

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **4 June 2019**

Title: **Member Locality Fund**

Portfolio Area: **Communities**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **After call in period 12 June 2019**

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Hub Committee approve the proposed Member Locality Fund as detailed in paragraphs 4.2 and 5 of this report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Council on 12 February 2019, as part of its budget setting for 2019/20, made a one off budget provision for the creation of a £15,500 (£500 per Member) Member Locality Fund to support specific projects in a given ward.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to outline how such a fund might operate, not only for the current financial, but for the full tenure of the current administration i.e. the next four years. This could be achieved by using a mixture of funding streams, including the West Devon Community Project Fund, plus Devon County Council Communities Together Fund and Town and Parish (TAP) underspends.

2. Background

- 2.1 In the past West Devon Borough Council has provided a number of funding sources to enable community based projects. However, in recent years, due to increased financial pressure put on the Council by a reduction in central government funding, these discretionary community funds have either been removed, or significantly cut back. Deciding which funds to cut back has understandably proved difficult for Members and has resulted in divided opinions.

- 2.2 In a bid to combat the reduction in community funds made available by the Council, a decision was made in 2018 to launch the SeaMoor Lotto as a partnership between West Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Gatherwell Ltd. - a company experienced in running lottos across the country. The SeaMoor Lotto provides a means for supporting local good causes at no cost to the Council. Many local groups have signed up to the lotto to receive funds. It is acknowledged however, that further promotion of the Lotto is required before local good causes can depend on the Lotto as a regular source of income.
- 2.3 As well as administering its own community funds, this Council has also run funds on behalf of Devon County Council, namely the Town and Parish (TAP) Fund and the Communities Together Fund. However, Devon County Council announced earlier this year that it would no longer be offering either of these funds in future, choosing instead to distribute funds either online, via Crowdfund Devon or through their own in-house project funds. Refer to the following link to see the wide range of Devon County Council funds available to Devonwide communities:
www.devon.gov.uk/communities/how-do-i/getting-support-and-funding/sources-of-grant-funding
- 2.4 In recognition of the reduction in funding, specifically for West Devon communities, and in line with supporting the Council's strategic Community theme, the Council in February 2019 set aside £15,500 (£500 per Ward Member), for the provision of a Member Locality Fund, to support specific projects in a given ward.
- 2.5 Final appraisal of the TAP and the Communities Together Fund has revealed that there is a total underspend of circa £37,000. Devon County Council has indicated that it would be happy for West Devon Borough Council to retain these funds to support local communities. Ideally, Devon County Council would like some of these funds made available on the Devon Crowdfund website.
- 2.6 West Devon Borough Council participated in the Devon Crowdfund website pilot last year. Whereby it set aside, as a one off, £10,000 of New Homes Bonus monies to support projects in the West Devon area. Despite promotion of this fund and training for community groups on how to access it, only one eligible project came forward. As a result only £500 of the £10,000 fund was allocated. The remaining £9,500 has therefore returned to the New Homes Bonus reserve. The low take up of the West Devon Crowdfund could be attributed to a number of factors, namely: it was a new concept and schemes take time to bed in – longer than the 6 months allowed. Plus, some communities might not think it worth the effort involved in creating a project on Crowdfunder for the relatively low match funding on offer i.e. £500 from West Devon.

- 2.7 The Council for a number of years has made capital funding available through the West Devon Community Project Fund. In recent years applications to this fund have dramatically dwindled. There doesn't appear to be the same level of demand for this fund as there once was. The fund currently stands at £27,000.
- 2.8 Member locality budgets have proved popular in other local authorities with clear demand from local communities. South Hams District Council has been running a scheme for a number of years. Interestingly, analysis of their fund shows that over 50% of the grants awarded by Members to local projects has been for £250 or less. The most common award given being £100.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The creation of a 4 year Member Locality Fund, providing £500 per Member per year to support projects in their ward.
- 3.2 Plus, increased promotion of other funding sources available to local communities namely the SeaMoor Lotto and Devon County Council funding streams.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Provide a Member fund to empower communities for 2019/20 – low risk as budget provision is already made. However, experience has shown it takes time for funds to be publicised and bed in. As a result running a scheme for less than 12 months is unlikely to stimulate much community buy in or indeed investment.
- 4.2 Provide a fund for four years, utilising existing underspends and providing a medium term, as opposed to short term resource for communities and Members to tap into.
- 4.3 Do not provide a community fund at all, and be at high risk of failing to deliver on one of the Council's key strategic themes i.e. the Community Theme - *Council and residents working together to create strong and empowered communities.*

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 It is recommended that option 4.2 as detailed above is adopted and is achieved in the following way:
- i. Year 1 Member Locality Fund**
Finance a Member Locality Fund (£500 per Member) through the revenue budget for 2019/20 as agreed by Council in February 2019.
 - ii. Years 2-4 Member Locality Fund**
Finance a Member Locality Fund (£500 per Member) by utilising the Council's Community Project Fund (£27,000), plus part of the TAP and Community Together underspend (£19,500).

5.2 **West Devon Crowdfund**

The remaining TAP and Communities Together Fund (£17,500) could be allocated to Crowdfund Devon to support projects located in the West Devon Area. Thereby satisfying Devon County Council's preference to distribute some of the funds on the Crowdfund Devon website. It is also suggested contributions of up to £2,500 be made available as opposed to the £500 originally piloted.

5.3 **Review**

It is advised that a review is set for Autumn 2020 to assess take up of both the Member Locality Fund and West Devon Crowdfund and to consider a rejig of the fund allocations for financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 if deemed necessary. For example there might be a need to increase Member Locality Funds and reduce Crowdfund or vice versa.

5.4 **Member Locality Fund Administration**

Administration of a West Devon Borough Council Member fund could be undertaken by the Localities Team. It has been confirmed the team has capacity to do this because it no longer needs to administer a TAP or Community Together Fund. The Localities Team also administers the Member scheme for South Hams District Council with great success.

5.5 See appendix A for a proposed application form for the Member Locality Fund (Sustainable Community Locality Fund) and Appendix B for applicant guidance notes. The format of these appendices are based on the Member Locality fund currently used by South Hams District Council.

5.6 Should Members be concerned that £500 is not sufficient to make a difference to local communities, they could club together with other Members to support larger projects. If a Member did not spend their allocation in a given year it could be rolled forward to the following year. Any monies not spent at the end of the 4 years would be treated as a saving.

5.7 **Promotion of All Community Funds**

A plan is put in place to promote all funds including the SeaMoor Lotto, Devon County Council funding streams and those of the Council via:

- Dedicated web page on the Council website
- Launch event of community funds available
- Social media campaign
- Digital flyers to community groups, town and parish councils
- Digital and printed materials for Members to share with their communities when they are out and about in their wards

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Hub Committee has a responsibility to provide Leadership to the overall activities of the Council and deliver on each of the Council's corporate themes. A Member Locality Fund is a new initiative which seeks to support the Community corporate theme as such a decision from Hub Members on this scheme is sought.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	The financial implications are set out in Section 5 of the report.
Risk	N	Risk is mitigated by including a review of fund allocations in year 2 of the proposed scheme.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Community Theme - <i>Council and residents working together to create strong and empowered communities.</i>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	There is potential to make a positive impact on equality and diversity through these funds should relevant projects come forward.
Safeguarding	Y	There is potential to make a positive impact on safeguarding through these funds should relevant projects come forward.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	There is potential to make a positive impact on crime and disorder reduction through these funds should relevant projects come forward.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	There is potential to make a positive impact on health safety and wellbeing through these funds should relevant projects come forward.
Other implications	N	None.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Member Locality Fund Application Form

Appendix B – Member Locality Fund Guidance Notes