Thursday, 21 November 2024

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Cooperative Council, Community Partnerships and ASB

Community Recovery Funding

Exempt Information
None

Purpose
To consider the outline spend plan of the Government's Community Recovery Funding

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Endorse the funding of the Belong Network, procured to undertake the Honest Conversations project as part of the Community Recovery Fund

2. Endorse the procurement of the Spacehive Social Crowd Funding platform for Community Cohesion projects as part of the Community Recovery project for the adoption of a community crowdfunding programme to distribute funds to locally led projects seeking financial support, initially with funding for community cohesion projects.

3. Endorse the outline emerging draft spend plan for the Community Recovery Fund

4. Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Cooperative Council, Community Partnerships and ASB , the Executive Director Communities and Section 151 officer to authorise confirmed and committed expenditure by 31 March 2025, in accordance with Government Criteria and confirmation by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Executive Summary

Following the civil unrest in Tamworth on 4th August, HM Government have approved the allocation of £600K Community Recovery Funding to spend or commit by 31st March 2025. Subject to approval by MHCLG, funds will be retained where commitments have been made in accordance with council financial guidance and Reserves Policy.

Guidance can be found here: Community Recovery Fund: Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The project is assigned as £510K revenue spend and £90K capital.

The criteria for the spend is as follows:

      i. Immediate action to safeguard life or property
      ii. To prevent suffering or severe inconvenience

      iii. To reduce the risk of further disorder in the future
      iv. To rebuild social trust and promote cohesion between communities

The AD Partnerships, in consultation with ELT, CMT and wider partners have been working on plans for immediate spend and on an outline draft plan.

Reducing the Risk of Further Disorder in the Future

The Council have procured the services of the Belong Network to undertake an Honest Conversations project until March 2025 and provide a report on priority issues, strength and weaknesses to develop appropriate action plans and strategies for community cohesion and engagement .

The key outcomes of the project will be to provide a report and action plan for the council and our partners to :

- Promote social integration and inclusion by fostering an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel included, can build mutual respect, can interact, share experiences, and integrate into the community
- Strengthen community engagement and participation by encouraging active involvement from all community members in local governance and community building initiatives.
- Address inequalities and promote fairness by identifying systemic inequalities and barriers that prevent certain groups from fully participating in community life.
- Foster intercultural and intergenerational dialogue by promoting an understanding and collaboration between different cultural, ethnic, and age groups within the borough.
- Build resilient and supportive communities by enhancing the community's ability to respond collectively to challenges, such as economic downturns, public health crises, misinformation, social conflict and permissive environments for violent extremism and radicalisation.
- Combat discrimination by creating a safe environment where all forms of discrimination, racism, and hate crimes are actively challenged and reduced.

This work has commenced and meetings will be arranged with relevant stakeholders and seek to engage harder to reach communities.

There is a provisional spend within the funding for any ongoing training and support from the Belong Network programme as part of the project, subject to appropriate procurement, governance and budgetary arrangements.

Rebuilding Social Trust and Promote Cohesion Between Communities

To provide a platform for more community involvement in community projects, including businesses and the wider public, it is proposed that Spacehive are procured to provide a social crowd funding platform. This will support the community cohesion work and our emerging Community Development/Engagement Strategy including options for other funding streams

Crowdfunding gives local people the opportunity to develop and fund their own projects while gaining the active support of the community. This builds capacity within groups and helps them to become more financially self-sustaining.

Typically, a project will reach its crowdfunding target within 90 days on Spacehive, allowing the community to get on with delivering the project. Projects that are crowdfunded with the support of the community have a richness and joyfulness to them that isn't engendered through other funding methods. This video highlights some of the human stories behind

projects funded through Spacehive's partnership with the Mayor of London.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4akh4jdyGhU

Information on Spacehive is attached as Appendix 1.

The work Spacehive does in reaching into communities to find projects for crowdfunding identifies a different cohort of project creator, with 65% of users reporting never having undertaken civic engagement or online fundraising before running a crowdfunding campaign on Spacehive, thereby diversifying the reach and demographic of participants.

Projects brought forward for crowdfunding by Spacehive will deliver on the council's pre-defined strategic objectives.

Unique to the Spacehive crowdfunding platform, the budgets, permissions and governance of all projects are checked before crowdfunding can commence to ensure the viability of projects and that there are no issues that would cause TBC to have to intervene later down the line.

Initial consultation with voluntary partners, ELT and Portfolio lead has given positive response to this proposal and gives the Council a wider platform to develop other funding streams and projects on a variety of projects. (Subject to wider governance)

A small officer and partners stakeholder group has produced a draft outline of proposals for expenditure (attached as Appendix 2)

This outline is for discussion only and does not have any specific costs outlined. It is proposed that delegation is given to the Portfolio Holder for Cooperative Council, Community Partnerships and ASB , the Executive Director Communities and Section 151 officer to oversee and approve project expenditure, The AD Partnerships will complete monitoring forms as required and report on this will be included in the presentation of the report as a result of the Honest Conversations project.

All projects must have a committed cost by 31st March 2025 to run beyond that date and is subject to MHCLG approval for this.

Options Considered

Action	Outcome
Do nothing	The council will not benefit from the funding provided and will need to return it to the Government No action to understand the community cohesion issues presented as result of the riots will not benefit the people of Tamworth
Ensure spend plan and community cohesion work is started	Recommended options outlined in report
Do something else	Due to the timescales presented and the need to act quickly no further options were considered

Resource Implications
The spend plan for the Recovery Fund will be managed in partnership by the AD Partnerships and officers. Resource will be monitored over the life of the project.

Within the funding scope, there is consideration for some temporary contracts to support communications and community engagement.

The cost of the Belong Network Honest Conversations project work is was commissioned following a competitive procurement exercise in October 2024 (QQ22-012). The cost of this commission is £33,500.

The fee for Spacehive to deliver the community crowdfunding programme is £30,000 per annum (funded for the first 3 years through the Community Recovery Fund subject to approval from the MHCLG for the duration of the contract). A 7.5% success fee is charged by Spacehive to every crowdfunding campaign that hits its target to ensure that all projects are verified and for maintenance of the crowdfunding platform. Transaction fees of no more than 2.4% are charged by Stripe (See Appendix 3) to successful crowdfunding campaigns to facilitate online payments to project creators. All fees are visible to project creators at the outset of their funding campaign.

This is a direct award via the G-Cloud Government commissioning framework.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The following costs are excluded as eligible expenditure for the Recovery Fund:

Costs for which a claim can be made under personal, organisational or business insurance.

- Expenditure for which a claim can be made under the Riot Compensation Act 2016. Anyone who suffers property loss or damage as the result of a riot may be eligible for compensation under the Riot Compensation Act. Any such damage or loss should be reported to the police as a crime. Those who hold insurance for their property should then contact their insurer in the first instance. Guidance on how to claim is available on the Home Office website.

- Any protective security measures, including guarding services, provided as part of the Home Office rapid response offer or existing Protective Security for Mosques Scheme.

- Expenditure covered by the Police Special Grant.

Beyond that, the overriding rule is that expenditure, which is not clearly incurred on, or in connection with, immediate action to safeguard life or property, prevent suffering or severe inconvenience or bringing communities back together as a result of the public disorder in their areas between July and August 2024 will not be eligible for grant. In particular, expenditure which an authority would normally expect to incur (such as normal salary or wages) will not be eligible.

Expenditure and any fund retention for committed projects beyond 31st March 2025 will be signed off the by Section 151 officer (subject to MHCLG confirmation)

The council is responsible for the dispersal of funding within their local area, for management of such funds in line with relevant standards and legislation and for maintaining an appropriate audit trail for expenditure.

Belong Network Risk Assessment:

RISK	Mitigation
Lack of community engagement in focus groups	Belong will spend time relationship building with community leaders to ensure trust in and knowledge in the Honest Conversations project
Discussion topics leading to tensions in focus groups established.	Ground rules for all participants

Participants dropping out during discussions making focus groups unviable	Belong will recruit over the minimum number of participants needed to ensure group viability
Lack of diversity in focus group participation	Belong will use intermediary organisations to ensure a broad range of participants are reached
Project runs over budget and time	Allocation of an experienced project manager who will ensure the project is included in regular updates to the project board. Timescales and budgets will be monitored regularly. Buffer weeks are included in the project timeline.
Lack of engagement and skills in the community cohesion delivery group	The group will be targeted for the skills it can bring to cohesion in Tamworth and additional training will be provided. The meetings will be organised to be as accessible as possible and at times suitable for all.

Spacehive Risk assessment:

Failure of project	Each project creator is liable for the delivery of their project and all the costs associated with it. Spachive verification processes check that they have all the right things in place to be able to proceed and we have a legal agreement with the creator to ensure the project is delivered, as specified, once the funds have been transferred.
Inability to raise funds	The platform gives a set time to raise required project funding. If a project fails during funding, then we can simply remove it from the platform and any pledges already made will be returned. Creators do not receive any funds until the funding target is reached. Attempts will be made to see if there are any solutions to keep it live (it may just be a that part of it can't be delivered in which case we will ask everyone who pledged whether they accept the new changes and wish to leave their pledge in place – those they don't will have it returned).
Project does not go ahead	Post funding, If a successfully funded project does not get delivered then Spacehive are able to seek the return of funds to those that pledged. The Council is also able to set up our own conditions on any pledge you make through the digital grant agreement facility within the platform giving a further layer of governance
Staff Resources	A Spacehive programme is a partnership between them and the Council. They provide the strategic resources necessary to organise and run the programme, the events, however partnership team will need to be fully engaged with input from CMT (or senior sponsor). After each of the two funding rounds we will hold a review meeting . The most successful programmes are ones where members / leaders / CMT are bought into it. Quite often soundbites, video, tweets etc are captured to amplify and promote the programme and the leader or CEO will be invited to speak at the launch event
Public perception	Risk of the public suggesting that they are funding projects that the Council should invest in. This needs to be managed – the projects are community led and focussed. Opportunity to join with partners in other areas (health, County etc) to enhance what the Council can do. Opportunities for bigger projects that may not otherwise have been possible previously

Workload	Project will become part of the Community Recovery Fund project but is an option to continue on review of other funding streams and external partners
BENEFITS	Wider investment in community projects that matter to our communities – can be small but impactful · One Council approach to grants and funding opportunities, regardless of where funding has been sourced · Encouragement for communities to build capacity · Wider targeted involvement for Councillors to support projects · Opportunity to support hyper local small projects or larger more impactful projects · Support for businesses as part of their corporate social responsibility

Equalities Implications
Community Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 4.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)
There are no direct implications as a result of this report

Background Information
All information contained within this report

Report Author
Joanne Sands – Assistant Director Partnerships

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Spacehive
Appendix 2 – Outline spend plans
Appendix 3 – Spacehive Stripe Platform
Appendix 4 – Community Impact Assessment