

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 June 2023

Social Impact Fund Progress Report

Recommendation

That the Committee notes and comments on the progress of the Social Impact Fund and the projects supported by the Fund.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Council resolved in February 2021 to bring forward proposals for a Social Fund to act as a catalyst for building stronger communities.
- 1.2 In October 2021 Cabinet approved a recommendation to proceed with the Social Impact Fund, total value £1 million, using source funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).
- 1.3 The Fund was prioritised towards areas and groups that had experienced higher levels of COVID (aligned to COMF requirements), as well as projects:
 - With a focus on financial, digital, health, social, or cultural inclusion.
 - Aligned to at least one of the Council Plan outcomes.
 - Aligned to at least one of the 6 core themes of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-25.
 - Relating to the Community Powered Warwickshire approach.
 - Responding to and helping to reduce climate change and support biodiversity.
- 1.4 The Fund provided both revenue and capital funding on a 60/40 split, the capital element added to the Council's Capital Programme.
- 1.5 The operation of the Fund was commissioned to Heart of England Community Foundation, with awards being determined by a member and officer panel.

- 1.6 21 projects were awarded funding in February 2022, 16 revenue projects and 5 capital projects. Revenue awards were to be spent within 15 months, capital awards within 18 months.
- 1.7 Appendix 1 to this report describes the progress of the 21 projects. Most of the projects are now well underway and are expected to be completed within the 15 month or 18 month timescales. There are notable exceptions described in paragraph 4.12.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no new financial implications arising from this report.
- 2.2 The capital element of the Fund is already approved in the Council's Capital Programme.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 As part of the application and determination process, organisations were asked how their projects respond to and help to reduce climate change, and latterly projects were scored around their environmental implications to ensure projects aligned with the Council's climate change and biodiversity commitments.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 In scoping the Fund, analysis indicated that higher value revenue awards, and capital awards, both focusing on promoting inclusion, would meet a hitherto unmet need.
- 4.2 The Fund was split 60% revenue and 40% capital based on analysis of existing funding streams. Further analysis revealed that revenue awards of between £25,000 and £50,000, and capital awards of between £50,000 and £100,000, would meet unmet needs.
- 4.3 A single funding round took place, starting in October 2021 with an 8-week application window and then a 6-week determination window.
- 4.4 Heart of England Community Foundation was commissioned to operate the Fund at an additional cost of £60,000 drawn from COMF. The operation of the Fund involved managing the application and determination process, ensuring all due diligence and grant paperwork was completed, making payments, monitoring, and reporting.

- 4.5 Revenue awards were intended to be spent within 15 months: 3 months' set-up and 12 months' duration. Capital awards were intended to be spent within 18 months, with some flexibility to allow for other funding sources being confirmed, and contractor delays.
- 4.6 An awarding panel comprising the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture, senior managers, and external sector specialists, met to discuss each application and to make the final awards.
- 4.7 All awards were signed-off by the Strategic Director for Resources.
- 4.8 The following monitoring and reporting arrangements apply to all awards:
- Interim reports at 6 months.
 - End of project reports for revenue projects at 15 months.
 - End of project reports for capital projects at 18 months.
- 4.9 A marketing and communications plan is in place for the Fund, including social media promotion. As a grant condition, all award recipients are required to acknowledge the Social Impact Fund and the County Council in all promotion around the projects.
- 4.10 21 awards were made in February 2022. The projects all correlate to the areas and groups that have experienced higher levels of COVID (aligned to COMF requirements). The projects also partly align with the 22 Lower Super Output Areas identified as priorities in the Levelling Up Approach for Warwickshire (adopted in July 2022 after the Fund's launch).
- 4.11 Appendix 1 gives an update on all awards. Allowing for flexibility around timescales, all projects are on course to be completed by the end of 2023, except for two projects described in paragraph 4.12.
- 4.12 The following projects have been delayed:
- Boxing Clever, capital award, £97,000. Delayed because the sports club could not proceed with works at its original premises and is searching for alternatives.
 - Springfield Mind, revenue award, £45,000. Delayed because of difficulties in recruiting staff.

There is confidence that both projects will be able to proceed soon.

- 4.13 Appendix 1 contains feedback on the application process and more general learning points around the Fund as a whole. Of note are comments around the duration and timing of the application window, and the importance of strong working relationships between stakeholder agencies. The Appendix also includes some case studies and descriptions of early impact.

4.14 The commissioning of Heart of England Community Foundation has realised benefits including increased efficiency and the levering-in of additional funding for some projects.

5 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 A further report will be presented to Committee in 2024 after the conclusion of all projects, except for the delayed projects described in paragraph 4.12.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Fund Update Report (Heart of England Community Foundation)

Background Papers

None

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Charles Barlow, Delivery Lead, Communities and Partnerships Service	charlesbarlow@warwickshire.gov.uk
Assistant Director	Kushal Birla, Assistant Director, Business and Customer Services	kushalbirla@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Director	Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources	robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Member	Cllr Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture	heathertimms@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: