

## SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet                      **DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019

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**WARD(S):** All

**PORTFOLIO:** Councillor Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council

### **PART I** **NON-KEY DECISION**

#### **COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to gain approval for changes to the process of coordination, monitoring and delivery of projects funded through the Community Investment Fund (CIF).

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve that the following changes to the Community Investment Fund be approved:

1. A single officer to be responsible for the end to end management of the Community Investment Fund process with authority to approve/reject applications and control and report on the status of each project.
2. Reports will be submitted to the Capital Monitoring Board, on a quarterly basis, on the spending of the fund and the amount remaining.
3. Projects requiring specialist design, engineering input and/or planning permission/consultation need to be submitted by 31 August; other projects need to be submitted by 31 January. To support this information will go out to all Ward Councillors about the launch of each year's fund giving them all the information they need about criteria, timetable and how to apply.
4. Cabinet is asked to note that work to assess financial liabilities on the council as a result of budget pressures is ongoing and as a result the pause on revenue allocations remains in place.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

###### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The Community Investment Fund has been introduced to give all Ward Councillors the opportunity to directly impact their local community and make swift and impactful changes to resolve issues or address challenges in their Wards. The criteria has been developed to ensure the funds are spent consistently across all Wards and giving Councillors opportunities to pool their funds.

Typically projects are related to highways and parking changes along with facilities in community areas such as outdoor gyms in parks. In this case there is an intention to improve mental health and wellbeing, meeting Priority 3 of the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy.

**3b Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The Community Investment Fund allocations are intended to be used by Members to make small financial contributions within their Wards that support an, or all, of the Five Year Plan outcomes

- Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives
- Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs
- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit
- Our residents will have access to good quality homes
- Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide jobs and opportunities for our residents

**4 Other Implications**

(a) Financial

We expect the financial impact of the proposed changes to be as follows:

- i. Less funding will remain unspent - With a greater emphasis on communicating directly with Councillors will be coupled with more robust guidance on how and when to spend/allocate the funds.
- ii. Greater scrutiny on fund reporting – This will give Officers and Councillors more clarity on the amount that has been allocated and to which types of projects along with a clear view on the remaining funds and the time remaining before they must be spent. This will be achieved through quarterly reports to Capital Monitoring Board.

(b) Risk Management

**The Table below must be completed fully for each recommendation from Section 2**

<b>Recommendation from section 2 above</b>	<b>Risks/Threats/ Opportunities</b>	<b>Current Controls</b>	<b>Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk</b>	<b>Future Controls</b>
Reports on a quarterly basis, to Capital Monitoring Board, on the spending of the fund and the amount remaining.	Creates an opportunity to have a greater awareness of funds spent and funds remaining in order to reduce the likelihood of funds remaining unspent.	N/A	Negligible	Report to be published and shared with all relevant officer and Councillors.

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
	Opportunity to identify economies of scale and interdependencies with other Council project and initiatives through oversight by a Board representing all Council Directorates			
Projects requiring specialist design, engineering input and/or planning permission/consultation need to be submitted by 31 July; other projects need to be submitted by 31 January.	To support this information will go out to all Ward Councillors about the launch of each years fund giving them all the information they need about criteria, timetable and how to apply.	More reminders will be sent and timely applications will mean jobs are delivered more quickly.	Negligible	Timing of applications to be monitored as part of ongoing reporting.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Implications for this proposal.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment as assessment criteria will not be reviewed as part of this process.

(f) Carbon Emissions and Energy Costs

There are no Carbon Emissions implications of this proposal.

**5 Supporting Information**

5.1 The changes summarised in this proposal need to be put in place to improve the management, coordination, reporting and delivery of the Community Investment Fund projects. While the fund has facilitated the completion of some interesting and impactful projects the nature of the coordination has required too many hand-offs

during the process and responsibility for decision making has not rested with the appropriate officers. Communication with Councillors is inconsistent and comes from too many people, often causing confusion. There is minimal checking and reporting of the spending of the fund over the year and no one officer holds daily responsibility for the process.

- 5.2 In addition, Officers need to be aware that the CIF programme is for Councillors use only. Officers must not make requests of Councillors to use their CIF funding on specific projects.
- 5.3 The changes proposed in this document have been suggested to give the Community Investment Fund process more stability and consistency. With one individual officer taking responsibility for the fund and pulling in support as required the fund will be managed with more consistency and Councillors will receive better information about applications and projects throughout the year. We also expect that with more focus on communicating with Councillors and a focus on getting applications in a more timely way that more money will be spent throughout the year having more impact in communities.
- 5.4 This report recommends that a virtual “Responsible Officer” role is created and developed. This role will control and be responsible for the end to end process of delivering projects identified by Ward Councillors and funded through the Community Investment Fund. The broad duties and responsibilities will be as follows:
- Liaise with the officer responsible for group communication to Councillors in order to ensure that information goes out to all Ward Councillors about the launch of each year's fund giving them all the information they need about criteria, timetable and how to apply.
  - Receipt of ALL applications into the CIF mailbox. An acknowledgement of receipt confirming that the project has been submitted will be issued to the Councillor within 2 working days
  - Within 10 days of the application being acknowledged as being submitted, the Councillor will be informed by the “Responsible Officer” whether or not the proposed project meets the criteria. Where an application is rejected a clear reason will be provided.
  - Within 30 days of notification that a project meets the criteria, the Responsible Officer will provide the Councillor with a Project Initiation Report detailing the critical aspects of the project including its indicative cost, confirmation of specification, viability, relationship with other projects, cross council dependencies and provisional timetable. The provisional timetable will be influenced by a range of factors including seasonality, works scheduling and any need for planning permission or public consultation.
  - The Councillor will make a go/no go decision based on the Project Initiation Report in consultation with the Responsible Officer who will arrange a meeting to include other officers where necessary.

- Where it is decided to continue with a project then the Responsible Officer will provide monthly updates to the Councillor detailing progress and issues/problems/delays, if any, until the project is completed.
- The Responsible Officer will maintain a CIF Progress Report detailing which projects have been initiated by which Councillor together with progress against timetable and money spent.
- The Responsible Officer cannot progress projects without the Councillor's consent.
- The CIF Progress Report will be presented at Capital Monitoring Board each quarter explaining:
  - The total number and value of applications received, how many approved, how many declined and the value of projects that have been approved and begun.
  - The number of Councillors who have submitted applications to date and the number who have not (no names to be given)
  - The amount of funds spent on completed projects, amount in project underway, amount to be carried forward and amount unallocated.
- All communication to Councillors about CIF Applications is to be undertaken by the Responsible Officer only. This avoids a situation either where everyone is trying to leave the communication to someone else or several officers are sending Councillors varying information resulting in confusion and lots of questions coming back.
- Projects requiring specialist design, engineering input and/or planning permission/consultation need to be submitted by 31 August; other projects need to be submitted by 31 January.

5.5 In order for information and resources to be put in place, this new arrangement will go live on 1 April 2020.

## 6 **Comments of Other Committees**

No other committees have been involved in this proposal.

## 7 **Conclusion**

The changes proposed in this paper will provide members and SBC with a greater deal of control and scrutiny over this fund. More projects will be completed in shorter timescales and the council will be able to clearly demonstrate that every consideration is given to all member proposals. Members will have a greater transparency of their own projects and understand where they are in the process. More money will go to deserved causes and members will receive better information to understand when their projects will be delivered.

## 8 **Background Papers**

'1' - Appendix 1 Community Investment Fund Flowchart