

<b>Committee(s):</b> Community and Health Committee	<b>Date:</b> 6 December 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Brentwood Community Fund	<b>Wards Affected:</b> All
<b>Report of:</b> Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager (Communities, Leisure and Health)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report Author:</b> Lucy Gill, Community, Leisure and Wellbeing Officer Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: lucy.gill@brentwood.gov.uk	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The Brentwood Community Fund was set up to give Brentwood's communities the opportunity to provide local initiatives to improve the quality of life for local people living in the borough. The Community Fund, of £31,300 is currently allocated within an existing 2020/21 budget, and grants of up to £4,000 are available to applicants. The funding was open from 1 April until 30 September 2021. A summary of the applications and the officers' scoring sheet is attached in Appendix B.

### Recommendation(s)

**Members are asked to:**

**R1. Agree to fund those projects highlighted in green as outlined in Appendix B out of the Community Fund.**

### Main Report

#### **Background**

1. The Brentwood Community Fund has been set up to give the borough's communities the opportunity to promote local initiatives to improve the quality of life of people living in the local area. The Fund has £31,300 allocated for localism projects. This year, the fund consists of £16,300 contribution from Brentwood Borough Council and £15,000 contribution from Axis, the Council's repairs and maintenance contract as part of their Social Value contribution. £5,000 of Axis' usual £20,000 contribution to the Community Fund was allocated to the Stars of Brentwood Community Awards this year.
2. Grants of up to £4,000 are available and the funding was open to applications from 1 April until 30 September 2021. The recommendations for funding are to be approved by the committee.

3. The criteria that applicants need to meet for the Brentwood Community Fund were provided in the information and guidance notes (Appendix A). This also includes the scoring matrix that officers have used to score each of the applications (Appendix C).
4. The total number of applications to the Community Fund was 11, requesting a total of £31,981.38
5. Last year there were 17 applications. Fewer applications were once again expected this year due to the impact of COVID-19, the wealth of funding pots currently available to support community initiatives, and organisations' confidence in their ability to deliver planned projects as far ahead as next year.
6. A summary spreadsheet of officer recommendations and a copy of all of the application forms can be made to Members on request to provide comments on the applications to the Chair of Community and Health Committee prior to the meeting.

### **Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

7. The criteria, expected outcomes and application process have been simplified in order to encourage applications and to broaden the accessibility of funding as set out in Appendix A of this report.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

8. Each application has been subject to a robust, independent and transparent scoring process to ensure fairness in the allocation of funding (Appendix C). Once reviewed, the applications were scored by a panel of officers and a representative from Axis, considering the following key priorities:
  - a) Evidence that the bid meets the criteria, the Council's priorities and expected outcomes;
  - b) Evidence that the community has been involved in the development and implementation of the project;
  - c) Evidence that the bid supports the promotion of volunteering and community participation;
  - d) Evidence that the applicant has sought additional external funding or in-kind value (such as the use of volunteers) for the project; and
  - e) Evidence that the project is sustainable once the Council's contribution has ceased.
9. Once the applications were individually scored, they were ranked by their score. The recommendations by officers of the projects that met the key

priorities and the amount of funding that is recommended is attached in Appendix B of this report.

10. Those applications marked as green are recommended to receive 100% of funding requested. Previously, in order to support as many applicants as possible, awardees have received a percentage of requested funding based on final scores. However, the reduction in applications this year has enabled the Council to allocate 100% of requested funding for those who scored over the 50% threshold. This has resulted in an underspend of Axis' contribution of £4,727.40. The underspend will be carried forward to the 2022 scheme.
11. Notifications will be made to all applicants that applied. Successful applicants will need to agree to any terms stipulated within the conditions of the grant being awarded. Successful applicants will also need to complete a self-monitoring report once their project has been completed.
12. Any unsuccessful applicants to the Community Fund will be offered the following support: telephone call or online meeting with a member of the Community Services team to review their prospective application; offered a funding training session via Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services which includes tips on submitting a good funding application and access to My Funding Central, an up-to-date database of thousands of funding streams for the sector. Members will also be asked to assist in this process.

## **Consultation**

13. Consultation has been undertaken with previous applicants over a number of years, and as a result we have revised and simplified the application process, including simplifying the application form and supporting guidance notes. It was recognised that some organisations or individuals may have had difficulty understanding some terminology in respect of completing the funding application, and the requirements for information and match funding should be proportionate to the amount of money being awarded.
14. Following consultation for the recently approved Voluntary, Faith and Community Sector Support Strategy (2021-2026), the application process will be reviewed for 2022's funding scheme to ensure that it aligns with the strategy's commitments. This will be undertaken with a view to encouraging flexibility and widening the breadth of initiatives the fund can support.
15. Part of the monitoring form that is sent out to all successful candidates, also asks the organisation about the whole process and areas that can improved.

## **References to Corporate Plan**

16. The Community Fund supports a number of priorities and sub priorities within the Corporate Plan. The criteria and expected outcomes from the Community Fund are applications are outlined in Appendix A. The Community Fund was reviewed for 2021/22 to ensure that the priorities and desired outcomes continued to align with the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2025 and any further priorities that may have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

**Name & Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and S151 Officer**

**Tel & Email: 01277 312500/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk**

17. The Community Fund pot consists of £16,300 from existing budgets and £15,000 contribution from Axis as part of their social value commitment through their housing, repairs and maintenance contract.
18. The underspend of £4,727.40 will be carried forward to next year's allocation.

### **Legal Implications**

**Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer**

**Tel & Email: 01277 312500/amanda.julian@brentwood.gov.uk**

19. The General Power of Competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a broad power, subject to some limitations to do things an individual may do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. This power is wide enough to include the allocation of funding under the Community Fund.
20. Criteria has been formulated against which applications for grant funding will be assessed. This will support decision making on the allocation of funding being made in a fair and transparent way and satisfies the legal process.

### **Economic Implications**

**Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning & Economy)**

**Tel/Email: 01277 312500/philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk**

21. The Community Fund has a positive impact on the local economy when there is an increase in the number of jobs, volunteering roles, skills development opportunities and improvements to facilities.

## **Other Implications**

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

22. The Community Fund supports voluntary and community organisations that best support residents in the community, regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race religion and sexual orientation.

### **Asset Implications**

23. Where relevant, the granting of funding is dependent upon permissions being granted by the owner of the asset.

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Community Fund Guidance and Criteria
- Appendix B: Community Fund Scoring Recommendations
- Appendix C: Community Fund Scoring Matrix