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**Decision Session:** Cabinet Members for  
Crime & Stronger Communities and Education,  
Children & Young People's Services

27 September, 2013

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities, Culture & Public Realm)

## **A Review of the Community York Fund**

### **Summary**

1. This report reviews the Community York Fund, one of the key ways that the Council distributes funding to the voluntary sector. It sets out:
  - Learning drawn from the first two rounds of the fund
  - A recommendation to continue the scheme with Your Consortium for a third year
  - Proposed criteria for the third year
  - Proposals for a consultation with regard to arrangements for 2015/16 and beyond

### **Background**

2. In March 2012, as part of the new model for neighbourhood working, Cabinet approved a new funding pot to support voluntary sector organisations that provided services to a number of wards across the city. This funding pot was to be put in the hands of a standalone, third sector management organisation, who would:
  - Administer the scheme based on the Council's own priorities
  - Support recipient organisations to access additional funding / revenue sources and help them to become more sustainable
3. The new funding pot drew together a number of different Council voluntary sector funding streams creating simpler arrangements for the voluntary sector. The May 2012 Cabinet paper, *Developing a Thriving Voluntary Sector in the City of York*, clarified that the funding to be pooled would include a proportion of the former ward funding, the former 'core grants' and the play grants. (Play grants to

come into the fund from 2014/15 on expiry of existing service level agreements).

4. A tendering process was undertaken to identify a suitable organisation to manage the new fund. Your Consortium Ltd secured the contract, which also included York CVS as a named partner, to manage the fund from April 2012 to March 2015. The management fee equates to 10% of the overall grant funding available.
5. The fund, which became known as Community York, has two aims:
  - To provide high quality additional services to York residents in line with defined themes
  - To support voluntary sector organisations to deliver outcome-focused services with demonstrable impact
6. In establishing the Community York Fund, Your Consortium was able to draw on their experience of managing grant programmes within the sector. They designed systems to administer an effective, transparent and cohesive process including:
  - **Setting the criteria** – in consultation with the Council to establish desired outcomes
  - **Designing the application process** – to ensure a clear process for applicants
  - **Designing robust shortlisting criteria** - to enable a rigorous assessment process based upon:
    - a sound analysis of need
    - demand
    - capacity to deliver
    - realistic and deliverable outcomes
    - value for money
    - sustainability
  - **Marketing and Publicity** – to ensure all sections of the voluntary sector were aware of the funding.
  - **Grant Management and Support** – to make interested organisations aware of the support available throughout all stages of the application process.
7. In 2012/13 the fund provided £120,650. £60,000 was ring-fenced for one large project per theme, with a maximum of £15,000 available per project. The remaining £60,650 was allocated to projects of between £2,000 and £10,000. In 2013/14 the amount of funding available was £131,126. Based on feedback from the first

year, the amounts that organisations were able to apply for were changed to between £2,000 and £15,000 to allow more flexibility.

8. Criteria for Community York are based on the Council's own priorities. There are four themes: Healthy, Engaged, Inclusive, and Prosperous Communities (See Annex 1 for details). Applicants are asked to describe how their project aligns with one or more of the themes.
9. A clear and straightforward process was established giving all organisations the opportunity to submit a bid. Application packs provide detailed guidance on eligibility, supporting documents required, scoring criteria and weighting of each question, and instructions on how to submit.
10. Additional support is made available to potential Community York applicants through Your Consortium's Grant Team, 1:1 development sessions with a Development Officer from York CVS (this is in addition to the support services offered as part of CVS's core function). Support includes:
  - Identifying whether the grants programme is appropriate for the organisation
  - Undertaking initial development work to formulate the project idea in line with the requirements of the Community York themes
  - Providing signposting to other funding/support where the grants programme is inappropriate or not sufficient to develop/sustain the project idea
  - Providing proof-reading or checking of the draft application
11. In the first year a number of groups approached York CVS for a range of formal and informal support in relation to the Community York Fund. In the second year the support that was offered to groups was more clearly defined to allow the impact to be measured. Eight organisations accessed the support available for 2013/14. Of these, two did not go on to apply, one failed at the sifting stage, four were marked but did not score highly enough, and one was successful.
12. Applications are marked independently by two members of Your Consortium's Grants Team and moderated by the Head of Grants based on the scoring criteria. All applications scoring over 50% of the available marks are considered to be of high enough quality to receive funds. All applications below 100 marks are unsuccessful at

this point. Feedback is provided to all organisations to facilitate continuous improvement.

13. In 2012/13, 18 out of 45 applications were sifted out either because they had not answered all the questions or not attached the required mandatory supporting documents despite a checklist of eligibility requirements being included within the application pack. In 2013/14 the application guidance was amended further to highlight the requirements of eligibility resulting in only 4 out of 40 applications being sifted.
14. Your Consortium designed a comprehensive marketing and publicity campaign to ensure that all aspects of the Community York Fund are effectively promoted including:
  - A distinctive brand, to provide the fund with its own identity
  - Working with York CVS to gain their support to help promote the fund utilising mailing lists, forums and networks throughout the city.
  - A designated zone on the Your Consortiums website, to provide continual information regarding Community York with downloadable guidance and application packs.
  - A launch event, to introduce the fund, with Your Consortium staff on hand to provide general advice in respect of the application process. York CVS also attended to offer further support and guidance following to steer and support to organisations.
  - A mandatory workshop for successful applicants to detail the requirements of the fund, including monitoring and support with concerns
  - Capturing the progress of the projects via photographs, used to promote the fund and made available to the projects for their own marketing purposes. The images used throughout the project were also used to showcase the projects and fund within the end of project report and celebration/launch event.
  - An end of project report detailing the outcomes of the funded projects
  - A Celebration/Launch event in April 2013 for projects from the previous year to showcase and inspire those interested in applying for the following year
15. Your Consortium provides support to the grant recipients to ensure that projects achieve their outputs and demonstrate impacts. Grant agreements are in place with each organisation based on the agreed outputs and outcomes. Your Consortium monitors the progress of the projects through reports and visits to the projects.

Where grant recipients are unable to meet their agreed outcomes, grant recipients do not receive their full grant. In the 2 year period this has happened on only 2 occasions.

16. For 2013/14 grant recipients will also benefit from further support, which is funded through Transforming Local Infrastructure, Accelerating Enterprise project. The 14 grant recipients will receive support to help with their organisational development and to increase their capacity. Each organisation will benefit from 1 day of individual support during September at an initial review meeting to:
  - Identify strengths, challenges and areas of concern in the business
  - Use the Accelerating Enterprise Profile and Accelerating Enterprise Assessment and Action Plan form to develop a simple action plan to meet some of the business needs
  - Explore the organisations use of support networks, infrastructure, training, membership and the barriers to seeking support
17. There will also be ongoing support to:
  - Work with managers and staff to make appropriate developments, changes and meet their action plan
  - Research availability and signpost to relevant training and support
  - Explore how the organisation can demonstrate the impact of their Community York Project and organisation
  - Review the activity using the Accelerating Enterprise Progress Review Record
18. 14 projects have been funded in each of the first two years. The end of year report for 2012/13 is attached at Annex 2.

### **Lessons Learned**

19. Following the completion of the first round of Community York, Your Consortium carried out an evaluation with grant recipients. 11 of the 14 organisations funded completed the evaluation. Staff support, troubleshooting and problem solving were rated as either good or excellent by every recipient. Outcomes and lessons learnt from operating of the scheme the scheme to date include:
  - **Sustainability** – Throughout all stages of the grant process from application to delivery, organisations have gained essential skills and experience that will aid further applications to other funding

streams and ensure they have the necessary processes in place including the essential policies and practices. Your Consortium were also able to advise on other relevant funding streams

• **Added value** – Throughout the project Your Consortium were able to promote partnership working, wider reach, increased profile, promotion of project / organisation, catalyst to trial a project and develop further, community involvement/ownership, volunteering, networking for referral or signposting and increased capacity

20. In terms of challenges, the main one was to support those organisations that were previously funded through Council pots, including the ward grants and enable them to adapt to new and different way of the Community York fund.
21. One of the grant conditions is that organisations provide basic details relating to the clients that they work with through their project in order to facilitate monitoring and ensure that the projects are benefiting the people, as stated in their application. There have been two occasions where organisations could not agree to meet this grant condition and did not take up the funding offered. Guidance around this particular ruling was made clear in all documentation concerning the Community York scheme and further strengthened in the second year. This issue will be a matter for consultation in respect of 2015/2016 and beyond to ensure that the grant requirements balance the need to monitor against collection of sensitive data (see below).
22. Another point that was raised related to the funding periods. In the first year, funding for projects was available over an 8 month period and 9 months in the second year, with a break between the rounds. For planning purposes organisations felt it would be helpful if there was no break between the funding rounds to allow time to look at continuation funding from a perspective of them either successfully accessing repeat grants through Community York or exploring other funding streams. For 2014/15 Your Consortium will advertise the Fund in time for an April start.
23. The contract with Your Consortium is for up to 3 years with a break clause before year 3 which can be activated by either party giving notice by 30 September, 2013. Given the success of the fund it is recommended that the contract with Your Consortium is allowed to run to 31 March, 2015.

### Criteria for 2014/15

24. For 2014/15 it is proposed to retain the existing criteria (See Annex 1).
25. Organisations that previously applied for 'Better Play' grants will be able to apply to the Community York Fund using the Taking Play Forward priorities (as approved by the cabinet member for Education, Children & Young People's Services in February 2013). This is a transitional arrangement for this 2013/14; for 2014/15 new criteria will be defined following the consultation (see below). The table below shows the new Taking Play Forward priorities mapped against the current Community York Fund criteria:

<b>Community York Theme</b>	<b>Taking Play Forward Priorities</b>
Healthy	Contribute to children's health outcomes
Engaged	Support the development of play opportunities at a neighbourhood level
Inclusive	Promote quality and inclusiveness of play Promote the benefits of play to parents/carers and families Promote playwork so that each play setting in York will look to having a workforce trained to the new playwork standards Support risk and challenge in all play activities so that settings can be confident in providing activities that excite and allow children to test boundaries and assess risk for themselves Support partners, including schools, to understand the benefits of play

### Consultation with regard to 2015/16 and beyond

26. The end of the contract with Your Consortium on 31 March 2015 means that there is an opportunity for fundamental review of the Community York Fund arrangements. It is proposed to complete this review by April 2014 so that a procurement process can then be set in train in order to have successor arrangements in place in good time for 2015/16.
27. In light of the learning from the first two rounds of Community York, a number of possible principles are proposed for consultation:

- A fair and transparent approach is maintained to ensure that all voluntary and community organisations can apply to the Community York Fund subject to meeting clearly defined criteria
- A rigorous shortlisting and assessment process is maintained to ensure that organisations that are successful in receiving a grant are robust enough to deliver their project and complete the necessary paperwork to demonstrate its impact
- A robust monitoring process continues with clear key milestones, outputs and outcomes identified by the applicant, to enable measures to be focused and delivered as proposed and that there is a redefined reason and need to collect sensitive data
- Support is offered throughout each stage of the process to ensure that prospective, successful and unsuccessful applicants are clear on what is required throughout the grants process and clear about the support that is available from each organisation that provides support services
- There are clear exit routes and the necessary support in place for unsuccessful organisations
- The purpose of the grant is clearly defined as a project grant with a clear focus on sustainability beyond the life of the project
- Criteria continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure that the funding is directed to the areas of need. Since establishing the fund a number of changes have taken place including pressures on council budgets resulting in the transformation of council services
- All reviews should include consultation with the voluntary and community sector

28. It is proposed that we consult with the voluntary and community sector to gain a further understanding of their experience of the Community York initiative and to build on the learning to date. The results of this feedback will be used to inform the tender documents that will be prepared as part of the procurement exercise for Community York for 2015/16 and beyond. Recommendations will be reported through a decision making session of the Cabinet Member for Crime and Stronger Communities, in April 2014 to allow a decision to be made about future criteria and identified priorities for spending drawing on the results of the consultation.



## **Implications**

29. **Finance:** The total budget available for 2014/15 will be £231,350. The management fee of 10% is payable from this amount. The figure is net of a £20k saving agreed for 2014/15 within the budget setting process.
30. **Equalities:** The Community Impact Assessment screening that was undertaken in December 2011 identified that establishing the fund on the basis of clear themes would have a positive effect on the promotion of equalities.
31. There are no Human Resources, Crime and Disorder, IT, Planning, Property or other implications.

## **The Council Plan**

32. The Community York Fund is key to delivering the Stronger Communities priority within the Council Plan and its key priorities:
  - Community Engagement – more residents will understand and be engaged in planning, budgeting, priority setting and problem solving in their communities
  - Stronger voluntary sector – there will be a strong volunteering infrastructure with increased levels of volunteering in the city and opportunities for not for profit organisations to deliver services
  - Safer inclusive communities – we will achieve safe, resilient and cohesive communities where no person or community feels left behind or disadvantaged
  - Improved community infrastructure – we will establish an appropriate infrastructure including housing, leisure, schools and businesses supporting opportunities for capacity building, work and enterprise
  - Healthy sustainable communities – we will create healthy and sustainable living options in communities
  - Communities where young people flourish – we will consult with young people to build communities that reflect their needs

## **Risk Management**

33. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score all risks has been assessed at less than 16. This means the risks need only to be monitored.

## Recommendations

34. The Cabinet Members are asked to:

- Note the learning drawn from the first two rounds of the fund
- Agree to continue the scheme with Your Consortium for a third year
- Agree the criteria for the third year as set out in Annex 1
- Agree a consultation with regard to arrangements for 2015/16 and beyond and receive a further report in April, 2014

Reason: To ensure effective funding of the voluntary sector's contribution to Building Strong Communities

## Annexes:

1. The Four Themes
2. Year End Report 2012/13

## Contact Details

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<b>Wards Affected:</b>			<b>All</b> ✓
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