

TITLE OF REPORT: **Community Renewal Fund Project- Sunderland City Council**

REPORT OF: **Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Children, Adults and Families**

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to retrospectively endorse the action taken by officers in accepting funding of £504,280 awarded to Gateshead Council learningSkills from Sunderland City Council for a Community Renewal Fund project, following a successful bid. The project will fund third sector organisations in Sunderland to provide wrap around support to Sunderland residents with multiple barriers and difficulties to access statutory services, the community, training, and employment opportunities.

Background

2. The funding is from the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund as part of the wider Levelling Up Fund. The Fund is administered through local authorities. In May 2021 applications were invited from any organisation or business to bid for appropriate funding. There are four investment priorities: 1. Investment in Skills, 2. Investment for Local Business, 3. Investment in Communities and Place, and 4. Supporting People into Employment.
3. Gateshead Council learningSkills have a very successful track record of delivering similar projects, namely the LA7 and LA6 European Social Fund (ESF) Community Grants since 2016. From these projects it was identified that funding was needed to support the most vulnerable residents in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland with wrap around services and support. Bids were submitted to all 7 neighbouring local authorities under priority 4: Supporting people into and the bid to Sunderland was successful.
4. ESF funding will cease in 2023 and the Community Renewal Fund is a pilot for the UK Shared Prosperity fund to be released in late 2022.
5. A total income of £504,280 was secured. £55,625 of this will fund 2.5 FTE posts within learningSkills, £440,000 will be paid as grants to the third sector in Sunderland. Remaining funds will pay for a project evaluation and other miscellaneous items. The project runs from November 2021 to July 2022.
6. Rigorous application and approval procedures are in place to ensure grants are distributed fairly with very low-level risk of non-compliance. Each successful organisation will sign an approved grant agreement which will state the terms and conditions of the grant award.

7. Payment from Sunderland City Council will be made on a quarterly basis in arrears on actual spend of the project.

Proposal

8. The funding will enable Gateshead Council learningSkills to deliver the pilot project in Sunderland, with clear lessons learned that can be used for similar projects in Gateshead.
9. The funding from the project will allow 2.5 FTEs to remain in post. This will also result in a saving of £55,000 on a current ESF project, which can be used to fund further projects.
10. A robust evaluation using the Social Return on Investment model will extrapolate specific information on benefit to residents, communities, and the local area through the interventions within the project.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that Cabinet notes and retrospectively endorses the action taken by the Service Director, Education, Schools and Inclusion in submitting the bid and accepting the funding award contract with Sunderland City Council, following consultation with the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, in accordance with Schedule 5, Part 2 General Delegations to Managers, Paragraph (4)(e) of the Council's Constitution.

For the following reasons

- (i) To meet the requirements of the Council's Constitution
- (ii) To ensure openness and transparency with the decisions made by officers.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The learning from the project will be used to support the Council's Thrive policy aspirations.

Consultation

2. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has been consulted.

Alternative Options

3. Alternative options are to not sign the contract which would affect our relationship with Sunderland City Council, and they would have to return the funding to central government.

Implications of Recommended Option

4. Resources:

a. **Financial Implications-** The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there will be no impact on any capital or revenue budgets. Spend is claimed against actuals on a quarterly basis in arrears. If the project aims are not met, and funding returned, all costs can be met within learningSkills EFA and ESFA budgets.

b. **Human Resources Implications-** Existing members of staff will be deployed to this project with no changes to their employment contracts or conditions.

c. **Property Implications-** There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

9. **Risk Management Implication-** There is very limited risk relating to the financial element of the project. However, all expenditure will be reimbursed by Sunderland City Council up to the maximum value of the project.

10. **Equality and Diversity Implications-** Nil within the Gateshead area as the project is based in Sunderland. This project will have a positive impact on those with challenging and multiple barriers to moving forward with their lives.

11. **Crime and Disorder Implications-** There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising directly as a result of this report.

12. **Health Implications-** This project will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the project beneficiaries. For example:

- Improved physical and mental wellbeing
- Improved financial security
- Increase contact with families and wider community
- Access to jobs and training
- Engagement in statutory services

13. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications- There are no direct climate energy and sustainability implications arising directly as a result of this report.

14. Human Rights Implications- There are no direct human rights implications arising directly as a result of this report.

15. Ward Implications- There are no direct ward implications arising directly as a result of this report.

16. Background Information

The following background papers have been used to inform this report:

- [Community Renewal Fund Prospectus 2021-2022](#)