

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed:		
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES/NO
	Discretionary/	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/NO
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/NO
All				
Lead Member: Cllr R Blunt E-mail: cllr.richard.blunt@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: All		
		Other Members consulted: CIL Spending Panel		
Lead Officer: Alan Gomm E-mail: alan.gomm@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial:01553616237		Other Officers consulted: Management Team		
Financial Implications YES/NO	Policy/Personnel Implications YES/NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/NO

Date of meeting: 16 November 2021

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Consideration of ‘lessons learnt’ from the first round of grant applications for CIL funding.

Summary

A successful exercise took place to distribute CIL funds to various types of infrastructure project in line with criteria agreed by Cabinet in the CIL Governance document. A second round is proposed. The CIL Spending Panel has considered a number of changes to our present processes and these are set out below to streamline the application processes.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to make changes to the CIL Spending - Application process as set out in Section 3 (as listed A – D) of this report.

Reason for Decision

To ensure an efficient process for applicants and promote the provision of infrastructure for the growing needs of the Borough through use of CIL.

1 Background

1.1 As a Charging Authority the Council has an obligation to: (my emphasis in *italic / bold*)

- Prepare and publish the CIL Charging Schedule
- ***Determine CIL spend, ensuring it is used to fund the provision, improvement, replacement, operation; or maintenance of infrastructure to support development of its area***

- ***Report publicly on the amount of CIL revenue collected, spent and retained each year.***

1.2 The Borough Council has set up a CIL Spending Panel to assess and recommend expenditure on eligible projects.

1.3 We sought applications for CIL funding from community organisations in January this year and applications closed 3 months later in April. Some 70+ applications were made, and ultimately decisions were made about all 58 of the valid application, at the 22 July meeting of the Panel. This was the first time the Borough Council had undertaken such an exercise, and it is appropriate to undertake an assessment of how it went and consider if changes are required for the next round.

2. Reviewing the process

2.1 Appendix 1 gives a number of discussion points reflecting experience of the various stages and elements of the CIL spending processes during the first round, and pre and post application. Members may wish to use this list to highlight other issues not discussed in detail below.

2.2 In general terms the application process went well, and a significant number of applications were actually made, and some £1,414,211.14 was supported / committed to projects.

2.3 At a meeting of the CIL Spending Panel on 21 September the following items were discussed.

3. Discussion of specific items recommended for amendment

- **Combination of the ‘Local’ and ‘Community’ categories** – These were originally differentiated to allow a relatively small amount of grant to be given. However, the categories of allowable projects in each category proved confusing for applicants. Many lower value schemes found difficulty in expressing how they were meeting the relevant criteria, but would have qualified if they had applied for more money (i.e. the next £ banding). Members took a pragmatic view, but the initial analysis seemed too harsh.
- The wider set of projects that would be allowed for applications up to £50K will make applying a more straightforward affair. In essence these are all relatively small projects and the totality did not cause any financial stress on the fund.
- **A simpler application form is also proposed** for the new ‘Local Community’ category to only include the following elements:
 - Match Funding Details
 - Evidence of Need
 - Evidence of support
- To avoid additional reports needing to be created and further points of assessment it is proposed that the CIL Spending Panel is authorised to agree

the new combined category, with the actual payment delegated to a relevant officer.

- This leaves the £50K plus element of the fund (strategic projects) as it was, and criteria unchanged i.e. still needing agreement and being signed off by Cabinet
- The combined categories (renamed as 'Local Community' projects), are outlined in Appendix 2.
- **Timing and notice of the application period / notification of outcome** – The 3 month period for which the applications were open proved useful in giving time to prepare the relevant submission material, however it also meant a long wait for decisions on the projects for some applicants. The important consideration is applicants knowing when applications would be accepted and having time to prepare.
- The recommendation is that we set a more definite timetable so that applicants can prepare submissions and have less time waiting to hear the outcomes.
- It is proposed that the following schedule is implemented:

Application dates:

Advertise – Asap

1st Round - Start: 01/01/2022 Close: 01/02/2022 SP Meeting Early March (TBC) Funding allocated by Mid/End March

2nd Round - Start 01/07/2022 Close:01/08/2022 Funding Allocated by Mid/End Sept.

Other issues

- There were teething troubles with the administration of the process due to the fact it was the first ever round of our CIL application funding. Systems were new and officers and members were getting used to the procedures. A smoother process can be anticipated next time.

In summary Cabinet is asked to agree to:

- A. **Combining the 'Local' and 'Community' categories to form one set for all proposals up to £50K. The eligibility criteria are given in Appendix 2.**
- B. **Creating a simpler application form** for the new 'Local Community' category to only include the following elements:
 - Match Funding Details
 - Evidence of Need
 - Evidence of support
- C. **A revised timetable for the timing and notice of the application period and notification of outcomes to applicants.** As follows for the following year:
 - Bidding round dates:**
 - **1st Round for submission** –
 - Advertise – Asap
 - Open for applications: 01/01/2022 Close: 01/02/2022

- CIL Spending Panel Meeting Early March (TBC)
- Funding allocated by Mid/End March

- **2nd Round for submission of bids-**
- Start 01/07/2022 Close:01/08/2022
- CIL Spending Panel Meeting September (TBC)
- Funding Allocated by Mid/End Sept.

D. To give effect to the above changes further consequential work will be undertaken, as set out below. **Cabinet is asked to delegate the final wording to the Strategic Director in association with the Portfolio Holder.**

- Update and produce CIL Governance Document 2022
- Amend process flowchart
- Amend application forms and match scoring criteria
- Create online application details in Keystone system
- Publish Infrastructure Funding List for 2022 (Statutory Requirement)
- Update CIL Webpages to reflect changes and review wording to make application process clearer
- Advertise application dates
 - Produce posters for community notice boards
 - Newspaper Notice
 - Internal Affairs
 - Notify Internal Departments/|Staff
 - Notify Parishes/NCC
 - Webpages – Corporate Communications
- Provide Guidance/training for interested parties/Parish Councils
- Notify Councillors of timetable for applications
- Set up online Portal for receipt of applications
- CIC / Councillor Training

4. Options

4.1 The options above offer a modest adjustment to the CIL funding scheme to make it easier for communities to engage and apply so as to add to or improve infrastructure for a growing area.

4.2 Other more radical options could be to:

- Completely re-design the scheme. This is not felt appropriate as we are only in Year 1 and have not fully evaluated all the categories of spend, and the current priorities still reflect corporate priorities.
- No changes – This would fail to respond to the difficulties for applicants, and not help a more efficient processing for officers / time saving.

5. Policy implications

5.1 None as the broad direction is still the same. We are fulfilling the commitment to communities to engage and apply so as to add to or improve infrastructure for a growing area.

6. Financial implications

6.1 There is sufficient funding available to fund further applications, and the scoring mechanism provides a possibility of prioritizing bids should the scheme be over subscribed.

7. Personnel implications

7.1 None specifically, but it should enable officer time to be more efficiently used.

8. Statutory implications

8.1 Our spending and governance needs to conform to the relevant Regulations.

9. Risk Management implications

9.1 None specifically. Monitoring of spending and more particularly delivery is important to ensure money is directed to improved infrastructure in the Borough.

10. Corporate priorities

10.1 The proposals in the document are firmly referenced back to the Corporate priorities.

11 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

(Pre-screening report template attached)

12 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations Granted

12.1. None.

13. Conclusion

13.1 Some modest changes to the application categories (although not the criteria) are proposed to aid the application process, and a clearer timetable for the next round will be set out.

14. Background papers

Borough Council CIL Spending Panel notes and agendas outline the consideration of the particular proposal.

Appendix 1

CIL Spending – Notes on recent grant applications processes / potential action points

Subject / aspect of the process	Comment / Issues ?	Action <i>(Highlighted points discussed in main report)</i>
Application submission Streamlining the application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We clearly set out categories of projects, but some applications didn't reflect the right categories. Could we simplify advice on how to apply? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can we simplify / streamline the application process? Combine some categories to simplify the application process.
Post application submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great deal of telephone / email traffic on needing help to apply / fill in forms. Time consuming to service. Pressure from applicants on needing a decision for projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced use of the website
CIL Spending Panel / internal processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIL Spending Panel consideration of grant applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of material was clear / comprehensive Decision making straightforward. More clarity for subsequent internal BC processes. Post decision processes took longer than anticipated given first time nature of the exercise. One off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can we simplify / streamline? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting Agreement details. communicating to applicants As above combine categories
Communications on outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very important to ensure clear communications. There was press coverage post Spending Panel meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Comms engaged early.
Grant categories / priorities – new / flexibility of spending ideas / priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x3 levels of projects, with different criteria for each. People didn't always read the guidance. Are priorities still relevant? Are there other potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can we simplify criteria? Should criteria be expanded? Categories themselves are quite wide already, suggest no change but

	categories?	<p>continue to monitor types of applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining categories outlined above.
Next round – when, whom, how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated that we would undertake x2 rounds each year. • The number of applications was surprising and a challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce towards the end of the year?
Timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last time we gave 3 months for applicants to apply, would a shorter period be appropriate? • Another round when? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest another 3 months period? • Include an announcement
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious about the officer effort required to launch another round of bids / application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to ensure internally that sufficient time is available to service the grant applications / spending / implementation.

Appendix 2

Local Community Projects

The current list of projects eligible for funding and the eligibility criteria are:

Education - Improving social mobility and inclusion to work with partners to improve education attainment levels and the skills of local people.

Health - Improving social mobility and inclusion by continuing to assist our residents to maximise their opportunities by accessing the support and services they are entitled to.

Economic Development - Delivering growth in the economy and with local housing to promote the borough as a vibrant place in which to live, to do business and as a leading visitor and cultural destination.

Community Facilities - Creating and maintaining good quality places that make a positive difference to people's lives to maintain accessible, clean, pleasant and safe public places and communities.

Green Infrastructure - Helping to improve the health and well-being of our communities by supporting our local communities to be healthy and more active

Open Space and Leisure - Creating and maintaining good quality places that make a positive difference to people's lives to maintain accessible, clean, pleasant and safe public places and communities and help to improve the health and well-being of our communities

Community Transport - Creating and maintaining good quality places that make a positive difference to people's lives and helping to improve the health and well-being of our communities by providing early help and support to communities and individuals who are vulnerable.

Applications for funding up to a CIL contribution limit of £50K

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Question	Answer	Comments			
<p>2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is new or is favouring a particular service/function?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>CIL Infrastructure Grant proposal</p>			
	<p>Existing scheme under which a grant is considered.</p>	<p>(delete as appropriate)</p>			
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations</p>	<p>The NSPF continues to provide an important function in delivering sustainable local plans capable of supporting housing and economic growth together with the necessary enabling infrastructure and service provision. Cross-boundary cooperation is a cornerstone of the Duty to Cooperate and of the NSPF; and is of particular importance in post-Covid recovery. It is also a statutory obligation.</p>				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Gender			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief			x	
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Other (e.g., low income)			x	

community or denying opportunities to another?		
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No	The specific grant application is judged to be contributing to the educational (and indirect recreational) provision in respect of a growing population in the Borough.
5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	Actions: None
		Actions agreed by EWG member: Claire Dorgan Sent 06/10
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>		
Assessment completed by:		
Name	Alan Gomm	
Job title	Planning Policy Manager	
Date	26 August /2021	