

To: **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**  
**08 June 2021**

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**Plans for COVID Community Recovery Grant**  
**Assistant Director of Adult Social Care**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To set out the proposed approach for distributing £250,000 of funding. This was allocated within the council's 2021/22 budget for the voluntary and community sector to support mental health and wellbeing.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 **To agree the approach for distributing the £250,000 funding. The approach is outlined in detail below and is based around Involve being appointed to administer the grant funds of £210,000 (with oversight from the Health and Wellbeing Board) for which it is proposed Involve will receive £40,000 to coordinate and manage this.**
- 2.2 **Appoint a sub-panel for assessing the grant applications, as per the process established by Involve and in line with the grant conditions set by the council.**

**3 Reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 The grant provides much needed support for the community and voluntary sector, targeting the wellbeing of residents. This is a particular priority due to the pandemic and therefore these proposals are made to make sure that targeted funding is available to the community.
- 3.2 There are also wider funds available for supporting the community linked to mental health, wellbeing and/or the VCS, this includes the CCG's Innovation Fund. Therefore, these recommendations are established to align with, and enhance, these existing plans, avoiding duplication.

**4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 Alternative options have been considered through discussions with officers in the People Directorate, the Equality and Engagement team and partners at Involve. Options such as distributing the funding using internal resources were also considered however after further scoping, it is recommended to take a joint approach between Involve and Bracknell Forest Council to make the most of existing expertise and to enhance the reach of the grant funding.

**5 Supporting Information**

Overview

- 5.1 The council's 2021/22 budget included six one off-investments, as part of the stimulus package, to boost the recovery from the pandemic. These are aligned with the renewal principles agreed by the Executive in 2020. Part of this investment was

for £250,000 to support the increasing mental health needs following the pandemic, working with partners include the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Therefore, this fund will be referred to as the 'community recovery grant' through the rest of this paper.

- 5.2 The community recovery grant funding is assigned to the lead officer of Melanie O'Rourke, Assistant Director for Adult Social Care who has the responsibility for the funding. The governance for the allocation of funding is through the Health and Wellbeing Board. The funding should be allocated to VCS groups by the end of the 2021/22 financial year and can then be used by these groups until the end of the following financial year.

### Reason for funding

- 5.3 Over the last 12 months it is very clear that the pandemic has had a huge impact on the lives of residents, from employment, to health, to relationships. For some, this has been negative and is continuing to ripple into aspects of their lives, inevitably wellbeing is a significant part of this. The local evidence collected through the resident's survey and community impact assessment demonstrate that around a quarter of residents feel the pandemic has had a negative effect on their mental health. Further evidence such as the review conducted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel also support the need for improving wellbeing and reducing isolation. Therefore, the community recovery grant aims to support projects that address these negative impacts.

**Aim: Residents are better supported to improve their wellbeing and mental health as part of recovery from the pandemic.**

- 5.4 It is also recognised that there has been a great deal of disruption for the community and the local voluntary sector groups; regular activities stopped, communication methods had to change and the usual routes for sustaining funding were not possible. Research by Involve in 2020 found that half of organisations reported there would be a significant negative financial impact due to reduced fundraising income. The availability of volunteers has also significantly changed where many volunteers have been shielding. Therefore, a second aim of the present funding is to reinvigorate the VCS.

**Aim: The sustainability of the Community and Voluntary Sector is improved to help the community longer term.**

- 5.5 Within each of these aims there are multiple target areas that have been identified as a priority based on the insights from the local evidence. For example, it is evidenced that mental health and wellbeing is reported to be lower amongst younger age groups and this also correlates with more of this group being affected by employment changes and their financial circumstances. Therefore, the VCS would be encouraged to apply for the grant to address issues related to these target areas and groups.

- 5.6 These two aims are described visually in Appendix A, along with a more detailed breakdown of the target areas for this funding. An evidence pack has also been produced summarising the reasons for highlighting these particular priorities for the grant.

- 5.7 This funding is not intended to directly aid statutory services but instead to support the wider community to recover and thrive.

### Approach to distribution

5.7 It is recognised that there are already many community projects and groups within the VCS that are well placed to understand the needs and best solutions for the identified challenges. And so, a key foundation of distributing this grant will be to offer financial support to groups who have the autonomy to work towards the agreed aims in the way they can demonstrate will add the most value to the community.

5.8 Building on this and setting the community at the heart of this fund, it is recommended that Involve lead on administering the funding. This taps into their expertise in grants and their knowledge of the community. Their responsibilities would include:

- Designing the bidding and assessment process, based on the grant agreement and summary specification/objectives provided by the council in agreement with the HWB
- Promoting the programme to community and voluntary sector groups
- Report to the HWB quarterly progress in distributing the grant
- Transferring the grant payment to successful VCS groups, following appropriate due diligence
- Mapping the existing work of VCS/grassroots groups including for addressing issues such as loneliness and social isolation
- Collating the end of project reports into a grant summary to be reported back to the HWB once the money has been used by successful applicants (April 2023)

5.9 In order to resource this work, administrative funding will be provided to Involve and will be costed to the community recovery grant. Of the £250,000 it is expected that around £40,000 will be paid to involve for these costs in coordinating the grant and completing the community mapping work.

Task	Approximate cost
12-month post for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating and managing grant</li> <li>• Mapping community groups</li> </ul> Includes oncosts and set up costs (e.g. IT equipment)	£35,000
Management costs and end of project reports	£5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£40,000</b>

5.9 The council will also continue to be involved throughout the grant making process including to:

- Provide a summary specification for the aims and objectives of the grant
- Transfer the funding to Involve for the administration costs and for successful bids
- Support the promotion of the funding scheme to the community
- Participate in the assessment process of applications for the funding such as through a panel as determined by the Health and Wellbeing Board and Involve

5.10 The progress of the grant will be monitored on delivery of the conditions agreed between the council and Involve. As well as the existing monitoring arrangements established between the Head of Community Engagement and Equalities and Involve, the following indicators would be reported quarterly to the HWB. This would be in place until the full fund was allocated.

- Number of applications received
- Number of applications processed
- Proportion of successful applications
- Proportion of grants applying for each priority/focus area
- Amount of funding remaining
- Reason log for unsuccessful applicants
- Number of people reached by successfully awarded grants

#### Implementation of grant

5.11 A full grant conditions agreement has been drafted for the council and Involve which will be signed, on agreement of these proposals by the HWB. The conditions are based on previous agreements with Involve and it has been reviewed by the legal team.

5.12 In order to ensure the funding can reach the community groups the following timeline has been set in partnership with Involve.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Recruit grassroots/ coordinating role	June-July 2021	Involve
Designing details of application and assessment process	June-August 2021	Involve
Assessment panel	September/October 2021	Involve/BFC
Distribution of funding to successful applicants	November/December 2021	Involve
Potential to reopen applications for any remaining funding	December-January 2022	Involve
Potential final assessment and distribution of funding	February-March 2022	Involve/BFC
Successful VCS groups use funding as per application and produce end of project report for Involve	March 2022-March 2023	VCS Groups
Produce end of grant summary report for the council and HWB	April-June 2023	Involve

## **6 Consultation and Other Considerations**

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 These recommendations have been considered from a legal perspective and endorsed. Advice will be given on ensuring that the formal agreement (Conditions of Grant) between the Council and Involve adequately safeguards grant funds and requires the grant to be administered effectively and fairly.

#### Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial context is outlined in the report.

#### Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 Regular discussions with Involve have taken place to shape these proposals and the proposals, including the objectives and scope of grant were reviewed and endorsed at the People DMT on 25 May 2021.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An equalities impact assessment has been completed for these proposals and is attached with these papers. Broadly, the scheme will make a positive contributing to addressing the inequalities of groups. Equality monitoring will also be undertaken by Involve as part of their duties managing the grant distribution.

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 This approach has been recommended to balance the risks involved with distributing the grant. Whilst outsourcing the administration of the funding to Involve does increase some risks around control, strong governance and accountability mechanisms are in place through the Health and Wellbeing Board and the council's involvement in shortlisting. Involve also have significant experience related to grant applications which we hope will support the present scheme.

#### Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:

Have no impact on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions are that activities within this paper set out how grant funding will be distributed. There is no direct impact on emissions that setting out this approach will cause. It is likely and hoped that the funding will generate increased activity in the community, some of which may generate additional CO<sub>2</sub>. However, this is considered to a risk outweighed by the potential improvement to health and wellbeing.

#### Background Papers

None

#### Contact for further information

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**Appendix A – Overview for Grant Objectives and evidence pack.**

*Attached as PDF*