



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Policy and Resources Committee – 11 April 2011

Member Empowerment Fund

Purpose of report

To approve proposals for establishing a member empowerment fund that will help members support local community projects across East Northamptonshire.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1 - Proposed Criteria

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Policy and Resources Committee approved the implementation of a new voluntary sector grants model at its meeting 8 November 2010 (minute 259 refers). Part of the decisions taken on this included bringing forward proposals for a member empowerment fund (MEF).
- 1.2 An MEF would give each ward member the ability to support local community projects or activities taking place in their wards. Similar schemes operate at other local councils, including Northamptonshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council.

2.0 Outline of the MEF

- 2.1 £20,000 has been allocated in the 2011/12 budget for an MEF. This equates to £500 per member. It is proposed that the MEF is available from 1 June 2011 to coincide with the start of the new council. Similar schemes at other local councils run across the whole term of office i.e. four years with provision for individual members' un-spent allocations to carry-over from one year to the next.
- 2.2 The MEF would need to be promoted through our website, other literature and through individual members' activities. However it will be essential for community groups to approach their ward member(s) first and discuss their proposals prior to applying.
- 2.3 To ensure transparency and consistency, it is proposed that the fund will operate through an application process, similar to that of our previous community grant schemes. A grant application form will be developed for this scheme. In 'fourth option' councils it is unlawful for a single member to be given delegated power to approve grant applications. It is therefore proposed that the approval of applications to the MEF is with the Executive Director and the Head of Customer and Community Services. The relevant ward member(s) would however need to endorse applications coming forward.
- 2.4 If a proposed activity or project runs across more than one ward, the MEF will allow for individual members to 'pool' all or part of their allocations, up to a maximum of £2,000. An example of this might be sports coaching or activities for young people.

3.0 Eligibility criteria

- 3.1 A set of proposed grant criteria has been developed and is attached at appendix 1. Applicants must be able to account for the funding provided and should therefore be properly constituted groups that are non-statutory and not for profit.
- 3.2 Essentially the MEF will aim to support projects that help local communities improve

their lives, their local environment and local facilities. However as with any grant scheme the limits of what can and cannot be supported need to be stated and this is set out in the criteria.

4.0 Equality and diversity implications

4.1 There are no implications arising from this report. However when assessing applications, members should give consideration to how a local project promotes and supports equal opportunities.

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 The draft criteria sets out what can and cannot be supported through the MEF. This is particularly important in terms of activities or projects that would otherwise be funded through statutory means, either by ourselves or other authorities.

6.0 Risk management

6.1 There are no material risks involved in implementing the MEF.

6.2 As with any grant funding, community projects and schemes can run into problems. To mitigate against potential risks, applicants will be required to sign grant agreements prior to the release of any money. These agreements will set out what the money is to be spent on and protect the council's interests in the event of a group disbanding or a project failing.

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 As stated above, £20,000 has been allocated in the 2011/12 budget for running the MEF. Provision for future financial years will need to be part of yearly budget planning.

7.2 The grant agreements will stipulate how the awarded money is to be spent on an individual project and applicants will be required to provide supporting material to ensure expenditure is in-line with the project approved.

8.0 Corporate outcomes

8.1 Applications to the MEF will need to demonstrate how they will contribute to the achievement of at least one of our corporate outcomes.

8.2 Overall the MEF will contribute to our corporate outcomes as follows:

- Good Quality of Life: Local community-based groups in East Northamptonshire will be given greater opportunity to develop and deliver projects and activities that improve the quality of local people's lives.
- Strong Community Leadership: Members' roles in improving people's quality of life will be strengthened.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that:-

1. Approval be given to implement a member empowerment fund as detailed above, to commence 1 June 2011.
2. The grant criteria at appendix 1 be adopted.
3. The Executive Director and the Head of Customer and Community Services be authorised to approve applications and authorise payments.

(Reason – to support projects and activities by community-based groups that improve the quality of life and the local environment.)

Legal	Power: Local Government Act 1972				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers: None					
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Date: 23 March 2011					
CFO		MO		CX	

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East Northamptonshire Council

MEMBER EMPOWERMENT FUND

Proposed Grant Criteria

Funding support from the Member Empowerment Fund will be through an application process. Applications must fulfil the following criteria:

1. Applications must be from non-statutory community groups that are properly constituted and not for profit.
2. The application form must be completed in full and endorsed by the relevant councillor(s). Applicants will be required to discuss their proposals with their ward member(s) prior to making an application. All supplementary information as required will be sent in with the application.
3. The application must demonstrate clearly that the scheme or project contributes to one or more of the Council's corporate outcomes.
4. The application must clearly demonstrate the need for the proposed scheme or project.
5. All financial expenditure will be completed by the agreed date set out in the Grant Agreement.
6. The following table sets out what the fund can and cannot support.

What can be supported? ✓	What can't be supported? X
Community events such as fayres and carnivals, touring arts	Expenditure that is unlawful or for which the council is not entitled to spend money
Sports equipment or sports or coaching activity that promotes participation in physical activities or promotes healthy lifestyles	Schemes that promote the positions of politicians or political groups
Environmental improvements such as tidying up land, new planting schemes etc.	Schemes that exclusively support religion or religious beliefs
Village Hall Improvements	Office running costs
Parking improvements	Schemes that significantly encourage people to spend their disposable income outside of East Northamptonshire

Support for new community groups such as training in first aid, committee skills etc.	Routine maintenance of equipment, facilities or vehicles
Equipment for use by the community at a village location	Projects or schemes aimed at making a profit
Youth work and schemes that aim to tackle anti-social behaviour	Replacement of permanent facilities or equipment that is subject to an insurance claim
Schemes or projects that actively promote safer communities	Statutory duties or activities that are the responsibility of a statutory body

Application process

1. An application to the scheme must be proposed by the relevant ENC ward member(s). Applicants are required to discuss proposals with their ward member(s) first.
2. Applicants (and the ward member[s]) can discuss technical or eligibility issues with the officers before making an application. The Council's External Funding Manager can also give advice about other sources of funding.
3. The applicant must complete the application form and ensure that all of the supporting information as required is appended to it. The application must be proposed and signed by the ward member before being submitted.
4. Officers will discuss the application with the proposing ward member(s) to check that the project meets the eligibility criteria and either the Executive Director or the Head of Customer and Community Services will approve the application.
5. Officers will arrange for a Grant Agreement to be signed by the applicant and once this is complete raise the order to pay the grant to the applicant.
6. The applicant will ensure ENC is recognised in all publicity and marketing material, the style of which must be approved by ENC's Communications Team.
7. The applicant will submit to the Council all relevant paperwork including copies of invoices and payment records to demonstrate that expenditure is in line with the Grant Agreement