

Meeting Date: 5th July 2021
 Portfolio: Economic Development
 Key Decision: No
 Policy and Budget Framework: Yes/No
 Public / Private: Public

Title: Restarting Communities Fund
 Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
 Report Number: ED.18/21

Purpose / Summary:

A sum of £50,000 has been ring fenced in the Economic Recovery Reserve to support economic recovery for local parishes and urban communities as match funding to aid recovery following the COVID pandemic. The Council will approve the establishment of the reserve at their meeting on 20th July 2021. Due to the time critical nature of this opportunity at a time when restrictions are easing and communities coming together, this report is coming to Executive prior to approval of the reserve.

Management of the Reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Economic Development, the purpose of this report is to consider and approve the eligibility criteria and application process for the Restarting communities grant to be accessed by parish councils and urban communities within Carlisle District.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive agrees to:

1. approve the grant funding eligibility criteria and application process for parish councils and urban communities to access the Restarting Communities Fund; and
2. approve delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Housing to allocate funds in line with the eligibility criteria.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	20 th July 2021

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented. People, communities and businesses in Carlisle have all been affected by COVID-19 in a multitude of different ways. However, as vaccines are deployed across the UK, a post-pandemic future is in view. The recovery process must consider the impact of Covid-19 and how to best support its communities and local businesses.
- 1.2 Government / European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding has been allocated to councils through the Reopening High Street Safely Fund including the Welcome Back Fund in 2020-22 as part of wider support government is providing to communities and businesses, to protect jobs, support the most vulnerable. The Restarting Communities Fund (RCF) from Carlisle City Council reserves provides a grant funding opportunity for local community groups based on the same principles, however, it will provide a more flexible approach to funding opportunities for local parishes, urban communities and local economies during this recovery period.
- 1.3 The RCF will allow local communities to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in local shopping areas and public spaces as their communities and economies reopen. Local communities can use the fund to develop plans for responding to the impacts of Covid-19 in managing events safely. This is a limited grant and therefore efforts will be made to ensure grants are allocated to applicants that have not received covid related grants from other sources.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The Council recognises that local communities will already be delivering activity to ensure the safe reopening. This funding is intended to be additional funding on top of that existing activity, it should not be replacing the source for already committed expenditure.
- 2.2 The RCF will contribute 80% of the total costs of agreed projects against grant funding criteria. Parish councils, community centres in unparished areas and constituted urban community groups within Carlisle District will be eligible to apply to the grant. A contribution of 20% of total cost will be required from the applicant. Refer to Appendix 1: Restarting Communities Fund Application Guidance.
- 2.3 Grants will be capped as follows:
 - Revenue project grants are capped at £1,000.
 - Capital project grants are capped at £4,000.

2.4 A single grant bid for capital and revenue or a combination of both can be applied for that meet the following:

- Communications and public information to ensure safe reopening of businesses and public places is managed successfully;
- Place marketing, for example, supporting safe celebration events;
- Beautification activities including changes to public realm and graffiti removal;
- Activities that future proof local businesses;
- Improvement of green spaces and provision of outdoor seating areas.
- Removal of parking bays / on-street parking to widen footways for social distancing; and / or
- Temporary barriers, including planters to be used as temporary public safety measures.

2.5 This fund will support community events to be held safely where they:

- Promote the district as a vibrant place in which to live, work and visit;
- Increase economic activity;
- Celebrate the civic history and heritage of the District;
- Engage with people from the local community; and/or
- Benefit the health and wellbeing of the community.

2.6 There are two main categories where activities cannot be supported:

- Activity that provides no additionality - This funding is intended to be additional funding on top of that existing activity; it should not be replacing the source for already committed expenditure or activities that are normally financed by the parish council, community centre or community group.
- Grants to businesses – Funding cannot provide direct financial support to businesses to make adaptations to premises, purchase PPE, purchase goods or equipment or offset wages or other operating costs.

2.7 The grant funding will be advertised through council members, community centres and via the parish clerks. Applicants will be required to complete an application form that will be assessed by a grant panel consisting of council officers, council member representative and a member of the Carlisle Parish Councils Association. The grant fund will be allocated on a first come first served basis and will be paid on receipt of a completion form and evidence of expenditure. The grant will only be available for projects that will be completed and claimed against this financial year.

3. RISKS

3.1 The applicant contribution has been set at 20% of the overall grant request. This has been set to facilitate smaller parishes to access the funding that may not have the reserves to provide a larger contribution without budgeting for it in advance. In

addition, the short time frame in which this fund is available does may not allow for time consuming fund raising for match funding.

4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The RCF will enable parish council and community groups to open for business, in its widest sense, optimising on the opportunities to facilitate safe gatherings. Funding allocation will prioritise cultural events and beatification projects that will provide a 'safe' environment.
- 4.2 The Council in providing this grant directly from reserves rather than through the Reopening the High Street Safely Fund and Welcome Back Fund because this local approach will allow greater flexibility on eligible projects being taken forward for funding, avoiding the stringent ERDF requirements of these funding sources.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 5.1 The RCF contributes to three of the emerging Carlisle Plan priorities.

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Appendices attached to report: Appendix 1: Restarting Communities Fund – Grant Guidance

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – Any grants issued should be distributed with a 'grant letter' setting out relevant terms and conditions.

PROPERTY SERVICES - No property comments.

FINANCE – Council have been recommended by the Executive to approve the establishment of the reserve for £50,000 for this scheme. Council will make this decision

on 20 July. Therefore, until this decision is made, no expenditure can be incurred, however, Executive can decide, through this report the criteria for the allocation of the funding to Parish Councils and urban community groups.

EQUALITY – None

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – There are no information governance implications with this report.

Appendix 1: Carlisle District Restarting Communities Fund (RCF) Grant Guidance



Introduction

Carlisle City Council has allocated £50,000 to support parish councils and constituted urban community groups restarting community activities and supporting the local economy. This fund is designed to allow parishes and local communities to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and business, particularly in high streets, support the visitor economy and to bring the community together in a safe way. The fund will contribute 80% of the total costs of agreed projects (Parish council or urban communities contribution 20% of total cost from their own reserves/fundraising activities/other grants).

To assist you in identifying potential eligible spend against the Restarting Communities Fund (RCF) this document will summarise what is (and what is not) eligible spending, and the procedures that must be followed for spending to be claimable.

Who is eligible?

- Parish councils in the district of Carlisle.
- Constituted community groups or community centres in the district of Carlisle.
- For parish council or constituted community groups who have been in receipt of Covid related grants this will be taken into account when your application is assessed for funding.

What is eligible?

- A single bid that can be either revenue or capital or a combination to the specified grant funding limits
- Removal of parking bays to widen footways for social distancing*
- Temporary removal of on-street parking to widen pedestrian routes*
- Temporary barriers, including planters to be used as temporary public safety measures (barriers). N.B. any infrastructure on the highway must be 'passively safe', i.e. collapse on impact from a vehicle*
- Communications and public information to ensure safe reopening of businesses and public places is managed successfully
- Place marketing, for example, supporting safe celebration events
- Beautification activities including changes to public realm* and graffiti removal

- Activities that future proof local businesses
- Improvement of green spaces and provision of outdoor seating areas**

*Where proposals affect highways or footpaths written consent from the Highway Authority Cumbria County Council or landowner must be submitted with your application.

**Where proposals affect green spaces owned or managed by Carlisle City Council written consent is required.

This fund will support new community events where they:

- Promote the district as a vibrant place in which to live, work and visit
- Increase economic activity
- Celebrate the civic history and heritage of the district
- Engage with people from the local community
- Benefit the health and wellbeing of the community

NOTE

- Any items procured must be maintained by the parish/community group at their expense
- For any cost to be eligible, it must be evidenced as being over and above any expenditure that might otherwise have been incurred
- Carlisle City Council logo must be included in branding/materials
- To carry out any changes to the public realm, all necessary permissions must be in place and evidenced
- Public-facing messages should be welcoming (not just safety-related)

What is NOT eligible?

There are two main categories where activities cannot be supported:

- **Activity that provides no additionality** - This funding is intended to be additional funding on top of that existing activity; it should not be replacing the source for already committed expenditure or activities that are normally financed by the parish council or community group.
- **Grants to businesses** – Funding cannot provide direct financial support to businesses to make adaptations to premises, purchase PPE, purchase goods or equipment or offset wages or other operating costs.

The fund will also not support:

- Cleaning, cleaners, cleansing consumables, cleaning contractors, pressure washing
- Car parking income lost
- Support for private shops or land
- Provision of PPE / cleaning / adaptations to businesses or shops
- Financial support to businesses or shops for licensing, outdoor seating etc.
- Staff or agency costs for traffic management

How much funding is available for projects (TBC)

- Revenue project grants are capped at £1,000
- Capital project grants are capped at £4,000

Match funding requirements

To qualify for a grant, applicants must demonstrate a matched fund of 20% of total expenditure on the project by providing a costed proposal.

Procedures

- Complete an RCF application form.
- Spend against the RCF must be approved by Carlisle City Council against the RCF eligibility criteria.
- Parish councils/community groups on claiming the grant will be required to provide evidence of spend to Carlisle City Council.

NOTE

- All expenditure must be before 31 March 2022
- All claims for payment must be evidenced by an Invoice, BACS etc.
- All invoices, receipts, contracts, accounts, procurement records, publicity materials, PRs etc. must be retained until 2027