

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 AUGUST 2023**

STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with information on the spend and use of the Stronger Communities Fund (SCF) during the 2022/2023 financial year.

Summary

2. Cabinet agreed the establishment of the Stronger Communities Fund in April 2021 (**Appendix 1**). The Fund, which is held by the Credit Union, allows Councillors to use an allocated amount of money (£1,000) per annum to deliver the objectives of the Fund.
3. This report sets out the final spend against the £50,000 for the 2022/2023 financial year, together with information on what has been delivered in wards on an individual Councillor basis (**Appendix 2**).
4. Members will recall that this Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 12 January 2023, when considering the six-monthly spend and use, supported the continuation of the pilot scheme in the 2023/24 financial year.

Recommendation

5. Members are requested to note the final spend against the £50,000 for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Luke Swinhoe

Assistant Director Law and Governance

Background Papers

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report other than those referred to

Shirley Wright: Extension 5998

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications in this report.
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Health and Well Being	There are no issues relating to health and well being which this report needs to address.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no specific carbon impact issues in this report.
Diversity	The report does not contain any proposals that impact on diversity issues.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	No specific groups are particularly affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	The report does not require a key decision.
Urgent Decision	The report does not require an urgent decision.
Council Plan	The subject matter of the report, the Councils financial standing and financial management, is critical to delivery of the SCS, but this report does not contain new proposals
Efficiency	The report contains updated information regarding efficiency savings contained in the MTFP.
Impact of Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. Following the establishment of the Stronger Communities Fund by Cabinet in April 2021, each Councillor is, each year, allocated £1,000 with the aim of :-
 - (a) supporting individuals and groups to enhance access to opportunities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes;
 - (b) investing in environmental improvements that enhance the local area to the benefit of the local community.
7. In agreeing to the establishment of the fund, each Member was required to enter into an agreement (**Appendix 3**) with the Council regarding the use of the funds which, amongst other things, stipulated that :-
 - (a) the process of awarding grants is open and transparent
 - (b) grants are made without prejudice or favour
 - (c) the funds will not be used for Members' personal or political gain
 - (d) Members will be responsible for ensuring as far as possible that the grant has been used for the purpose that it was provided
8. If there is any doubt about whether any proposals being made by a Member adheres with the scheme, the original scheme required them to consult with the Chief Executive who would review the proposal in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. T
9. This provision has been reviewed and the Agreement now specifically requires Members to consider whether the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members will apply before agreeing to the award of any of the Funding and, any potential conflict should be declared within the signed Agreement. Advice on this can be sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer.
10. The relevant Cabinet Member will also take responsibility for monitoring the details of the grant recipient and the purpose.
11. It is also the individual Member's responsibility to provide evidence of spend that tallies with the account statement from the Credit Union.
12. Councillors are able to pool their budget with other Councillors within their wards and more widely across the Borough if they wish.
13. Appendix 2 sets out sets out the final spend against the £50,000 for the 2022/2023 financial year, together with information on what has been delivered in wards on an individual Councillor basis and details of paperwork received to date.
14. There has been good use of the fund, with only £3,465.02 of the £50,000 remaining unspent, which has been reclaimed by the Council.

15. At its meeting held on 12 January 2023, this Scrutiny Committee assessed the value of the Fund and supported the continuation of the pilot scheme in the 2023/24 financial year, and, as such, each Councillor will be allocated £1,000 to deliver the objectives of the scheme.
16. Members have now been provided with the 2023/24 Agreement to sign and return **(Appendix 4)**.