

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economic Success Panel** held by video link on **Monday 12 October 2020** at 6pm when there were present:

Cllr J Copplestone – Chairman

Cllr S Beadle

Cllr S Catchpole

Cllr T M Mancini-Boyle

Cllr P Bulman

Cllr A Crotch

Cllr S Prutton and Cllr F Whymark were also present.

Ross Pinney, Mark Adey and Martin Rose joined the meeting to take part in the informal briefing at the conclusion of the meeting.

In attendance were the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, the Assistant Director Economic Growth, the Communities Senior Manager and the Democratic Services Officers (DM and LA).

### **26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8**

None made.

### **27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N Harpley and Cllr K Vincent.

### **28 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **29 MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman reported that she would be meeting with Karen O’Kane and the Better Broadband for Norfolk Team on 21 October to discuss progress with Contract 3 of the Better Broadband for Norfolk project.

She also advised that applications for funding from the three-Council Confidence Campaign had now closed as requests for support to date had utilised the funding available. Work was ongoing to coordinate and bring together local stakeholders in relation to the Confidence Campaign work in Reepham.

**30 FUTURE OF COMMUNITY GRANTS**

Members considered the report of the Communities Senior Manager who highlighted key points in the report and invited members to support the changes to the member led ward grant system, support the introduction of a start-up grant linked to the new community at heart lottery and endorse the development of a whole council approach to community funding for example linking with business grants and CIL. .

Over the years several different grant schemes had been utilised and the member led funding scheme was the current main source of community funding together with the management of the external (County Council) funded “keep it going” grant. Communities and voluntary groups were currently facing a very difficult time and it was important to review schemes to ensure they were meeting the needs of recipients. Any grant scheme should also reflect the asset based community development approach which sat at the heart of council services. The aim was to ensure that there was a clear purpose to grants, reduce demand on services, support inclusive growth and promote health and wellbeing. Work was also needed to improve the current evaluation process of the impact of grants.

**Member Led Grant Scheme**

There was currently an underspend by some members and a demand for additional funding from others but overall the current fund was underspent. The promotion of the scheme relied solely on the member and was a passive system for the community. Proposals included retaining the £23,500 total pot of funding but allowing members to access up to £1,000 of funding per year (minimum project £50, maximum £1,000). Applications would be processed on a first come first served basis and local communities could themselves register their interest for funding on line which would then generate a contact with the local member to oversee the application. Additional branding and promotion of the scheme would be developed.

Members commented that in general they were satisfied with the way the current member led grant scheme was working. Some members supported the suggested increase in the grant amount as this would help those members who had used up all their allocation and if necessary the budget could be increased to allow for each member to apply for funding of up to £1,000. Overall however, the Panel did not support increasing the grants to £1,000 per member on a first come first served basis as this could be to the detriment of projects coming forward later in the year when all funds had been allocated. An increase in the allowance for all members to £1,000 would require an increase in the total budget from £23,500 to £47,000 which would have to be found from other budgets and was a matter for consideration by the Council when setting its budget. The Panel did not see this as a priority at the current time. Members acknowledged the officers’ ambition to see the budget fully utilised and suggested that any underspend available at a cut of

date of 31 January could be utilised to support projects which had come forward from the community via a direct online request. It was confirmed that the proposed changes to the scheme related to 2021/2022 and not this year's scheme.

### **Community at Heart Lottery**

Members were advised that the launch event for the lottery would be on 5 November with tickets being sold from January 2021. The lottery would raise money for a variety of projects/activities including day to day running costs and the Council would receive 10% of the ticket price which would be available to be used for reinvestment in the community, potentially for use in the proposed start up grant scheme. Members welcomed this proposal.

### **Start-up Grant**

The idea for this scheme was to provide a light touch approach to offer advice, guidance and financial support (up to £300) to informal groups to see if an idea was viable, get it off the ground and provide a gateway to other funding. Members welcomed this proposal.

**RESOLVED to recommend Cabinet** to endorse officers' proposals on a new approach to community grants including:

- (1) the Development of a whole Council approach to community funding,
- (2) the introduction of a start-up grant; linked to the new Community at Heart Lottery,
- (3) subject to the changes/comments above, development of the member-led ward grant system.

*The meeting closed at 6.45pm.*

*At the conclusion of the formal meeting members were invited to remain for an informal briefing on the Food Innovation Centre.*