

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Siobhan Farmer, Director of Public Health

Pursuant to the decision taken by Cabinet on 27.01.21

Decision: To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities and the Executive Director for Corporate Resources to allocate the Local Authority Contain Outbreak Management Fund in order to deliver the objectives in the Local Outbreak Management Plan in accordance with the Council's standing orders and procurement legislation.

Report title: **Levelling Up in Gloucestershire: Local Grant Scheme Proposal**

The Decision	<p>In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities and the Executive Director for Corporate Resources in accordance with a Cabinet decision dated 27.01.21.</p> <p><u>DECISION</u></p> <p>To approve the establishment and delivery of a flexible community initiative grant programme entitled Levelling Up Together. This programme will provide communities that have historically been left behind in Gloucestershire with an opportunity to bid for levelling up grants from a £1.5 million fund. This fund will be used by recipients to invest in projects and activities that contribute to communities and places that have historically been left behind and support the development of greater resilience in Gloucestershire's communities. The Levelling Up Together grant programme will be used to support the following 12 most deprived lower level super output areas in Gloucestershire (LSOAs) as identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) <i>Podsmead (Gloucester)</i>b) <i>Matson & Robinswood (Gloucester) (2 LSOAs)</i>c) <i>Westgate (Gloucester) (2 LSOAs)</i>d) <i>Kingsholm & Wotton (Gloucester)</i>e) <i>St. Mark's (Cheltenham)</i>f) <i>Moreland (Gloucester)</i>g) <i>St. Paul's (Cheltenham)</i>h) <i>Cinderford West (Forest of Dean)</i>i) <i>Tuffley (Gloucester)</i>j) <i>Barton & Tredworth (Gloucester)</i>
Background documents	Gloucestershire County Council's 2022-26 Strategy 'Build Back Better' - Building Back Better in Gloucestershire - Gloucestershire County Council

	<p>UK Government Levelling Up White Paper - Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p> <p>Living with Covid-19 in Gloucestershire Plan - Living with COVID-19 in Gloucestershire - Gloucestershire County Council</p> <p>Cabinet Paper on the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (Jan 2021)</p>
<p>Reasons for the decision</p>	<p>This grant scheme will support communities to access funds to help address longstanding inequalities and help support our ambitions in the Council Strategy to level up communities that have been left behind.</p> <p>There is an existing robust process that was adopted for the Growing Our Communities Grant programme from 2018 – 2021 and the Build Back Better Councillor Scheme (2021 - 2025) which will be adopted to ensure compliance with accounting instructions, governance requirements and the UK subsidy control regime.</p>
<p>Resource Implications</p>	<p>The total funding proposed is £1.5 million until the end of the financial year 2022/23. Such funding will be sourced from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (“COMF”) received from the Department for Health and Social Care which was carried forward from the financial year 2021/2022.</p> <p>An additional £100k sourced from COMF will be allocated to fund officer time in running the scheme.</p>
<p>Who has been consulted?</p>	<p>Cllr Nick Housden, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Corporate Resources</p> <p>Internal Support Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal Services ▪ Strategic Procurement ▪ Finance ▪ Information Management Service ▪ Communications <p>In addition, the Levelling Up Our Communities conference report identified the need for ongoing opportunities for the community to access funding to level up those communities that have been left behind.</p>

What were their comments?

Cllr Nick Housden, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities has considered the proposal and supports the allocation of funds from COMF.

Steve Mawson, the Executive Director for Corporate Resources has also considered the proposal and supports the allocation of funds from COMF.

All consultees are supportive of the proposed decision.

Internal Support Services:

- Legal Services: Drafting advice has been provided to the report's author and incorporated into the report.
- Strategic Procurement: As this proposal does not entail procurement this team had no further comment.
- Communications: Drafting advice has been provided to the report's author and incorporated into the report.
- Finance: Drafting advice has been provided to the report's author and incorporated into the report.
- Information Management Service: Drafting advice has been provided to the report's author and incorporated into the report. Advice and guidance will be sought from IMS with regards to how best the grant agreements are put in place. Relevant provisions will be included to allow access to appropriate information for assessing the success of grant agreement outcomes.

Background/Context

Strategic Context

1. The UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper (May 2022) is focused on challenging and changing geographical inequality in the UK, through investment and new infrastructure to allow 'everyone the opportunity to flourish'. Twelve missions are outlined in the White Paper (Appendix 1) which are long-term, quantifiable missions across a range of policy areas from housing to crime to health. Health inequalities are at the core of these missions, and many of them refer to 'closing the gap' and reducing health inequalities. The strategy is owned nationally by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. A national framework is due to be developed to monitor progress toward the White Paper missions.
2. Gloucestershire County Council's Building Back Better in Gloucestershire Strategy 2022-26 outlines several cross-service commitments as part of its ambitions. One priority area is entitled 'Levelling Up Our Communities' and details seven commitments (Appendix 2). This was written before the Levelling Up White Paper was published, however there was ultimately reasonable synergy between the two documents.
3. The Council Strategy commits to reducing health (and wider) inequalities and improving life expectancy (missions 7 & 8) as articulated in the Levelling Up Our Communities section. This was further informed by a Council Motion passed in September 2021. The motion was resolved as follows:

Motion 881 - Tackling poverty and deprivation in Gloucestershire

RESOLVED that:

This Council notes that despite Gloucestershire being a relatively affluent county, based upon the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation for England, there are 12 areas in the 10 per cent most deprived areas. These areas account for 19,415 people which is 3.1 per cent of the county's population.

This Council further notes that some areas have been in the 10 per cent most deprived areas in the 2010, 2015 and 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, suggesting that there are structural or long-term issues and that the communities in those areas need more sustained support and investment.

This Council is deeply concerned about the causes of poverty and deprivation, the detrimental effects this has on individuals, communities and upon the prospects of future generations.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- *Take a holistic approach to poverty by looking at the wider causes of inequalities not just material deprivation.*
- *Bring regular progress report on the progress of the Health and Wellbeing Board's 7 strategic priorities to Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has the ability to refer on to Cabinet to enact recommendations – and subsequently to full council.*
- *Host a "Build Back Better – Levelling up in Gloucestershire" Conference, inviting all interested partners and community groups from across the county promote and identify how we can maximise the Government's Levelling Up Agenda in delivering real change for communities in Gloucestershire*

4. In response to the Council Motion and Strategy, a "Levelling Up Our Communities in Gloucestershire" conference was held on 19 May 2022. It was attended by approximately 130 people in person and virtually. There were representatives from across a range of voluntary sector and community groups and local public sector leaders. A summary report from the conference has been shared with elected members and conference delegates.

Levelling Up in Gloucestershire

5. To date, there have been two national bidding rounds for Levelling Up funding. In round 1, Gloucestershire successfully secured three investment bids: (1) Gloucester City Council will regenerate Gloucester City Centre (£20 million) (2) Gloucestershire County Council transport improvements (£12.8 million) (3) Forest of Dean district, Cinderford Town Council and Hartpury University to improve leisure and community facilities (£20 million). Round 2 applications opened in Spring 2022 and were aimed at district councils, unitary authorities and London boroughs. The outcome of this round is awaited. These funding rounds have concentrated on the infrastructure aspects of the national Levelling Up agenda, as well as developing local bids to improve pride in place. There has so far been no local generic allocation from central government to Councils
6. During the height of Covid-19 pandemic, funding was made available to Local Authorities to both manage outbreaks and address community resilience and health inequalities. The grant conditions have allowed for some prospective spending to tackle inequalities at a system level to increase community resilience to decrease impact on underserved communities if the current or future pandemics were to be as severe as we all experienced in 2020. This Contain Outbreak Management Fund

(COMF) has been delegated by cabinet to the Director of Public Health to agree a spending plan in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities and the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Corporate Resources.

7. It was announced by the Leader of the County Council at the council's 'Levelling Up Our Communities' conference in May 2022 that an investment of £1.5 million of COMF funding would be made to support the 12 most deprived Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs); this would help improve the lives of the 3.1% (19,435 people) in the county currently living in the most deprived 10% of communities in England.
8. It is proposed that this is used to deliver a flexible community initiative grant programme called the Levelling Up Together Fund that will enable communities left behind in Gloucestershire an opportunity to bid for money to "Level Up". The purpose of the fund will be to invest in projects and activities that contribute to communities and places that have been left behind in order to develop greater resilience in our communities.
9. The scope of the Levelling Up Together Fund will be broad as possible to allow communities to be creative in what they bid for e.g., funding to devise a community plan, invest or upgrade community hubs or deliver projects on the ground. Bids will need to demonstrate how their outcomes would relate to one or more of the following the missions which are derived from the Levelling Up White Paper as those which most closely relate to the COMF criteria. These are:
 - By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.
 - By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
 - By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.
 - By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
 - By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
10. The £1.5 million Levelling Up Together grant programme will be used to support the 12 most deprived areas in Gloucestershire in accordance with commitments set out in the Council Strategy and Motion 881. The detailed criteria and process for implementing the Levelling Up Together grant programme will be developed in

consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Levelling Up.

11. It is proposed to open applications to the scheme in October 2022. This is an ambitious timeline, but the existing robust processes adopted for the Growing Our Communities Grant programme from 2018 – 2021 and the Build Back Better Councillor Scheme (2021 - 2025) can be rapidly modified to ensure compliance with accounting instructions and governance requirements.

Alternative options considered and why they were rejected

Alternative options considered in relation to this decision and why they were rejected – not those considered as part of the previous Cabinet/Cabinet Member decision, if applicable.

Option 2 (Rejected) - Allocate the £1.5 million directly to specific fundholding/distributor community groups for allocation to the communities in either in the 12 most deprived LSOA areas, or county wide.

The basis for this would be that it could be used to support local delivery plans, such as the “Power of Three” plan for Matson, Robinswood and White City. It also focusses resources to support the “Levelling Up” of these areas. This would be a flexible way to distribute the funding (whether it was focussed on the 12 most deprived LSOAs or made county wide). It would also reduce the resource needed by council officers to understand and evaluate the merit of any funding requests.

The barriers and risks to realising this option which led to it ultimately being rejected were:

- Not all areas have a VCSE organisation that could act as the fundholder/distributor on behalf of a specified community
- Some areas will have more than one VCSE organisation that could be considered, creating potential conflicts, and perhaps requiring a full procurement process.
- Feedback from the conference suggested that not all groups and organisations are connected in with each other and so may be prohibited from applying as they may not be linked into the relevant networks to access the opportunity.

Risk Analysis

The recommended option does carry the following risks:

- A robust communications plan and dedicated officer support will be need from the start of the scheme to mitigate the risk that the COMF funding is time limited and may not be able to be spent beyond the 22/23 financial year.
- To mitigate the risk of potential challenge from some parts of the VCSE sector, given recent feedback that longer term, more secure investment was needed, the Levelling Up Grant Scheme will work closely with all partners to support applications, manage expectations, and respond to queries from prospective applicants and interested parties to explain the rationale behind the scheme.
- Locally, we have always taken the approach that taking preventative action to tackle health inequalities and build the resilience of vulnerable communities across Gloucestershire will help to minimise the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and act as a preventative measure for any future pandemics. Whilst we are locally confident that this meets the COMF grant criteria, there is a risk that DHSC may not agree with our assessment of this. This can be mitigated by clear decision making and recording of the criteria used to assess the bids and is in line with decisions already taken for this funding scheme.
- There is a risk that not all groups wishing to submit bids will be able to secure local member support. This will be addressed by working actively with the voluntary and community sector networks and with Councillors using robust communications.
- There is a risk that the groups that most need support do not have the skills or resources to enable them to apply for grants. To mitigate this, officers will collaborate with colleagues from the District Councils, Town and Parish Councils and Voluntary sector infrastructure agencies to support community groups with the application process. It will also be made as light touch as possible to support these groups.
- There is a risk in respect of any grant award that it may contravene UK subsidy control regime requirements and/or public procurement law, hence legal advice will be sought in respect of the grants proposed in this report before they are awarded.
- A checklist will be completed to identify if a Data Privacy Impact Assessment is required. Any risks identified or accepted will be documented in line with the Council's processes.

Equalities considerations

An equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been completed.

There is a risk that the groups that most need support are unable to access the grant process. To mitigate this, officers will collaborate with colleagues from the District Councils, Town and Parish Councils and Voluntary sector infrastructure agencies to support community groups with the application process. It will also be made as light touch as possible to support these groups.

There have been previous EIAs (previously Due Regard Statements) completed for the Contain Outbreak Management Fund [here](#). This will also be considered in the decision-making process.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? Yes

Has any conflict of interest been declared by any Cabinet Member consulted on the decision?

The council's Monitoring Officer should be consulted, in the first instance, if any conflict of interest is declared by a Cabinet Member.

No

If any conflict of interest declared, was a dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Council?

N/A

Does this decision report form or any supporting papers provided contain confidential or exempt information?

No

Summary of any representations received before decision taken and how they have been taken into account

None received

Does this decision need to be published on the GCC website?

(Refer to guidance on "Executive Decisions taken by Officers").

Yes

In coming to this decision I have given due and full regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") by reference to the law itself and also the relevant Equality Impact Assessment, which was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Having fully considered all available information, I have decided to reject any alternative options and take the recommended decision(s), for the reasons set out in this report.

Signed



Name: Siobhan Farmer

Title: Director of Public Health

Date 06.10.22

Contact details for further information:

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