



Title: The Gateshead Housing Company Community Fund Annual Review 2013/14

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides the Board with an overview of the work delivered through the Gateshead Housing Company Community Fund in 2013/14.

Background

2. The Gateshead Housing Company's Community Fund was set up in 2007 by the Company and its strategic partners (originally FHM, Morrison's and the Councils Local Environmental Services – FHM and Morrison's have since been replaced by MEARS).
3. The fund was established to give grants (in cash or in kind) to projects or schemes that met its original criteria. Primarily the fund was linked to the decent homes programme and encouraged partners to contribute an element of their decent homes income back into the community.
4. Grants can be awarded between £500 and £5,000, with the fund administered by the Community Foundation.
5. In January 2014, Board approved a number of proposals for the fund to reflect the increased applications being received by the fund alongside emerging priorities. These proposals included:
 - Encouraging applications from organisations to support the asset transfer process
 - Explicitly excluding applications for sports kits
 - Explicitly excluding applications to support pitch or grass maintenance
 - Improving communication and feedback between partners, groups and the community foundation
6. The Board agreed that the fund should concentrate on three main areas:
 - Supporting projects that help tenants and their families overcome disadvantage by mitigating the impacts of welfare reform including areas of fuel and food poverty as well as capacity building of individuals

- Creating stronger communities by supporting community groups who are undertaking an asset transfer
 - Improving the health and wellbeing opportunities for young people and the elderly.
7. In addition it was recommended that the company and council should work more closely to ensure that the Community Fund complimented the work of the council's Capacity Building Fund. Since January, the council's Service Director for Communities, Neighbourhoods and Volunteering attends the Community Fund Meetings and the company's Involvement and Diversity Manager receives application information on capacity building applications.
8. This closer working relationship has ensured that we are maximising the impact of both funds, whilst retaining their distinct objectives.

Community Fund Annual Review

9. Over £61,000 has been awarded through the Community Fund in 2013/14 including both cash and in kind projects during 2013/14 supporting 22 local community projects and charities. This included 15 cash grants and 7 in kind projects. A copy of the 2013/14 Annual Review is attached at the appendix to this report.

Link to Values

10. This report relates to the company values of:
- Being a listening and learning organisation.
 - Being customer focused, innovative and professional.

Impact on Tenants

11. Organisations who apply for funding must be able to show how tenants will benefit from the proposed project.

Risk Management

12. By allowing the community foundation to run the fund on our behalf our risks associated with this fund and distribution of the grants are well controlled.

Financial Implications

13. The company's contribution along with the administrative fee are included within the company's 2014/15 budget.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

14. The fund is open to all groups across the borough.

Value for Money Implications

15. The fee charged by the community foundation represents good value for money, as the cost of employing a member of staff to manage the fund would be significantly higher than this cost.

Health Implications

16. A number of grants have been awarded to organisations who assist those with health issues. For 2013/14, one of the priorities was for projects which aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of our tenants and leaseholders.

Environmental Implications

17. A number of grants have resulted in improvements to the local environment.

Consultation Carried Out

18. No consultation has taken place as part of the preparation of this report.

Recommendation

19. The Board is recommended to note the annual review report.