

CABINET MEMBER FOR POLICE & POLICY CO-ORDINATION – 3 JANUARY 2012

BIG SOCIETY FUND – EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE

Report by Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Portfolio Holder for Police and Policy Co-ordination to make decisions on two bids to the Big Society Fund related to community responses to severe weather.
2. Cabinet will meet in February to consider the applications made to the third wave of Big Society Fund applications. There have been 20 applications to this 'wave'.
3. There have been two bids in this 'wave' for empowering communities to clear snow in the event of adverse weather. This report is intended to provide the applicants with an earlier decision on the success or otherwise of their bid given the likelihood of adverse weather in the coming months.

Background

4. In February 2011 Oxfordshire County Council launched the Big Society Fund. The Fund of £600,000 in 2011/12 is for communities to bid for start-up funding for community projects that would benefit their areas.
5. Cabinet has allocated funding in the first and second 'waves' of the Fund. A total of 24 projects totalling £434,752 have been agreed so far this year.
6. £165,248 of the Fund remains available for allocation in this and subsequent rounds in 2011/12.
7. In order to be considered for funding, bidders must demonstrate that they meet the following criteria;
 - the project is innovative and creative
 - the project meets a recognised community need
 - the project has a sustainable business case
 - the local community is involved in the project

Consideration of Bids

8. The bids related to extreme weather response have followed the same process as all other applications to the Big Society Fund.
9. A bidder assessment form has been completed for each application. These assessment forms include the project details and are considered by the Local Review Groups of local Councillors with views (where applicable) from service specific officers, all of which are used to inform the assessment against fund criteria.
10. Annex 1 summarises the bids we have received in this wave related to extreme weather response. Annex 2 contains the assessment forms for these bids, which have been categorised as follows:

Bids that meet the assessment criteria

Both bids are considered to have strong potential to contribute to our Big Society vision and meet the Fund criteria.

Financial and Staff Implications

11. The total value of bids received is £13,625. £165,248 of the Fund remains available to allocate over the remainder of 2011/12.
12. There are no staff implications in these proposals.
13. A grant funding agreement will be in place for all successful projects which will set out financial requirements and monitoring arrangements.

Legal Implications

14. The grant funding agreement outlined above will set out all legal requirements including health and safety and safeguarding policy requirements.

Equality and Inclusion implications

15. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the Big Society Fund. Potential impacts on equality groups have been considered (the [impact assessment](#) was part of the paper to Cabinet in July 2011).
16. In line with the council's responsibilities for equality the grant funding agreement with successful bidders will set out requirements for equality policies to be in place.

Risk implications

17. There is a risk to the county council that projects are not sustainable and are not able to continue in the future due to a lack of resources. To mitigate this, the application form for the Fund requires a business case and ongoing costs

information, and it is proposed that funding will only be paid to successful bidders with a robust business case in place.

18. Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council and Chipping Norton Town Council have both committed to covering the ongoing costs of the projects from within council budgets, supported by additional fundraising where necessary. Costs for both bids will be less after the first year once equipment has been purchased.

RECOMMENDATION

19. The Cabinet Member for Police and Policy Coordination is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) approve those bids which meet the assessment criteria; and**
- (b) ensure a grant funding agreement that meets legal requirements is in place for all successful projects**

SUE SCANE
Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer

Background papers: Nil

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December 2011

Annex 1 Summary of bids received related to extreme weather response

Project Name	Organisation	Description	Locality	Amount
Project Snowstorm	Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council	Provide the community with specialised equipment to allow a rapid and effective response to severe winter weather conditions	Chipping Norton-Charlbury-Woodstock	£ 8,625
Snow Plan	Chipping Norton Town Council	Ensure roads and pavements that are kept clear of snow and ice so the local community can move safely around the town.	Chipping Norton-Charlbury-Woodstock	£ 5,000
			Total	£ 13,625

Annex 2 - Bids that meet the assessment criteria

Chipping Norton Locality

Project Snowstorm

Section 1 – Project Overview

From the Website submission

Project Name: Project Snowstorm
Project Aims: Providing clear roads in winter weather.
Amount: £8,625
Project Location and Locality: Ascott-under-Wychwood, Chipping Norton
Sponsoring Councillor(s): Cllr Rodney Rose, Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles

Section 2 – BID Criteria Assessment*

Qualitative assessment

Community Benefits (meets identified need) Local residents and businesses were affected by impassable roads in previous years. Providing snowploughs and gritters would enable the parish council to take responsibility for clearing the roads and pavements, ensuring residents are not stranded and businesses do not suffer economically during winter weather.
Innovation and Creativity Ascott-under-Wychwood is not on the County Council's main clearing routes, so this provision will provide a service that is not otherwise available. It will also promote localism by empowering the community to take responsibility.
Sustainable Business Case Compared to the cost of the winter weather bid in wave 2 (£1180), this bid seems relatively high. However the location is more remote and no service is currently provided, and costs are mainly for initial purchase of equipment with future costs met by the parish council.
Community Involvement Community consultation was undertaken after last year's snowfall, with good response from residents. Many local residents have volunteered to help run the programme and others during the year.

Section 3 – Service Officer View

Where applicable

This project seeks to provide self-help from the community to tackle the problems for their parish during winter months. The county council has only been able to provide limited resources to tackle the problems of snow fall and community severance that occurs. This seems to be a creative way of tackling the problem through community engagement. The bid

is well written, very well researched and costs for the equipment appear to align with known cost from suppliers. Public liability insurance and Salt storage are issues that need to be addressed and managed.

Section 4 – Locality Review Group Assessment

Member comments:

The locality review group were supportive of this scheme, particularly as Ascott-under-Wychwood is not on a priority route and the village actually gets cut off in severe weather. The group felt the Parish Council had taken a very professional approach to choosing the equipment and preparing the bid, including discussion with Paul Wilson (Council Winter Manager) at the recent 'snow day'.

*Taken from 'Eligibility Checklist' document included as part of the 'Guidance Notes for the Application' page on the website.

Chipping Norton Locality

Snow Plan

Section 1 – Project Overview

From the Website submission

Project Name: Snow Plan
Project Aims: To provide equipment to clear snow and keep Chipping Norton open throughout the Winter
Amount: £5,000 (total project £10,000)
Project Location and Locality: Chipping Norton
Sponsoring Councillor: Councillor Hillary Hibbert-Biles

Section 2 – BID Criteria Assessment*

Qualitative assessment

Community Benefits (meets identified need) Chipping Norton is particularly exposed to inclement conditions, and recent severe weather conditions have caused local roads and pavements (both main and side roads) to become extremely dangerous. The bid will allow the Town Council to respond to similar situations more effectively, and the community to take responsibility for supplementing County Council provision on the main routes.
Innovation and Creativity This bid would enable a more complete service than is possible by the county council. It will also allow the community to take responsibility for this issue and promote localism.
Sustainable Business Case Compared to the cost of the winter weather bid in wave 2 (£1180), this bid seems relatively high. However the location is more remote, and the bid includes purchase of equipment as part of start-up costs that was not included in the previous bid. There will be ongoing costs relating to staffing and the loan of tractors. There is a question if this is the most sustainable solution, but the Town Council has committed to cover the costs in subsequent years.
Community Involvement The Town Council has involved various interested members of the community in development of the project. The Town Councillors have also been talking to members of the community living to assist with storage of grit and equipment and for rallying 'local' teams in the areas they live.

Section 3 – Service Officer View

Where applicable

This bid is a great example of the 'Big Society' approach that is prominent at the current time and links in well with the winter planning for OCC. There are a some considerations that need to be addressed regarding their proposal, these being:

- Salt storage - Although not a huge amount of salt will be stored there is still the need to consider its storage and legal compliance. This could raise the costs that will be incurred as part of the set up.
- All solid de-icers must be stored safely to prevent serious environmental damage.
- You should have management systems and equipment in place
- Uncovered roadside salt stores may cause localised pollution problems. You should consult us about their location and how the salt is stored

In summary, I feel that the costs need to be reviewed as there are some anomalies that need addressing.

Section 4 – Locality Review Group Assessment

Member Comments:

The locality review group were very supportive of this bid as Chipping Norton is the highest point in Oxfordshire and is on a hill, meaning snow lasts much longer than other areas and there are considerable difficulties during adverse weather. The group felt it is appropriate to include staffing costs as few people can drive tractors and it is one of the most important aspects of the plan, although there are also a number of volunteers willing to be involved in other aspects.

*Taken from 'Eligibility Checklist' document included as part of the 'Guidance Notes for the Application' page on the website.