



Community Services

Agenda Item No. 5

Briefing Paper

Report of: Matthew Barker (Regeneration Officer)

Date: Wednesday, 4th March 2009

Open

Revised External Funding Strategy

1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing paper details the proposed revisions to the External Funding Strategy.

2. Background

- 2.1 Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) promotes and improves the economic, social, and environmental well being of the district in the best interests and for the greatest benefit of its inhabitants, residents, businesses and visitors.
- 2.2 The District Council is increasingly dependant on attracting external funding sources, in addition to it's own budgets, to meet it's own priorities and as well of those of the community.
- 2.3 In April 2005 the District Council adopted it's External Funding Strategy to establish protocol and aid development to all stakeholders and partner organisations that WFDC work with (on external funded projects) to be aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- 2.4 The Strategy states that external funding data obtained is to be recorded on a quarterly basis to ensure that funding is reported and monitored regularly. It is also made available on the Intranet.
- 2.5 An annual report is also delivered to the Corporate Management Team detailing levels of funding attracted in that financial year.
- 2.6 As the Strategy is now over three years old a review is required to ensure that it is meeting its aims and objectives effectively, and that the protocol is relevant and up to date.
- 2.7 Recently, problems have been experienced in reporting and monitoring external funding data. Information regarding funding bids have not

regularly been submitted to the Regeneration Officer.

- 2.8 In November 2008 the Community Services Scrutiny Committee established an External Funding Review Panel to:
- i) Investigate the process for selecting and applying for external funding by Council divisions.
 - ii) Review the process for collecting, monitoring and the reporting of funding data across divisions of the Council.
 - iii) Define the role and responsibilities of the External Funding Strategy and the External Funding Working Group (EFWG).
- 2.9 The recommendations of which were reported to Members at the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on the 4th February 2009. The work of the panel has informed the development of the proposed revised strategy.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 As the strategy was adopted in 2005 a lot of the information within it is now out of date. This is particularly true of references to made to other Council Policies such as the Corporate Plan. There have also been changes in the service that the Council provides with regard to external funding. A general revision is required to make sure that the document is relevant and up to date.
- 3.2 The most notable issue involved in the review of the strategy is the process of reporting funding bids. As mentioned, bidding activity has not been consistently reported, therefore, the main aim of this review was to investigate this and find a way of making the process easier and more of a priority for Officers making bids.

4. Main Amendments to Strategy

PROTOCOL

- 4.1 The most significant change to the Strategy involves the protocol behind the reporting of funding bids.
- 4.2 Currently, Officers making funding bids are required to complete Funding Intent Forms, which are then sent to the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section for recording.
- 4.3 However, the revised Strategy proposes that Officers send the completed funding bid to the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section. The Regeneration Officer will then complete the forms on their

behalf and record the data.

- 4.4 All the Funding Intent Forms have been revised as part of this process, which the Community Services Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet in February 2009.
- 4.5 A new Intent Form has also been created for situations where WFDC has been involved in a funding bid but is not the financially accountable body for any monies received. It is still deemed important to report this as WFDC Officers have committed their time and the District will benefit. This will require the Officer to fill out the form, but it is designed to be simpler and quicker to complete.

EXTERNAL FUNDING SERVICE

- 4.6 As WFDC no longer subscribes to a funding database, it can no longer formally offer the free external funding search service it once did. However, the Strategy points people towards sources where they can search for funding streams, in particular the Worcestershire Partnership website, which offers an excellent search facility for community and voluntary groups.
- 4.7 The Strategy also highlights the important role that WFDC has in assisting community and voluntary groups in finding and bidding for funding.

IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING & MONITORING

- 4.8 The Strategy sets out exactly why it is important that all funding bids are reported and monitored. This aims to clarify that the process is not simply for bureaucratic reasons, but is vital to ensure the Council's financial and legal probity.

EXTERNAL FUNDING WORKING GROUP

- 4.9 The Strategy more concisely defines the role of the working group and their function in the process. The Working Group, representing each Division in the Council, are responsible for ensuring that funding bids from their area are reported to the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN

- 4.10 The items set out in the aims, objectives and the action plan have been included to ensure that a monitoring framework will be in place for the recording of funding bids which will then be reported to CMT on a quarterly basis and to Members via the Member Information Bulletin and the Audit Committee.

- 4.11 The recording of this information will also be used to set up a database of all funding bids. This database will be made available to all Officers and Members. It will be a useful tool in providing best practice examples of bids and for identifying funding streams in which the Council has been successful in attracting money.
- 4.12 The action plan also sets out that training will be provided to relevant officers dealing with external funding. This will hopefully lead to a greater number of successful bids.

5. Recommendations to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1 The Committee may wish to:
 - i. Recommend to Cabinet the revised External Funding Strategy be adopted.
 - ii. Put forward alternative or additional proposals for consideration by Cabinet.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 External Funding Working Group

7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies

- 7.1 External Funding Strategy

8. Wards Affected

- 8.1 District Wide

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Revised External Funding Strategy

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 External Funding Review Panel Minutes:
 - i) 25/11/08
 - ii) 15/01/09

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