



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 1 NOVEMBER 2021
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 10
Subject	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND (CHF)
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Lisa Spivey Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Email: lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Anwen Hughes, Strategic Housing Manager Email: Anwen.Hughes@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Cabinet on the role of Community-Led Housing Enabler and seek Cabinet approval for proposals for the allocation of the CHF small grants fund.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	<i>a) That the Council agree to authorise the determination of allocations from the Council's CHF small grants fund to an Allocations Panel, to consist of the Group Manager for Commissioning, the Strategic Housing Manager, the Community-led Housing Enabler/Housing Enabling Officer, and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver good quality social rented homes. • Help residents, businesses and communities access the support they need to achieve their ambitions
Key Decision	NO



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Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness• Chief Finance Officer



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.** The Council was allocated £882,272 of Department of Communities and Local Government funding via the Community-Led Housing Fund in 2017. The purpose of the fund was to diversify the delivery of affordable housing by enabling local community groups to be directly involved in the planning and delivery of affordable housing in the neighbourhood. The fund was also aimed at helping build collaboration, skills and supply chains at a local level to promote the sustainability of this approach to housebuilding and increase the overall supply of affordable housing. The fund was to enable capital investment, technical support and revenue to be provided to make more schemes viable and significantly increase community groups' current delivery pipelines.
- 1.2.** It was resolved at Cabinet on the 16th February 2017 that the Council's Community Housing Fund (CHF) allocation be allocated to a new earmarked reserve for Community Housing. Under 'Community Capacity Building', a budget of £150,000 for the 'small grants fund', identified in Appendix B to the report, was also approved as a revenue grant to be allocated to community groups to support their community-led housing projects. Cabinet resolved that the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, be authorised to amend the project plan and budget to reflect amendments to legislation and Government policy, and/or to respond to local or national opportunities.
- 1.3.** A seminar for Members, parish councils, community groups and individuals was held to promote the opportunity of community-led housing and offer support through the Council's Community-led Housing Enabler (CLHE). Two community-led housing groups have been established in the District and are actively looking for sites to deliver schemes.
- 1.4.** Parish Councils have been further encouraged to bring forward opportunities for affordable housing through the provision of additional information, however positive interest has been extremely low.
- 1.5.** Opportunities for developing small Council-owned rural sites have also been identified and parish needs surveys have been undertaken to establish the level of local housing need. These opportunities are now being considered for development by the Housing Delivery Programme Manager.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1. Small Grants Fund



- 2.1.1.** As part of the Council's Affordable housing delivery programme, the Council is working to promote innovative alternative methods of providing rural affordable housing such as encouraging community-led housing approaches. This includes working with Community Land Trusts through the Council's Community-Led Housing Enabler and identifying opportunities for the Council to directly deliver rural housing, including through the use of its own land. The allocation of small revenue grants to community groups will support this objective by providing both a start-up grant to assist groups in forming, gaining membership and incorporating and a pre-development grant to progress their project to the planning application stage.
- 2.1.2.** Two grants will be made available to community-led housing groups and established organisations to bid for, firstly a start-up grant of up to £1,000 and secondly a pre-development (second stage) grant of up to £10,000. The initial start-up fund is for new groups to help them get established and can pay towards the costs of incorporation, legal advice, capacity building, publicity or general costs such as meeting room hire. The second stage grant is aimed at established incorporated groups/organisations that are at the site and planning stages of their housing development project. It is aimed at helping fund up-front costs which may be incurred in trying to bring housing projects forward. This could include the appointment of consultants, financial feasibility appraisals, solicitor's fees, setting up a website or planning application fees.
- 2.1.3.** The levels of the Council's 'small grants' have been set according to similar programmes offered by other local authorities and community hubs and the Start-Up Support Programme, now closed, that was funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and delivered by Community Led Homes. Other grant funding streams are also available to community-led housing groups from time to time.
- 2.1.4.** An Allocations Panel will be created to assess and determine these grant applications from community groups. The panel will comprise the Group Manager for Commissioning, the Strategic Housing Manager, either the Community-led Housing Enabler or the Housing Enabling Officer and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, as the sums involved are below the threshold that requires a Cabinet decision.
- 2.1.5.** In line with the ethos of community led housing, applications to the community housing fund will only be considered where they can demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:
- That the community must be integrally involved in key decisions throughout the process;
 - Community groups play a long term role in ownership, management or stewardship of the homes;



- Benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.

2.2. Community-Led Housing Enabler role

- 2.2.1.** The current fixed term contract post of Community-led Housing Enabler, funded from the Council's Community-Led Housing Fund grant, is due to become vacant following the current job-share post holders' successful application for the permanent Housing Enabling Officer post (job-share) for the Council within Publica.
- 2.2.2.** The current fixed term contract post of Community-led Housing Enabler was due to end in March 2022. Officers will now consider opportunities for how the Community-Led Housing Enabler role can be taken forward and a report for Cabinet will be presented at a later date for consideration.
- 2.2.3.** In the interim, the new Housing Enabling Officer will continue to support existing community-led housing groups in the District. New enquiries/opportunities for community-led housing will be directed to GlosHub, Gloucestershire's one-stop resource for supporting all types of community led housing. <https://www.gloshubs.org.uk>
- 2.3.** The Council's small grant fund along with support from the Housing Enabling Officer and GlosHub will continue to provide a good opportunity for the Council to work with local communities and community organisations to develop community capacity and the possible development of community-led housing.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1.** None. It was agreed at Cabinet on the 16th February 2017 that the Council's Community Housing Fund (CHF) allocation be allocated to a new earmarked reserve for Community Housing. This fund can only be used to support Community-led housing projects in the District.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1.** The grant application form includes a declaration to abide by the grant allocation's terms and conditions (Annex A) and forms part of the grant agreement.



5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.** There is no financial risk to the Council associated with the awarding of the grant as the money will be funded solely from the grant-funded Community Housing Fund held by the Council.
- 5.2.** There is a minimal risk of mis-use of grant funds by community groups. The grant application form has been reviewed by the Counter Fraud team and includes appropriate checks to ensure the grant is spent in accordance with the agreed terms and conditions. Grant recipients will be required to provide a grant expenditure report and obtain quotations for services to ensure value for money.
- 5.3.** There is a risk that groups will not be able to progress projects and not contribute to the delivery of affordable housing in the District. However, support and advice will be provided by the Community-led Housing Enabler/GlosHub to community group members to minimise this risk.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1.** An equalities impact assessment was completed for the previous Cabinet Report and no adverse effects on any groups were identified. In order to monitor this, grant applicants are required to complete the section on *Equalities* and indicate which (if any) groups will particularly benefit from their project and provide details. A further Equalities Impact Assessment has therefore not been deemed necessary for this report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 7.1.** We are keen to see grant project proposals that show a commitment to good design, use of innovative housing construction products such as modern methods of construction (MMC), and make use of innovative funding mechanisms. This includes proposals that aim to reduce fuel poverty for tenants and improve the energy efficiency of homes.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1.** Alternative funding options have been considered. The government has recently announced another year's funding for the Community Housing Fund (2021/22) and community organisations are encouraged to apply for revenue grant funding from May 2021.



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- 8.2.** However, the 2021/22 CHF fund is for established community organisations for projects that have made substantial progression towards the site and planning stages of a project. It has been made clear that group's applying for projects in Local Authority areas that still have CHF available are expected to apply to the Local Authority for grant funding first.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1.** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
- 9.2.** Report *Community-led Housing Fund* to Cabinet dated 16th February 2017 and associated minutes
- 9.3.** These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Cirencester during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.