

Voluntary Sector COVID Recovery/Capacity Building Grant Scheme (Community Services, Darren Williams)

Synopsis of report:

To provide a summary of the Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) received by the Council, to provide support during and following the Covid pandemic

To provide a summary of one of the projects previously approved by Corporate Management Committee and set out the intended process for delivery of the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building grant scheme

Recommendation(s):

Members approve the delivery of the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building grant scheme (total funding in the sum of £50,000 to be funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant), available to community and voluntary organisations to assist with their post pandemic recovery and capacity building.

1. Context of report

- 1.1 Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) was received by the Council from central government, to enable financial support and investment against specific criteria, in response to, and following, the Covid pandemic.
- 1.2 The Council received a total of £800,650. Approval of how this funding was to be allocated, was given via reports presented previously to Corporate Management Committee.
- 1.3 COMF funding was able to be utilised where it met the following criteria/objectives as set by central government:
 - a) Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.
 - b) Additional contact tracing.
 - c) Enhanced communication and marketing, for example towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging.
 - d) Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.
 - e) Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.
 - f) Harnessing capacity within local sectors (voluntary, academic, commercial).
 - g) Extension/introduction of specialist support (behavioural science, bespoke communications).
 - h) Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance.
 - i) Measures to support the continued functioning of commercial areas and their compliance with public health guidance.
 - j) Funding Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (marginal costs only).
 - k) Targeted support for school/university outbreaks.

- l) Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population.
 - m) Support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives.
 - n) Providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable who are following tier 3/lockdown guidance.
 - o) Support for rough sleepers
- 1.4 Against the criteria above, the recovery of communities and return to daily lives in general has meant that there are more limited ways in which any remaining funding can be spent.
- 1.5 Of the remaining funding, approved within the report to CMC was a small grant scheme for voluntary and community organisations, to assist with their post pandemic recovery and capacity building. The total agreed by CMC for this purpose is £50,000.
- 1.6 This report sets out how the grant scheme is intended to be delivered, led by the Community Development team, from the promotion of its availability through to the decision-making process on grant awards.

2. **Report and recommendations**

- 2.1 A sum of £50,000 has been allocated from COMF, for the delivery of a post pandemic capacity building grant scheme, available to voluntary and community sector organisations. The sum of £50,000 is fixed, although should there be any other remaining monies within the wider COMF budget, this may be re-allocated to this scheme, therefore increasing the budget available.
- 2.2 It is proposed a small grant scheme will be delivered, with maximum grants of up to £5,000 being available to voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, based in, or operating within, Runnymede borough, and delivering services directly to residents.
- 2.3 The criteria and focus of the grant scheme will be broad, but with a focus on how the funding application will contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents and development of communities, following the priority strands of the corporate Health and Wellbeing strategy and Empowering Communities strategy.
- 2.4 In order to ensure that the COMF funding is being appropriately assigned, within the application process, organisations will be asked to outline the impact the pandemic has had, or continues to have on their activity or service, and the steps taken to recover said activity or service over the last two years.
- 2.5 Organisations will also be asked to outline how the grant award will be used to further strengthen organisations as part of their ongoing recovery, or how the grant funding will be used to build capacity in respect of the following:
- To increase participation and/or access to services as part of their continued recovery post pandemic
 - To establish or further develop/promote the sustainability of services that were key during/post pandemic including but not limited to:
 - Support with access to food/meals
 - Mental health support
 - Reducing loneliness and isolation

- Providing information and advice
 - Providing neighbourhood/community support
 - Providing continued support to specific populations, disproportionately impacted (e.g. BAME population or women)
- 2.6 All bidders will also be asked to confirm how their project or service development will be sustainable in the future, given this is a one-off grant scheme/source of funding.
- 2.7 The proposed process for submission of funding applications and the awarding of grants is as follows:
1. Submissions will be received and reviewed initially by Officers, led by Community Development
 2. A review of applications, provided with officer recommendations, will be undertaken with a panel consisting of the Leader of the Council, Community Services Chairman and Vice Chairman, supported by the Corporate Head of Community Services
 3. A report will be submitted to the next scheduled meeting of this Committee in September 2023 with recommendations for approval of shortlisted applications
- 2.8 It is intended that this will be a single round grant scheme, with all funding hopefully awarded within this process. However, should there be any remaining funding, either a second grant giving round will be organised or consideration given to how this funding may be utilised differently.
- 2.9 Whilst a large amount of work has already been undertaken on grant giving, there is some work which needs to be undertaken prior to its launch, including forming a plan and obtaining materials to promote the scheme. Therefore, the intention would be to launch the grant scheme by no later than September 2023, with an update to this Committee in November 2023.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The funding identified for this grant scheme is non-recurrent funding received from central government via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, received in relation to the Covid pandemic.
- 3.2 Therefore, whilst funding is identified to deliver the grant scheme, it is important to recognise that this is a scheme that will not be repeated. Therefore, all applicants will need to be aware of this fact and demonstrate in their application, the sustainability of any project, without further funding from the Council.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 This report does not raise legal implications at this stage, although grants will need to fulfil and demonstrate they do fulfil the funding requirements. This should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. Policy Implications

- 5.1 Delivery of this grant scheme will support the themes of the Council's Corporate Business Plan, specifically Empowering Communities and Health and Wellbeing, and their associated strategies.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 An Equalities screening document has been completed in relation to this grant scheme (Appendix 'A'). The potential for funding to support those disproportionately affected by covid, against protected characteristics has been identified. This is with the Equalities Group for review.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 It is intended that within the grant application process, applicants will be asked to identify how they will promote environmental sustainability through the delivery of their service or project.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Whilst the world has returned to business as usual, the impact of covid on individuals and communities is still felt, with voluntary and community sector organisations and activities still recovering from its effects.
- 8.2 Therefore, in this final year of being able to utilise the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, the opportunity to provide support to organisations that continue to recover, need to add capacity, or need to continue to find a sustainable way forward, having been heavily relied upon during the pandemic, is an opportunity for the Council to again recognise the work of organisations within the borough.

(To Resolve)

Background papers

None.