
Meeting of the Cabinet – 26th October 2011

Report of the Chief Executive

Community First

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Cabinet of the Community First programme announced by Government to provide neighbourhood grants to 9 wards in the Borough.

Background

2. At the end of September, the Government confirmed the establishment of Community First, a programme with two elements:-

A £30m neighbourhood grant programme, and
A £50m programme to encourage the development of local endowments to be a long term source of local grants.

3. The following wards in the Borough are eligible for a minimum level of neighbourhood grants over the next four years:-

Belle Vale	£33,910
Brierley Hill	£67,820
Brockmoor and Pensnett	£84,775
Castle and Priory	£67,820
Cradley and Foxcote	£33,910
Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews	£84,775
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	£33,910
St James's	£118,685
St Thomas's	£84,775

4. The basis for the allocation was through considering a combination of the 2011 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, together with the Jobseeker's Allowance claimant data. A note on this is included as Appendix 1.
5. The Government's intention is that each ward would establish a Community First Panel, to create a plan for how they will match and spend the money. The Government's delivery partner is Community Development Foundation, (CDF), who as administrator will release funds provided the panel is able to demonstrate community involvement and support for the plan. Each Panel will be asked to also nominate a Panel Partner who will validate the Community First Panel on the ground and confirm they are using the funds appropriately. A guidance note produced by CDF on the operation of the programme is attached as Appendix 2.

6. The Government have stated that they believe “it will be important to have local authority representation on each panel and the active involvement of the elected representatives of the ward”.
7. The funding will be available from this October, subject to Community First Panels being created and registered on-line with CDF.

Response to the Community First programme

8. The Council has responded to the Government to confirm our interest in cooperating with the programme. In addition, the Council has commenced working together with Dudley Council for Voluntary Services to develop a co-ordinated local response, which includes:-
 - Notifying ward members of the programme.
 - Compiling a comprehensive list of local neighbourhood groups and networks in each of the relevant wards to ensure that all relevant groups are aware of the programme and the formation of a local Panel.
 - Contacting CDF to ensure that there is a clear understanding of which organisations are requesting Panel status in each area.
 - Reviewing the representation on each Panel and ensuring that local ward Members are aware of the groups and how to become involved.
 - Considering how VCS support can be offered to local community groups to establish good practice in the organisation of Panels, engagement of local communities and the preparation of clear, prioritised action plans.

Linking individual Panels with the work of Public bodies so that proposed priorities of the Panel are considered in conjunction with the mainstream work and funding taking place in the ward to encourage match funding and co-ordinated impact.

Finance

9. There are no direct implications to the Council from this report

Law

10. The Government have established the Community First programme within its own legal remit, there is no specific legal framework for the Council.

Equality Impact

11. The Council will want to ensure that the Panels are representative of all local communities and that there is fair and equal opportunity to benefit from the grant programme.

Recommendation

12. The Cabinet are asked to note the introduction of the Community First programme and approve the approach outlined in paragraph 8 of this report.

John Polychronakis

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John Polychronakis
Chief Executive

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List of Background Papers

1. Letter from the Government announcing the Programme within Dudley.