
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY FUND 2021/22

Report by Service Director, Customer and Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 March 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the recent review of the Community Fund and proposes a number of changes to the fund for 2021/22.**
- 1.2 At its meeting on 27 August 2020, Council agreed that each Area Partnership established a mechanism to review the findings of the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Report on the Community Fund and to make recommendations for further public consultation within each locality.
- 1.3 This report proposes a number of immediate changes to the Community Fund to take effect from 1 April 2021, and that a report is brought back to Council on the outcomes of these changes after one year of operation, with further recommendations as appropriate.
- 1.4 The Council is continuing to respond to the current Covid-19 pandemic and working with our communities through the Community Assistance Hubs. The learning from this work should be taken into account and how ongoing arrangements evolve.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Council:-

- a) Agrees to continue to ring fence grants made to Community Councils, Village Halls and Festival Grants within the Community Fund for 2021/22.**
- b) Agrees to the changes to the Community Fund highlighted in Section 5 of this report, to come into effect on 1 April 2021, with a review after one year of operation.**
- c) Agrees to receive a further report on the outcome of these changes after one year of operation, and to make further recommendations as appropriate.**

- d) Notes that in parallel to these changes, the review of Area Partnerships will continue to progress and the thinking around future models will evolve.**
- e) Notes the Community Fund budget as detailed at Section 6.**
- f) Notes the development and next steps for the Community Fund as detailed at Section 7.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 27 August 2020, Council agreed that each Area Partnership establish a mechanism to review the findings of the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Report on the Community Fund and make recommendations for further public consultation within each locality.
- 3.2 The findings of the SCDC Report highlighted the need for clarity between the Community Fund and the Council's participatory budgeting process (initially Localities Bid Fund 1 and 2), improved transparency of the grant making process, including decision making, and that grants to Community Councils, Village Halls and Festival Grants should remain ring-fenced at this time.
- 3.3 Council also agreed to receive a further report from the Service Director Customer & Communities on the outcome of the Area Partnership findings and the next steps thereafter. As requested by Council, this report gives details of the approach that each Area Partnership has undertaken, the findings from each Area Partnership, and makes recommendations as a result of these findings for the Community Fund 2021/22.

4 THE APPROACH OF AREA PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDING COMMON PROPOSALS:

- 4.1 Berwickshire and Cheviot agreed to form working sub-groups to consider the findings of the report and to make proposals to their next Area Partnership for further discussion.
- 4.2 Eildon and Tweeddale discussed the report within their Area Partnership meeting, and the Area Partnership Chairs held further community meetings to gather views for further discussion.
- 4.3 Community Councils within Teviot & Liddesdale met with Elected Members and agreed a proposal which was discussed with Council officers to obtain feedback and then presented to the Area Partnership for discussion.
- 4.4 All five Area Partnerships brought their initial findings and proposals back to their next Area Partnership for further discussion and agreement
- 4.5 There are a number of common themes regarding the proposals received to date in relation to the Community Fund:
 - For each Area Partnership to have flexibility within the Fund for agreeing criteria, timescales, the purpose of the Fund and evaluation and monitoring arrangements
 - A Fund that supports the development of locality and place plans
 - The desire in some areas to establish Assessment Panels or Sub-Committee that would develop aspects of the Fund in relation to local need and demand – including:

- Developing an open and transparent scoring mechanism within the assessment process.
 - Assessment Panels that would make recommendations to the Area Partnership in regards to applications for consensus and decision making.
 - Sub-committees that would have decision making powers regarding making awards from the Community Fund, reporting these to the Area Partnership for noting.
- 4.6 A number of proposals in relation to the Community Fund included **both** establishing sub-committees in order to make decisions and Assessment Panels to make recommendations. This report makes proposals in relation to Assessment Panels only.
- 4.7 The possibility of establishing sub-committees requires further consideration and will be progressed as part of the review of Area Partnerships.
- 4.8 The output from each Area Partnership is detailed at **Appendix 1**.

5 COMMUNITY FUND - PROPOSED CHANGES FROM 01 APRIL 2021

- 5.1 With regards to the Community Fund, based on feedback and the above proposals from each Area Partnership, Elected Members and taking into account SCDC's recommendations - a number of immediate changes are being proposed to the Community Fund to take effect from 1 April 2021. These proposed changes reflect the local nature of the funding, provide further flexibility and enhance the role of Area Partnerships, through empowerment, to decide on the priorities for the funding.
- 5.2 In parallel to these changes, the review of Area Partnerships will continue to progress the thinking on how the Partnerships can be more effective and representative of the locality and communities it represents. The findings from the review process of the Area Partnerships will be brought back to Council at a later date.
- 5.3 Community Fund - proposed changes from 1 April 2021:
1. **Assessment Panels.** Each Area Partnership if desired, may create an Assessment Panel to work with officers to assess, develop a scoring mechanism and make recommendations on Community Fund applications. Training and officer support will be provided to ensure that there is a level of consistency regarding a standard assessment framework across the five Area Partnerships.
 2. **Assessment Panel Recommendation Process.** For the purpose of openness and transparency, all applications (including scoring and recommendations) will then go forward to their Area Partnership for decision making. The current process will then apply, with consensus from the attendees of the Area Partnership being required, and if this was not reached, Elected Members would vote with the Chair having the casting vote.

3. **Assessment Panel Membership:** Any Assessment Panel established **must/should invite and include** wider community representation in line with the SCDC recommendations of wider participation and engagement.

Suggested Assessment Panel membership – representation *could* be from the following:

- Elected Members
 - Community Councils
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Community Planning Partnership – Police Scotland, Fire & Rescue, NHS Borders, SOSE, Registered Social Landlords
 - Third Sector/Community Representatives: i.e. Parent Council, Older People’s Forum, Community of interest, Youth Group, Disability Forum, general public etc.
4. **Community Fund criteria.** Each Area Partnership may review the criteria for their Community Fund and gain approval for any changes to the criteria from each Area Partnership. All applications must demonstrate sustainability and compliance with all legal requirements as well as the Council’s Following the Public Pound code of practices.
 5. **Community Fund allocation and promotion of the Fund.** Each Area Partnership may if desired, allocate their funds to different schemes, priorities and timescales, for example Quality of Life/Member Priority Fund, VE Celebration Fund, or to a third party to undertake local participatory budgeting on their behalf. It is likely that each of these of sub-fund schemes will have set outcomes and criteria. Each Area Partnership may also allocate funding to market and promote the Community Fund as they see fit.
 6. **Funding tranches.** Each Area Partnership may set funding allocation cycles within the calendar year and can open and close their Community Fund in set phases.
 7. **Evaluation and Monitoring.** Each Area Partnership may review the evaluation and monitoring arrangements for successful funding applications and make changes to these arrangements at a local level after approval has been gained at Area Partnerships. Standard evaluation tools will be provided to ensure a level of consistency across the five Area Partnerships, and to enable appropriate audit and scrutiny of the Community Fund.
 8. **Review of arrangements.** Agree that all of these changes above will be piloted and reviewed after one year.

- 5.4 The above proposals give the flexibility within each Area Partnership to make local arrangements based on engagement within their communities which will be required to be captured by a range of evaluation, feedback and survey options.

- 5.5 In taking cognisance of the findings and developing this report, officers have considered views from Elected Members, Community Councils, Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network, Third Sector Interface, Area Partnership attendees and Area Partnership Working Groups.
- 5.6 Due to the tight timescales involved in bringing a report to Council for the start of the financial year, it has not been possible to undertake wider consultation in a meaningful way. However, a review of the Community Fund arrangements will be brought back to Council after one year of operation, and this will include feedback from communities throughout the year collated through both Area Partnerships and other means.

6 COMMUNITY FUND BUDGET 2021/22

- 6.1 The Community Fund budget for 2021/22 is £470,718. Based on this figure, the allocations for each Area Partnership based on population estimates is shown at table 2 below:

	£
Base Budget 2021/22	470,718
Community Councils	58,159
Village Halls	50,074
Community Council Network*	1,250
Festival Grants	85,110
Balance	276,125

*Contribution to Borders-wide Network

Table 1

Area	Population	£
Berwickshire	20,969	50,230
Cheviot	19,433	46,551
Eildon	35,598	85,273
T&L	17,925	42,938
Tweeddale	21,345	51,131
Total	115,270*	276,125

*2018 Population Estimate (NRS)

Table 2

- 6.2 Earmarked balances reported to Executive 16 March 2021:

Area Partnership	Earmarked Balances reported to Executive 16 March 2021 £	Likely balance after March Area Partnerships £
Berwickshire	33,989	0
Cheviot	1,529	1,529
Eildon	62,030	11,522
T&L	42,541	0
Tweeddale	43,121	2,784
Total	183,210	15,835

Table 3

7 COMMUNITY FUND – FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The outcomes of the changes to the Community Fund being proposed within this report will be reviewed after one year and brought back to Council with further recommendations as appropriate.
- 7.2 It is acknowledged that there will be a number of areas that will require further support in order to build capacity, engage with more diverse communities and develop the Community Fund for the future to ensure that it is fit for purpose and reduces inequalities:
- i. Training and support will be required to ensure that each Area Partnership fulfils its duties in both the dispersion of funds, to build capacity and engagement, and to reduce inequalities
 - ii. Investment in digital technology is required to enable better connectivity and engagement with our communities, and will form part of the Digital Strategy.
 - iii. Communication platforms and tools will require to be developed and invested in, to provide seamless ways of engaging and interacting with communities, and in specific relation to the Community Fund, to allow online application and evaluation forms to be easily completed, downloaded and shared.
 - iv. Investment in resources to build capacity to ensure that we have strong community networks that have the skills and expertise to deliver the aims and aspirations of their projects and funding applications to completion.
 - v. There may be a desire in the future to disperse the Community Fund to other entities/incorporated bodies. If so, this will need to be supported and explored further both with communities and those interested organisations to examine appropriate governance, best practice and develop models for further consideration.

8 PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

- 8.1 There was little appetite from those consulted within the current review of the Community Fund to take forward participatory budgeting at a local level, however there was recognition that this may be due to a lack of capacity and something that the Area Partnership may wish to consider further.
- 8.2 Proposals to further develop the Council's approach to Participatory Budgeting were detailed in a separate report to Council on 19 March 2021.

9 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial

There are no further financial implications other than those detailed within the body of the report.

9.2 Risk and Mitigations

Not acting upon the review of the findings of the SCDC Report by Area Partnerships and Area Partnership Working Groups would have a negative impact on both the Area Partnerships and the Council's reputation as an organisation that listens to the community

9.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

- (a) It is anticipated that there will be no negative impacts under either the Equality Duty or the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- (b) It is anticipated that the ongoing effects of the proposals will help to eliminate discrimination, help to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations with those who have equality characteristics as the way in which the recommendations are addressed will be chosen and agreed by the membership of the Area Partnership and the wider community. The recommendations will be working to avoid exclusion, tackle inequality and empower local communities.
- (c) The aim is for the evolution of the Community Fund and local participatory budgeting to be undertaken at grass roots level. In order for this to happen, there can be no predetermined shape for the work to take, but rather the community representatives will be empowered to do this. Although the outcomes generated through this work are not known, it is anticipated that they, and the implementation of the wider recommendations, will identify and overcome any inequalities and/or discrimination, perceived or otherwise, that may exist.

9.4 Acting Sustainably

A sustainable development assessment has been carried out on the proposals contained in this report and it is anticipated that there will be a positive effect on the following community participation outcomes:

- (a) Involve the community in developing and implementing the project;
- (b) Take into account under-represented or excluded groups;
- (c) Take into account equal opportunities;
- (d) Improve community quality of life;
- (e) Improve community capacity;
- (f) Encourage local action and decision making.

9.5 Carbon Management

There are no anticipated effects on carbon emissions as a result of the recommendations contained in this report

9.6 Rural Proofing

Not applicable

9.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

10.2 The views of the Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network, individual Community Councils and the Third Sector Interface have been considered in developing this report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig

Service Director – Customer & Communities Signature

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Background Papers: None

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