

11 November 2015		ITEM: 11 01104424
Cabinet		
Community Environmental Development Fund		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Jane Potheary, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection		
Accountable Head of Service: Ann Osola, Head of Transportation & Highways		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Director of Planning, Transportation & Interim Housing		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval to proceed with the establishment of a bidding process for a Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF) to support street-scene infrastructure and environmental improvements which have demonstrable local priority. The intention is to make capital funding available to community groups to deliver defined projects which provide significant added value to the local community according to the criteria set out in Appendix 1. Bids will be ratified and monitored by a cross-party panel of Members in line with agreed criteria. Full details of successful bids will be published on the Council's website. The proposed value of the fund for 2016/17 would be £250K, subject to confirmation by Council in February. The scheme would allocate local funds for implementation from April 2016 based on the criteria set out in the draft Expression of Interest Form in Appendix 2.

1. Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

- 1.1 Gives approval in principle to the establishment of a Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF), based on the criteria set out in Appendix 1, and the Expression of Interest Form at Appendix 2.**
- 1.2 Recommends that £250k for the fund for 2016/17 is provided from capital resources, which will be subject to Council approval in February 2016.**

- 1.3 **Agrees that officers seek two nominations from each of the Council's political groups to a Shadow CEDF Panel to oversee the development of the process, procedure and future governance of the fund.**
- 1.4 **Agrees that the bidding process should start immediately with an invitation to established community groups to make expressions of interest.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF) will support local community groups or voluntary organisations within Thurrock. Its focus is on public involvement and support to identify community-led solutions that will improve street-scene appearance within the borough, increase community safety and the safety of our highways for the benefit of the local community and particularly children, young people, older people and vulnerable groups. (See Appendix 1)
- 2.2 Each year, Thurrock, like most Local Authorities, receives more requests for community infrastructure than it has funds to support. Within the Transportation & Highways Capital Programme, funding allocation is prioritised based on the Council's statutory obligations in relation to road safety, traffic management and maintenance of the highways asset. However, it is clear that streets have a 'place' function beyond the scope envisaged in highways legislation which makes a direct contribution to the appearance and quality of life in the communities they serve. This fund seeks to support local groups who are willing to devote their own time and effort to implement infrastructure and environmental projects which will bring tangible benefit to the wider community.
- 2.2 The 2020 Thurrock Council Vision is to become financially self-sustainable through place leadership, facilitating economic growth, protecting the most vulnerable and enabling communities and individuals.
- 2.3 In June 2015 Cabinet endorsed the Corporate Priorities Activities Plan 2015/16 which includes as a Corporate Priority and Objective "Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life".
- 2.4 In July 2015, Cabinet endorsed the approach to shaping the Council based on discussions in Strategy Week, held in June 2015. The Council is working towards enabling communities and individuals by being contemporary, digital, empowering and entrepreneurial for the benefit of all Thurrock residents.
- 2.5 This project has been developed with the intention of making a real difference to the quality of life of people living in Thurrock. Applicants are encouraged to be both imaginative and innovative in designing bids for community infrastructure and environmental improvements which will impact positively on as many members of their respective communities as possible.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Localisation is encouraged by the Government and the CEDF is seen as the opening of a new era which will facilitate the engagement and development of community groups in taking an active role in community and environmental improvements. The fund is a stepping stone for progressing community-led schemes which potentially could develop in future years.

3.2 The CEDF will be made available to;

- community groups with a constitution or set of rules which clearly define the group's aims, objectives and procedures
- registered charities working for local community benefit
- residents' associations
- neighbourhood committees
- social enterprises, or
- individuals who can work with a nominated constituted community group, who are able to take receipt of the grant with a bank or building society account in the name of the group which requires at least 2 signatures on each cheque or withdrawal.

3.3 This grant scheme aims to support projects which:

- meet a community need;
- can evidence local support of their scheme;
- improve street-scene infrastructure and the local environment;
- result in a tangible capital asset;
- represent value for money;
- achieve long-term benefits;
- make a positive difference to the community; and
- are sustainable and do not create additional ongoing financial commitments or implications for the Council and
- make local contributions

3.4 On the other hand, the fund will not support:

- fundraising events or campaign activities;
- projects claiming an administrative cost or recoverable VAT;
- projects or activities that have already taken place; or
- projects with incomplete application.

3.5 It is proposed that the value of the fund for the 2016/17 financial year is £250K for allocation from the Council's capital resources as part of the annual corporate process, subject to Council approval in February 2016.

3.6 The bidding process will be promoted on the Council's website and advertised in local press. It is proposed that the details of the eligibility and evaluation criteria be agreed by a cross-party group of Members nominated for this purpose (the Shadow CEDF Panel). These Members will also undertake the

prioritisation of and monitoring of bids, with details of successful bids being published on the Council website. The application process will be overlooked by Planning & Transportation Directorate and the Community Development and Equalities Team who will also collate monitoring data and support the CEDF Panel in evaluating bids.

3.8. The envisaged timeline is as follows:

- November 2015 – subject to Cabinet agreement, nominations sought from Thurrock’s three political groupings for a Member to be involved in agreeing the detailed operation of the scheme as members of the Shadow CEDF Panel.
- February 2016 – Council asked to approve funding for the formal establishment of CEDF. Shadow CEDF Panel formally established as CEDF Panel. Bidding process started with an invitation to established community groups to make expressions of interest by end of March.
- March – May – Bidders which satisfy the eligibility criteria are asked to develop full bids.
- June 2016 – Bids assessed by officers. Compliant bids prioritised by CEDF Panel and funding awarded. Details of successful bids published on the Council’s website
- July 2016 – March 2017 Projects delivered in line with bid proposals, monitored by Council officers. Progress updates provided to the CEDF Panel who will oversee the delivery of the CEDF programme.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To commence the process of local community engagement with the aim to mobilise a mechanism for resident-led project delivery in the 2016/17 financial year.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Stakeholder consultations will be undertaken for each approved scheme. Stakeholder engagement will vary but will be appropriate to the scale, type and location of each scheme.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The schemes to be delivered by way of future proposals support the Thurrock Council Corporate Vision:

“Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish.”

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Head of Corporate Finance

Capital allocation will be subject to a separate bid for capital funding, due to come to Cabinet in February 2016 and ratification by Full Council. There can be no guarantee that there will be sufficient resources available for allocation as the benefits of this fund will need to be measured against bids from other services. Operation of any community infrastructure fund will be subject to due diligence protocols to ensure transparency and the proper use of public funding.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Legal and Governance

The appropriate Council democratic processes and procurement rules shall be adhered to during the approval process of each application.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community development and Equality
Manager**

The creation of the Community Environment Development Fund will support community-led solutions to improve areas in Thurrock for the benefit of the local community and particular children, young people, older people and vulnerable groups. Applications will be assessed on the extent to which they support inclusive community engagement.

7.4 Other implications

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report

None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Eligibility Criteria
- Appendix 2 – Expression of Interest Form

Report Author:

Ann Osola

Head of Transportation & Highways