved by Cabinet at that time.

5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Connecting Communities, with support from the Transition Fund focuses on changing the current relationship that the Council has with local communities in Coventry, as well as partner organisations, the community and voluntary sector. It is envisaged that this approach will result in closer working and more shared responsibilities and ultimately a transformation of community and partnership working in the city.

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