

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 11th January 2022

SUBJECT: Community Pitch funding - Overview

REPORT FROM: Councillor Richard Gold

CONTACT OFFICER: Chris Woodhouse – Community Hubs Manager

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In February 2021 the Council committed one-off funds of £250 000 to invest in community recovery activity through a participatory budget scheme. This report sets out an overview of the scheme; updates on current delivery status and the details of monitoring and evaluation.
- 1.2 This report provides an overview of the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Council's £250 000 participatory budget scheme, to support the delivery of community recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.0 ISSUES

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

- 2.1 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the current activity in delivering the participatory budget scheme and provide feedback to inform continuous monitoring and review.

SUMMARY OF THE SCHEME

- 2.2 In February 2021 one-off funding of £250 000 was agreed for local community and voluntary group activity in each neighbourhood in the Borough to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This scheme was set in the context of:
- The "Recovery" theme of the Cabinet's "3R" priorities for 2021: Response; Recovery and Renewal
 - The defined outcomes in *Let's Do It* strategy for Bury, which partners have agreed to pursue to deliver recovery and drive prosperity. These include

- Improved quality of life in terms of length of life and good health
- Improved support to children so that they are better prepared for school
- More young people getting the qualifications they need for the future
- Better support to adults who want to retrain and find new jobs
- Higher wage rates and business growth that benefits everyone
- Improvements to our environment by being carbon neutral by 2038
- Better access to digital services through how we connect to broadband and mobile networks, or through improving our skills to use digital products

2.3 The 2021 Pitch funding scheme was designed with Ward Councillors, the Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance and informed by feedback from previous funding rounds. Community Groups were invited to make one bid for up to £5000 funding to support community recovery. The funding allocation was equally divided across the five neighbourhoods which Bury's public services work across. These are:

- East Neighbourhood – wards of East, Moorside and Redvales
- North Neighbourhood – wards of Elton, North Manor, Ramsbottom and Tottington
- Prestwich Neighbourhood – wards of Holyrood, Sedgley and St. Mary's
- West Neighbourhood – wards of Church, Radcliffe East, Radcliffe North, Radcliffe West
- Whitefield Neighbourhood – wards of Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth

The opportunity was promoted to all residents and community groups through a communications and digital media marketing programme and the leadership of the Community Hub in each neighbourhood. Each Hub is working to a "placemat" summary of all the assets in each neighbourhood, including all the active community and faith organisations. Every partner on the "placemat" was contacted direct and encouraged to make a funding application and encourage their contacts and service users to vote.

A total of 78 applications were received, totalling over £340k as follows:

Neighbourhood	Number of applications	Value of applications
North	18	£80k
West	17	£77k
East	22	£106k
Whitefield	9	£32k
Prestwich	12	£46k

2.4 As a participatory scheme, the community was invited to vote for the schemes they thought best supported community recovery and should therefore be awarded funding. Each voter was required to vote for up to 5 projects, to provide a balance across all groups. Votes were cast through three platforms as follows:

- i. Online voting was facilitated through the One Community platform. <https://www.onecommunitybury.co.uk/let-s-do-it-together-neighbourhood-pitch> .
- ii. In person pitch voting events were scheduled to take place within each neighbourhood. Some changes were, however, necessary due to the unanticipated increase in Covid-19 infection levels. Arrangements were made for each neighbourhood as follows, in consultation with Ward members and community groups:
 - a. Bury East completed their event on 5 December 2021
 - b. West and North took the decision to postpone face to face events which are yet to be arranged.
 - c. Whitefield and Prestwich have proceeded without a face-to-face component
- iii. Ward Councillor votes

Funding will be allocated within each neighbourhood based on the total number of aggregated votes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 2.5 The Council is providing clear grant terms to organisations which have been successful in their funding application. Each organisation will be required to accept these conditions before the money is released, which includes:

- Stipulation of the financial value of funding being awarded
- Agreement to comply with the necessary reporting requirements, to demonstrate transparency and both qualitative and quantitative impact from the project, as described below
- confirmation that the funding is to support the specifics included within the original application only.

The offer letter details that Bury Council reserves the right to ask the Council's Internal Auditors to inspect the documentation associated with the award at any time and that all such documents must be made available to the auditors upon request.

- 2.6 Pitch initiatives will be monitored through an interim and end of project evaluation structure, to be co-ordinated by each Community Hub manager over the next 12 months. Through this structure:
- proof of expenditure will be sought from participating groups, to confirm compliance with grant terms
 - the quantitative impact of initiatives will be reviewed, eg numbers of events delivered or residents reached; the volume of activities delivered or measurable impact of difference eg a shift in a survey score
 - qualitative benefits will also be captured, for example case studies; stories and testimonials

If all or part of the financial award made to a group is not used or used to deliver the project as outlined in the application, the outstanding sum must be repaid to Bury Council.

Interim and end of project evaluation reports will be produced for each neighbourhood by the respective Community Hub manager. The impact of the totality of schemes will be assessed against the strategic outcomes within the Let's do it! Strategy set out in the introduction to this report.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The Council is in the process of issuing formal grant offer letters to successful bidders. Unsuccessful bidders will also be contacted with feedback and advice on other potential sources of support.

Options are being considered about how unallocated balances in some neighbourhoods will be distributed. A formal proposal will be brought forward in due course.

List of Background Papers:-

Equality Impact Assessment for Community Hubs applies

Contact Details:-

Chris Woodhouse Community Hubs Manager

Executive Director sign off Date: 30/12/21