



## **Member Development Group**

**Thursday, 19 May 2022**

### **Review of Councillors' Community Support Scheme**

## **Report of the Service Manager – Corporate Services**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. The Councillors' Community Support Scheme is due for review prior to the Borough Council elections in May 2023. The last review was undertaken in 2016 with the current version of the Scheme going live in April 2017.
- 1.2. The Scheme was adjusted during the early phases of the Covid-19 pandemic to allow Councillors to draw-down a proportion their allocation for distribution more swiftly to meet community needs. Evidence was collected by Councillors and provided proactively to support monies spent. The Scheme has since reverted back to normal administration which better meets public transparency and audit requirements.
- 1.3. Applications are approved by the Council's Monitoring Officer and she has made suggested changes to the Scheme Guidance and Application Form (Appendix One and Two) to reduce the number of applications not meeting the Scheme criteria for approval and subsequently being rejected which leads to Councillor frustration.
- 1.4. The Member Development Group is asked to review these changes and discuss any further improvements with officers present at the meeting.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is RECOMMENDED that Member Development Group:

- a) Approves the changes suggested by the Monitoring Officer
- b) Discusses any additional improvements with officers present at the meeting.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1. The Councillors' Community Support Scheme is an allocation of public funding ringfenced for Councillors to spend on community projects, events and improvements in their ward. It is important that the Scheme is robust, fair and represents value for money as well as being clear in the community benefits it delivers.

- 3.2. The Scheme is traditionally reviewed every four years in line with the Borough Council election cycle. The next review is due now prior to the Borough Council elections in May 2023.

#### **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1. The Councillors' Community Support Scheme is an allocation of public funding ringfenced for Councillors to spend on community projects, events and improvements in their ward. The allocation per Councillors is set as part of the budgeting process each year and approved by Full Council in March. The current allocation is up to £1,000 per Councillor.

- 4.2. During 2021/22, 117 applications were made by 45 Councillors (including one ward split by a by-election) to a total value of £36,343. Details about each approved application are listed on the Council's website. Regular updates about projects funded through the Scheme are featured in Rushcliffe Reports, the Borough Council's residents' newsletter that is delivered to every house in the Borough.

- 4.3. The following changes to the Councillors' Community Support Scheme Guidance have been proposed by the Monitoring Officer:

- Clarify the arrangements with regard to the Scheme during the pre-election period (including by-elections)
- Details about the annual audit and requirements to submit suitable evidence with the application
- Additional criteria to ensure funds are not misappropriated where there is a more appropriate source of funding (such as a school PTA or equivalent)
- A number of references to the need to demonstrate broad community benefit
- Measures to identify and limit multiple applications from the same applicant through different councillors so that the benefit of the scheme may be widely allocated
- Clarification regarding the use of this Scheme for individual grants where other sources of funding are available
- The requirement to sign the guidance before accessing the Scheme.

- 4.4. The Group is asked whether additional changes to the Scheme Guidance are required or if they can suggest improvements to the Scheme for officers to investigate.

#### **5. Risks and Uncertainties**

- 5.1. The main risk associated with the Councillors' Community Support Scheme is related to opportunity – if the allocation remains unspent at the end of the year then potentially the community is missing out on additional funding that can be spent on meeting community needs, improving community access or infrastructure, or delivering community events.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1. Financial Implications**

6.1.1. Each Councillor is allocated £1,000 to spend within their local community (the allocation is set each year as part of the Budget). This grant allocation is primarily for use within the Councillor's own Ward. However, it can be spent in conjunction with other Councillors for the same Ward or within a neighbouring Ward with the approval of the relevant Councillor.

6.1.2. The total budget for 2022/23 is £40,000 as not all Members spend their allocation.

6.1.3. Applications must be made in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and standing orders.

6.1.4. Any funds remaining unspent at the end of the financial year will be returned to corporate reserves (£3,657 unspent in 2021/22).

### **6.2. Legal Implications**

Councillors have a fiduciary duty to ensure that public funds are spent appropriately.

### **6.3. Equalities Implications**

There are no Equalities implications contained within this report.

### **6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications**

There are no Section 17 implications contained within this report.

## **7. Link to Corporate Priorities**

Quality of Life	Use of the Councillors' Community Support Scheme is predominately used to enhance residents' Quality of Life
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

## **8. Recommendations**

It is RECOMMENDED that Member Development Group:

- a) Approves the changes suggested by the Monitoring Officer

- b) Discusses any additional improvements with officers present at the meeting.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	Charlotte Caven-Atack Service Manager - Corporate Services Tel: 0115 9148278 ccaven-atack@rushcliffe.gov.uk
<b>Background papers available for Inspection:</b>	
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix One – Councillors’ Community Support Scheme Guidance Appendix Two – Councillors’ Community Support Scheme Application Form