

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
29 AUGUST 2024

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 2023/2024 financial year.

Summary

2. Cabinet agreed the establishment of the Stronger Communities Fund in April 2021. 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 spend against the £50,000 for the 2023/24 financial year, together with information on what has been delivered in wards on an individual Councillor basis **(Appendix 1)**.

Recommendation

4. Members are requested to note the final spend against the £50,000 for the 2023/24 financial year

Councillor Dr Amanda Riley
Stronger Communities Portfolio

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report other than those referred to.

Shirley Wright: Extension 5998

Council Plan	The report contributes towards the Council Plan through Members allocation of the Stronger Community Fund. The Stronger Community Fund might contribute to 'Communities' – Working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities' and 'Local Environment' – A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough.
Addressing inequalities	The report does not contain any proposals that impact on diversity issues.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no specific carbon impact issues in this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The report contains updated information regarding efficiency savings contained in the MTFP.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues relating to health and well being which this report needs to address.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications in this report.
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.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. Following the establishment of the Stronger Communities Fund by Cabinet in April 2021, each Councillor is 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.
6. Prior to the allocation of the funding, each Member is required to enter into an agreement with the Council (**Appendix 2**) regarding the use of the funds which, amongst other things, stipulates 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
7. Appendix 1 sets out the final spend against the £50,000 for the 2023/24 financial year, together on what has been delivered within wards on an individual Councillor basis.
8. There has been good use of the spend, with only £3700.30 of the £50,000 remaining unspent which has been reclaimed by the Council.

2024/25 Fund

9. Council, as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, agreed to support the continuation of the Stronger Communities Fund in 2024/25, however, all applications are now required to be authorised by the Monitoring Officer to ensure there are no potential conflicts of interest and that the fund is being allocated in accordance with the aim of the scheme.
10. Members have been provided with the 2024/25 Agreement to sign and return (**Appendix 3**) and funding is now being allocated and will be reported to this Scrutiny Committee in January 2025.