

Report to Walsall South Area Panel

Funding Procedures

1. Context

- 1.1 Following the decision at Council to delegate decisions regarding any funding applications to Area Panels, rather than Area Managers, the following procedure is proposed and recommended, in order to ensure that any project applications are progressed within timeframes and within audit, legal, procurement and financial procedures.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Area Panel notes that they have authority to make decisions on Area Partnership funding, where allocated to an Area Partnership area by the Council.
- 2.2 That the Area Panel approves delegated authority, to the relevant Area Manager for any urgent projects, up to the value of £500, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and relevant Ward Members.

3. Process

- 3.1 Funding applications will be received by Area Managers, which will be assessed against the current criteria before being recommended to Area Panels for consideration, in line with the procedures, which are that:
- Applications are robust and financially viable and the application form has been fully completed and all requirements have been answered robustly
 - Applications meet the criteria set out within the Area Plans, in that they address one or more of the Area Plan priorities
 - Applications are made by organisations that are formally constituted and are able to provide evidence of their constitution and that they have a bank account, signed by at least two people from their governance board
 - Applicants can provide evidence of their bank account details, with signatories, so that we are able to reimburse
 - Applicants are aware that they are required to defray their expenditure before making any claim for reimbursement, which must be accompanied by robust evidence of expenditure and outcomes / milestones
 - Applicants are aware of the funding process, in terms that they are required to complete a project application form, will receive an approval letter and grant agreement setting out the funding process and what they are required to provide, that they will be required to complete a claim form setting out what they have achieved and providing robust evidence (as detailed above) before any payment is made and that projects were delivered on time and within budget

- Applicants must adhere to the processes set out in the Applicant Notes
- Any application must identify where they have applied for any other funding to meet the financial need of the project and if this is the case, that they are able to provide evidence that they have secured / applied for this funding (this will be considered by Area Managers, in consultation with the Partnership Manager, on a case by case basis, for example, start up projects)
- Projects are not live until all paperwork is in place and signed
- Any project suspected of fraud will be suspended whilst an investigation takes place and funding could be withdrawn

3.2 Any funding applications that are provided to Area Managers will not be forwarded to the Area Panel for consideration, unless the above criteria are met and will be issued with a rejection letter, stating the reasons for not progressing the application at that stage and areas that require further attention if appropriate.

3.2.1 This does not mean that the organisation cannot submit another application for consideration.

3.3 Any projects that are approved by Area Panels will be administered through the Area Partnerships team.

3.3.1 If, at any point, any of the approved projects presents an issue, this will be reported to the Area Panel, via electronic methods (due to the need for expediency and to enable issues to be resolved, as far as practically possible, sooner rather than later). Issues may be that the organisation has not met required outcomes, is unable to provide robust evidence of outcomes / measures / financial information, financial issues, procurement issues, the project has not taken place within specified timeframes, or any other grant specific reason. In these cases, the Area Partnership team need to progress these issues as quickly as possible and may result in an organisation not being reimbursed for their expenditure if they do not follow procedures or are unable to provide evidence required. For information – all projects are subject to timeframes for submitting claims and evidence, which are made clear to applicants. Whilst we try to be lenient and supportive, there are times that we need to enforce our policy and refuse payment.

3.4 In some circumstances, we may be able to request a carry forward in to the next financial year where some service areas / partner organisations cannot complete the project within that specified financial year.

4. Funding

4.1 Each Area Panel has an allocation of up to £40,000 available.

5. Decision Making

- 5.1 Area Panels will be provided with a written report, from their relevant Area Manager and / or Partnership Manager, including projects for consideration and any comments from Area Managers relating to each project.
 - 5.1.1 Area Panels will either approve or not approve projects for consideration and give valid reasons why any project does not receive approval, which will be minuted as part of the Area Panel meeting, in order for formal feedback to be given to the applicant.
- 5.2 Any projects that are approved to receive funding will receive an approval letter, stating the conditions of the grant and the requirements to provide evidence within 28 days of the end of the project (or sooner, in case of any projects that are funded towards the financial year end). Any projects that do not provide the evidence required will not receive the funding allocated, until such time as the Area Support Officer, Area Manager and Partnership Manager are satisfied that the evidence provided is robust and auditable.

6. Delegated Decisions

6.1 Urgency

- 6.1.1 As Elected Members are aware, there are times where Area Managers are requested to fund urgent projects, (that meet the funding criteria) due to emerging issues within an area, or issues reported by residents / partners / Elected Members, or due to event dates. Therefore, it is proposed that Area Panels delegate certain decisions to Area Managers under certain circumstances, to enable projects to be processed under urgency:
 - Projects, up to the value of £500, are approved by the Area Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Area Partnership, with further consultation with the relevant Ward Councillors. The wider Area Panel will be informed of the decision being sought and by a specified date and approved projects will be submitted, for information, to the next Area Panel meeting
- 6.2 Again, any project applications are subject to meeting the criteria set out at 3.1 above, before any consultation / approval is sought.

7. Other Matters

- 7.1 Where project applications are assessed as not meeting our funding criteria, these will be referred back to the relevant organisation for further development, where appropriate to do so.

- 7.2 Where there are any anomalies after the funding approval, Area Partnerships will endeavour to progress projects. However, there is no guarantee that projects will be funded, if they do not meet the Council's financial, procurement, audit and legal procedures, as set out in the funding procedures, issued to applicants.

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