

COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve spending of the Community Housing Fund of £976,387 which was allocated to New Forest District Council from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Community Housing Fund (CHF) provides £60 million nationally per year of revenue and capital.
- 2.2 The purpose of the CHF is to enable and facilitate community led housing opportunities and the criteria of community led housing are:
- That the community must be integrally involved in key decisions throughout the process;
 - Community groups play a long term role in ownership, management or stewardship of the homes;
 - Benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.
- 2.3 The first year of funding is to build capacity within local groups, such as improving technical skills, setting up support hubs to offer advice, business planning and providing staff to help review local housing needs. In the following years the funding will be used to deliver housing on the ground for local people and be awarded to schemes via direct grants from HCA (Homes and Communities Agency).
- 2.4 In the first year this is awarded to local authorities based on the percentage of second homes in the area. New Forest District Council has been awarded £976,387 of which £488,194 has already been received and the 2nd tranche has been allocated following the completion of a proforma to the DCLG on 10 March 2017 outlining an action plan for spend.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 This Council has secured the second tranche of money available from the DCLG on the basis that it would use the funds as follows:
- Fund a full time (two year temporary) post to:
 - Promote and develop the CHF and initiatives to parish councils, parishes that have started in the neighbourhood plan process and other communities with an interest in community led housing

- Develop information packages, resources, guidance and training
 - Assess viability, advise on legalities and good governance
 - Upskill communities to take projects forward
 - Assist community groups to bid for the £60million funding available in years two to five to take forward their particular projects to implementation, ongoing support can be provided to assist this process
 - Develop models of community led housing (Community Land Trust (CLT), co-operative housing, co-housing, self-build)
 - Develop the self-build register, research methods of delivery including de-risking sites and making serviced plots available
 - Administer the process of allocating funding
- Provide grants/and or loans for set-up costs, events, consultation, surveys, fees and initial site finding preparation costs
 - Provide seed corn funding for community led housing initiatives and projects – to provide a legacy for ongoing projects to bid for future CHF.
 - Consider the application process, assessment and funding tiers.

3.2 The Government funding has been paid to Housing Authorities, and not to National Park Authorities. In this district some of the projects that may come forward may be within the National Park. In such circumstances close working with the National Park Authority will be important. The National Park Authority will be encourage to identify a lead officer with whom this Council can liaise to ensure that schemes are feasible from their perspective before the District Council allocate resources to them.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 New housing will have environmental implications especially on small rural communities. Liaison with planning officers in both the District and the National Park will be required to understand these implications.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Costs will be contained within funding received from DCLG, other than management time for the Housing Development and Strategy Officer and Service Manager.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None known.

7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1 Discussions and meetings have been held with neighbouring Hampshire authorities on any partnership working opportunities.

- 7.2 A community housing enabler has been consulted through the Hampshire authority meeting to discuss the allocation of funds to best meet the needs of community led housing initiatives.

8. CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed spending plan could make a valuable contribution towards facilitating and enabling local communities to meet local housing needs.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 New Forest District Council's role, using the year one money, is to spread knowledge and information to the community and to make grants available to help get projects started. If we do this well, many communities could build the capacity to pursue suitable schemes using the money available to them in year's two to five.

10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 10.1 The additional funding from Government, which will assist the Council in helping a wider range of local people to address their housing needs in the district, is welcomed and I support the approach recommended by officers.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That the proposals outlined in Section 3 be implemented.

For Further Information Please Contact:

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Background Papers:

None