

**Norton, Pedmore & Stourbridge East and Wollaston & Stourbridge
Town Community Forum – Wednesday 27th October 2021**

Report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

Community Forum Funding

<u>Purpose</u>	
1.	To consider the allocation of expenditure from the community forum funding budget for the 2021/22 municipal year.
<u>Recommendations</u>	
2.	It is recommended that the forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considers the new application referred to in the report and makes an appropriate recommendation to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, and • notes details of the funding it has allocated since the last meeting of the forum held on 20th January 2020, prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.
<u>Background</u>	
3.	The ten community forums are responsible for allocating expenditure from the delegated community forum funding budget. The Cabinet, in March 2018, approved a new set of criteria to replace the previous guidelines against which allocations from the delegated budget should be considered, and these are attached. Criteria for any remaining funding available through the High Street Innovation and Empty Shops Grant are also attached.
4.	A copy of the new application referred to in this report has been e-mailed to Members prior to the meeting.

	<u>Application for consideration at this meeting</u>
5.	<p><u>Wollaston Allotment Society</u></p> <p>An application has been received from Wollaston Allotment Society which looks after a number of allotment sites in the area with over 200 tenanted plots. The entrance to its site on South Road, Wollaston, is in a poor state of repair and the society is requesting funding of £5,000 towards the estimated cost of £6,300 to lay tarmac to improve access, with the balance coming from society funds.</p> <p>The society has not received any community forum funding within the last three years.</p>
6.	<p><u>Funding allocated since the last meeting</u></p> <p>Community forum meetings were suspended from mid-March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but funding remained open to voluntary and community organisations to apply for. During the period since the last meeting of this forum, the following funding has been agreed:</p> <p><u>Black Country Community Radio</u> - £3,990.60 for two items of equipment for its new studios at the Waterfront (February 2020).</p> <p><u>Friends of Greenfield Gardens</u> - £4,435.64 to purchase and install two benches and an interpretation board in the park (March 2020).</p> <p><u>Chawn Hill Church</u> - £485.00 towards catering equipment, DBS checks and training (March 2020).</p> <p><u>Oldswinford and Stourbridge Social Cricket Club</u> - £2,640.00 to replace two sight screens at the club's ground in Albermarle Road which had been vandalised (March 2020).</p> <p><u>Stourbridge & District Chamber of Trade</u> - £5,000.00 for the installation and maintenance of the streetlighting displays for the 2020 Christmas festival in Stourbridge town centre (October 2020).</p> <p><u>Christmas tree and lights 2020</u> - £7,945.07 for a Christmas tree/lights in Stourbridge town centre and new on-street lighting displays in Oldswinford and Wollaston (October 2020).</p> <p><u>St. Peter's Church, Pedmore</u> - £5,000.00 towards the cost of repairing the footpaths around the church (December 2020).</p>

Age Concern Stourbridge and Halesowen - £5,000.00 towards building repairs and improvements to the Elton Centre, Stourbridge (January 2021).

Stourbridge in Bloom - £3,250.00 for plants, hanging baskets and soil for Stourbridge In Bloom displays in the town centre (March 2021).

Stourbridge in Bloom - £1,196.40 for a water bowser for watering the floral displays in the town centre (August 2021).

Friends of Wollescote Park - £5,289.00 for matchfunding a bid for funding for improving the play area in the park replacing old equipment and installing new items and surfacing (September 2021).

Christmas tree and lights 2021 - £19,897.65 for Christmas trees/lights in Stourbridge Town Centre and Queensway Wollescote (including new tree socket), lights for live tree by Mary Stevens Park, on-street lighting in Oldswinford, including new displays and on-street lighting in Wollaston, including new displays (October 2021).

Stourbridge & District Chamber of Trade - £5,000 for the installation and maintenance of the streetlighting displays for the 2021 Christmas festival in Stourbridge town centre (October 2020).

Applications deferred at the last meeting

7. Fizzog Community Trust – following further consideration the application was unsuccessful.

Wild About Stourbridge – the application was withdrawn.

Finance

8. Each community forum receives an annual allocation of £10,000 per ward. The balances currently available to spend are as follows:

£	Balance Bfwd from 20/21	Annual Funding 21/22	Actual Spend 21/22	Committed	Balance to award
Norton	*	10,000.00	*	*	*
Pedmore & Stourbridge East	*	10,000.00	*	*	*

Wollaston & Stourbridge Town	*	10,000.00	*	*	*
Total	17,982.35	30,000.00	9,446.40	34,621.52	3,914.43

*Funding is pooled across the three wards.

9. Empty Shops Grant and High Street Innovation Fund - one-off funding was made available in the 2014/15 financial year for projects which improve the appearance or economic vitality of an area, with preference to the borough's centres and high streets. The remaining value of this funding allocated to the community forum is £1,478.65. Guidance about the criteria to be used in making decisions about the allocation of this funding are attached to this report.

Law

10. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a power of general competence to act in the interests of the Community. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to or incidental to, the discharge of its statutory functions.

Risk Management

11. There are no significant risks involved in the proposal.

Equality Impact

12. A wide range of voluntary and community organisations across the borough have been awarded community forum funding. Beneficiaries have included, for example, people from across all age groups, from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and groups of disabled people. An equality impact assessment of community forum funding has been completed.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

13. A review of community forums was carried out in 2016/17 with a range of recommendations approved by the Cabinet in May 2017 for developing forums as part of the council's commitment to working more closely with local communities.

Commercial/Procurement

14. There are no significant commercial or procurement implications.

Council Priorities

15. Community forums contribute to objectives within the Borough Vision, the Council Plan and the Future Council Programme which focus on healthy, resilient, safe communities by:
- providing an opportunity for local people, elected members and partners to work together to identify and progress priorities for their local area
 - supporting people to be actively involved in their community by identifying community assets, connecting people and resources, and enabling people to share ideas and make positive things happen in their communities
 - providing opportunities for local people to influence plans and services which will impact on the local area
 - providing a forum to deal with wider community issues rather than individual complaints
 - providing funding to groups who demonstrate that they are working alongside local people and utilising existing community assets wherever possible
 - focusing on approaches which support people to be more self-reliant, independent and co-ordinated in order to increase community resilience

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List of Background Papers

- The application forms on which this report is based have been emailed to Members prior to the meeting, but contain exempt information under the terms of part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
- Criteria for considering funding applications attached.

Funding criteria for applicants – Community Forum funding

1. Voluntary or community organisations based in Dudley borough, or which benefit people in the borough, can apply for up to a maximum of £5,000 per year. The same project will not normally be funded more than once in every three years (see note 1).
2. Applications should be for local projects i.e. in a particular ward/small number of wards and not borough wide. Applications should be from a parent organisation rather than, for example, an individual team within a sports club.
3. Applications should demonstrate how they will contribute to Dudley Council's aim to support local people and organisations to work together to improve the local community or area and encourage local people to be active citizens.
4. Applications may be for capital and/or revenue expenditure (see note 2), but revenue costs must be one-off or strictly time-limited; ongoing revenue costs will be the applicant's responsibility and will not be funded by the council.
5. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate match funding or efforts to obtain funding elsewhere/share resources with other organisations.
6. Applications are to be submitted at least 21 days before a forum meeting in order to be considered at that meeting. Later applications will be held over to the next available meeting. Genuinely urgent applications may be considered between meetings at the discretion of community forum members.
7. Once an application is received, where appropriate a council community development worker will arrange to meet the applicants to provide advice and support with the application before it proceeds.
8. Applications will only be considered if the application form is completed fully and the requested documents submitted (see note 3).
9. If appropriate, applications may be recommended for, or redirected to, funding from other sources.
10. Applicants will need to attend the forum meeting at which their application is considered to share what they plan to do and answer any questions.
11. A recommendation on the application will be made by the forum's elected members to the council's Director of Public Health and Wellbeing.
12. A funding approval may be given with particular conditions attached e.g. equipment purchased to be shared with other organisations.

Notes:

Note 1. Individual community forums reserve the right to make exceptions depending on the circumstances of the application.

Note 2: Capital – one-off expenditure on buying equipment, vehicles, land or buildings, or carrying out improvements or new build. Revenue – expenditure on running costs of projects or activities, including staff costs and purchase of consumable items or services.

Note 3: an alternative way to apply will be available to people who may have difficulty in completing the application form because of a disability

Terms and conditions of funding

Payment will usually be made once work or an activity has been carried out and/or goods/equipment purchased and related paid invoices or receipts provided to the council.

If approved, funding will be provided on the basis that:

1. The funding is spent within nine months of approval by the community forum i.e. paid invoices/receipts are submitted to the council within this timescale. If (in exceptional circumstances) funding has been provided in advance, paid invoices/receipts must be provided to the council within three months or the money will need to be repaid to the council.
2. A representative of the organisation attends a meeting of the community forum within twelve months of the application being approved to share feedback about the difference the funding has made.
3. The organisation uses the funding only for the purpose stated, agrees to provide any extra information that the Council may require and allows Council officers to inspect goods/equipment purchased, if required.
4. Any goods/equipment funded are sufficiently insured.
5. The Council's internal and external auditors have the right to inspect documentation relating to the funding application.
6. If funding has been awarded based on misleading or inaccurate information, or the organisation receives funding for the same items from another source, the organisation will repay part or all of the allocation as required by the Council.

Elected members, when considering community forum applications:

1. should apply the funding criteria for applicants in considering applications; the council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and the council's legal powers must be complied with in dealing with applications;
2. should declare any interests that they have in any of the applications to be considered;
3. will make recommendations on applications for community forum funding to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing who has delegated authority for community forum funding;
4. are free to decide whether to pool their resources across wards or to use each ward allocation only for applications relating to that ward;
5. may wish to identify with the local community some priorities for their areas on an annual or other basis and invite grant applications which relate to these;
6. should allow applicants, who will be asked to attend forum meetings, to present their applications, and successful applicants, who will be attending a future meeting, to provide feedback. This will help in establishing accountability and a clear audit trail for expenditure, as well as sharing learning and inspiration with other community groups; and
7. have discretion in dealing with applications at meetings in the absence of the applicants.

High Street Innovation/Empty Shops Grant Funding Applications

1. One-off funding has been made available in the 2014/15 financial year for projects which improve the appearance or economic vitality of an area, with preference to the Borough's Centres and High Streets.
2. The Council will decide which source of funding successful applications will use, but as guidance for applicants High Street Innovation/Empty Shops Grant funding will be considered for the following:

Eligible proposals

- Proposals will be considered either for Capital or Revenue activities.
- Proposals are preferred for projects within the Borough's defined Principal or Local Centres, but applications may be considered in any location where benefits to the local economy or environment may be demonstrated.
- Proposals that show a partnership approach (between for example business and the Community will be preferred).

Ineligible proposals

- Proposals which create ongoing revenue costs for the Council. Proposals must demonstrate how any improvements will be maintained.
- Proposals which are required as a direct result of a planning condition, enforcement action or any other statutory consent.
- Proposals that do not have the agreement of the owner or occupier of land or property affected.
- Proposals that do not have a realistic prospect of being granted planning permission.

Suggested areas of expenditure

- Proposals to improve the appearance or condition of empty commercial or retail premises.
- Proposals to improve vacant or unsightly land.
- Match funding to support funding bids for the above.
- Activities and events to support centres economic vitality.