

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Sam Chapman-Allen, Deputy Leader and Executive Member of Strategy, Governance & Transformation
Paul Claussen, Executive Member of Place

To: Cabinet, 24th July 2018

(Author: Greg Pearson, Corporate Improvement & Performance Manager)

Subject: Community Reserve Projects

Purpose: To set out to Cabinet a proposed list of projects that could be funded from the Community Reserve.

Recommendation:

- 1) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to create a themed granted scheme based on improving social mobility and delegate authority to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the developing service specification and any associate procurement activity.
- 2) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £50,000 from the Community Reserve to carry out a feasibility study to explore the option of developing a commercial leisure offer in Swaffham.
- 3) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £50,000 from the Community Reserve to carry out a feasibility study to explore the option of developing a commercial leisure offer in Attleborough.
- 4) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on transport to work schemes, and delegate authority to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the award of grants to these schemes from these monies.
- 5) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to create a grant scheme to help support local entrepreneurs, and delegate authority to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the award of grants to individuals, or to award the administration of this fund to a third party organisation.
- 6) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £50,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on providing digital skills training to Breckland residents, and delegate authority to the Deputy Leader, and the Executive Director Strategy and Governance to approve the developing service specification and any associate procurement activity.
- 7) That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the allocation of £200,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on the funding of Employment Officers, and that they delegate authority to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the developing service specification and any associate procurement activity.
- 8) That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the allocation of £500,000 from the Community Reserve to establish a scheme of leasing/buying vacant shop units to be used as start-up units for small businesses.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At Council on 22nd February 2018, Elected Members agreed the establishment of a Community Reserve to support projects and initiatives in Breckland. The funding has been generated by the removal of the Council's reliance on New Homes Bonus from the General Fund. Funding totalling £6.15 million is likely to be available over a four year period as follows: -

- 2018-19 = £1,785,946 (confirmed)
- 2019-20 = £1,479,766 (expected)
- 2020-21 = £1,334,368 (expected)
- 2021-22 = £1,550,667 (expected)

1.2 An agreement of how the funds in this reserve should be spent was adopted by Cabinet on 12th June 2018. This was established to ensure that the reserve is used in the manner that the Council intended it to be. This agreement is known as the Community Reserve Protocol for avoidance of doubt the criteria that it established are set out below.

1.3 THE PROTOCOL

1.4 The purpose of the Community Reserve is to deliver benefits to the communities of Breckland by investing in assets or initiatives that will either/or:

- Provide a direct financial benefit to the Council through:
 - i. Rental income
 - ii. Increased business rates income
 - iii. Increased council tax collection
- Save the Council money by:
 - i. Reducing service demand by ensuring skills improvement and growth
 - ii. Increasing employment opportunities creating a reduced demand for services such as benefits and council tax relief
- Address specific locality issues through:
 - i. Utilising fixed term resources to deliver actions that will address or reduce the impact on the affected community
 - ii. Commissioning specific services from third parties that will address or reduce the impacts of these issues
 - iii. Delivering a positive activity that brings benefit to the community

1.5 It must be acknowledged that due to the nature of community projects that any return on investment is likely to: -

- Be higher risk than commercial activities
- Take longer to realise than commercial activities
- Have a lower yield than more commercial activities
- Deliver community benefit not just financial return
- Capital investment will always be retained but can be disinvested if required

1.6 POTENTIAL PROJECTS

- 1.7 Appendix A of this reports sets out the potential projects that the current funds in the reserve could be used for. Included in this are details of each potential project including indicative costs and which of the Community Reserve Protocol criteria they meet.
- 1.8 It is worth noting that all costs are indicative amounts and further work needs to be carried out through the projects development to quantify these fully. This report is seek authorisation to spend up to these amounts, should additional funds be required further authority shall be sought from either Cabinet or Council in line with the constitution.
- 1.9 This report is seeking approval from Cabinet to proceed with the following: -
- To allocate up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to create a themed granted scheme based on improving social mobility in Breckland by supporting young people around key issues such as employment and housing as set out in Appendix A. Following approval of this amount a service specification will be developed to define this scheme in its entirety, this report is seeking for authority to be delegated to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve this specification and any associate procurement activity.
 - To allocate up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on transport to work schemes. Following approval of this amount local scheme providers will be engaged to determine whether there is need for existing schemes to be expanded or where new scheme are required as outlined in Appendix A and moneys shall be awarded accordingly. This report is seeking for authority to be delegated to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the award of grants to these schemes.
 - To allocate up to £100,000 from the Community Reserve to create a grant scheme to help support local entrepreneurs. Following approval of this amount a specification and protocol for how this fund can be allocated, this will include considering whether a third party organisation can administer this on our behalf. This report is seeking for authority to be delegated to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve the award of grants to these schemes or to award the administration of this fund to a third party organisation.
 - To allocate up to £50,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on providing digital skills training to Breckland residents. Following approval of this amount local providers will be engaged to help develop a service specification which can then be tendered to award this money to a supplier to deliver this on the Council's behalf. This report is seeking for authority to be delegated to the Deputy Leader and the Executive Director Strategy and Governance to approve this specification and any associate procurement activity.
 - To commission feasibility studies to explore the option of developing a commercial leisure offer in Swaffham and Attleborough at a cost of up to £50,000 for each study.
- 1.10 This report is seeking for Cabinet to make recommendation to Full Council for the approval of:-
- The allocation of £200,000 from the Community Reserve to be spent on funding of Employment Officers to work on behalf of the Council as set out in Appendix A to improve social mobility outcomes. Following approval of this amount a service

specification will be developed to define this scheme in its entirety, this report is seeking for authority to be delegated to the Deputy Leader, the Executive Member Place and the Executive Director Place to approve this specification and any associate procurement activity.

- The allocation of £500,000 from the Community Reserve to establish to fund a scheme of leasing/buying vacant shop units to be used as start-up units for small businesses and fund a scalable rent and business rate reduction scheme for these properties and any other associated costs. Following approval of this amount the Council will engage with the Federation of Small Businesses to develop a protocol and targeted programme of work to spend this fund and this will be brought back to cabinet for approval.

1.11 For clarity it is worth noting that the following expenditure has already been committed from the Community Reserve: -

- £250,000 has been allocated to continue the work of the Market Town Initiative;
- Up to £35,000 has been allocated to provide additional support in the Customer Contact Team to help with the development of digital skills in preparation for Universal Credit;
- £24,000 has been allocated to provide an enhanced level of service around dog waste collections and dog warden services.

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 Do nothing (Not Recommended)

2.2 Agree that the Community Reserve can be used to establish the projects as set out in this report. (**Recommended**)

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 By utilising the Community Reserve in the way set out above it would bring significant benefits to both the Council and the residents. It would enable the council to invest in its community in a sustainable way that would bring long term financial benefits through either additional income or cost reduction. It would benefits residents by improving skills and income levels across the district.

3.2 The Council has made already the decision to establish the Community Reserve. The budget for 2018-19 has made a provision that this money will be spent and Council Tax rates have been set taking this into account. By not spending this reserve the Council would have in affected set its Council tax rates too high.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 By utilising the Community Reserve in the ways set out above the benefits to the Council would be:

- a. Additional income through increased Council Tax collection, increased business rates income and/or additional rental income;
- b. Cost reduction through reduced service demand achieved by increased employment and income opportunities in the district.

4.2 It must be noted that the expected delivery of any benefits from the Community Reserve will be long term and unlikely to be realised within the first two years after investment.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Corporate Priorities**

5.1.1 The creation of a community reserve and its investment into initiatives supports the delivery of the Council's corporate priority 'Enabling stronger, more independent communities' as set out in its corporate plan.

5.2 **Financial**

5.2.1 Depending on what initiatives the Council's chooses to spend the reserve on there could potentially be tax implications which would need to be fully explored. All options would need to be set out in any business case brought forward prior to the agreement to release funding.

5.2.3 Appendix B of this report sets out the financial implications relating to the Community Reserve in full.

5.3 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.3.1 Investment into initiatives that have a positive community benefit will improve the health and wellbeing of Breckland residents. The focus on delivering improved skills and employment options to the district will increase income levels which national research shows has a positive benefit on health and wellbeing.

5.4 **Reputation**

5.4.1 By choosing to invest in community initiatives the Council is likely to receive positive recognition from its community, this will have a positive impact on the Council's reputation.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 This will affect all wards in Breckland.

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 NA

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Key Decision: Yes

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Community Reserve Projects
Appendix B Proforma B