

Subject:
Strengthening Our Neighbourhoods: Area
Based Grant

Status: For Publication

Report to: The Cabinet

Date: 30 July 2008

Full Council

24 September 2008

Report of: Chief Executive

Portfolio

Holder: Leader of the Council

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for the allocation for the Area Based Grant allocated to Rossendale Borough Council to support strengthened and cohesive communities.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objectives.

- Delivering Regeneration across the Borough (Economy, Housing)
- Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
- Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
- Improving Health and Well-Being across the borough (Health, Housing)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- Strategic Risks – Tensions within our communities have the potential to impact negatively on the ability of the Council and partners to achieve

improved outcomes for local people and their quality of life. The focus on strong, cohesive communities is a key element of the role of Councillors as Community Leaders. In addition, Community Cohesion is increasingly a priority of national government and will be a focus of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment. Failure to adequately address this issue has the potential to impact negatively on the performance of the Council.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 In 2007 the Commission on Integration and Cohesion published a report called *Our Shared Future* which set out proposals for building integration and cohesion at a local level. The report identified an integrated and cohesive community as one where:

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country;
- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights & responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them and what they can expect in return
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment
- There is a strong sense of trust in local institutions to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common; and
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

4.2 The Council recognises the importance of its role in improving people's satisfaction with their local area and has begun to widen its focus beyond service improvements to include the well-being agenda. How people feel about living in their neighbourhoods – how safe, how connected to the neighbourhood, how satisfied with the services they access – are all important aspects of this. A number of National Indicators have been identified which begin to try and capture what people feel about their neighbourhood e.g.:

- NI 1 The % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.
- NI 2 The % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood.
- NI 3 The % Civic participation in the local area.
- NI 4 The % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.
- NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area.

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Rossendale does not perform strongly against these indicators when compared with the rest of Lancashire, and nationally. To support the Council in beginning to address the challenges behind these indicators Rossendale Borough Council will receive an Area Based Grant of £540k over 3 years. This paper sets out some proposals for the allocation of this money. The allocation is based on a four year spend profile.

4.3 Proposal

(a) Community Engagement Worker(s)

There is a very strong focus in Rossendale's communities on taking action for themselves. The role of the Community Engagement Worker (CEW) will be to support local Councillors in their work within communities, engaging with local groups providing advice and support. There will be some limited capacity for taking projects forward. One CEW was agreed as part of the new organisational structure in May 2008, with the potential to employ a second if the role is felt to be successful.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cost	41.3	41.3	41.3	41.3

(Comprising £29.3k salary, £2k running cost and £10k annual "seed corn" budget).

If 2 workers are appointed the cost increases as shown below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cost	41.3	82.6	82.6	82.6

(b) Community Events

Local events can improve the way people feel about the area and increase opportunities for communities to come together. Increasing challenges and costs in relation to insurance, health and safety and administrative processes are making it more difficult for such events to take place.

It is proposed that each Neighbourhood Forum is allocated a community events budget to support people meeting the costs of such events on the same allocation basis as the existing Neighbourhood Forum grant. Any application for events on Council owned land will also need to be considered by the Council's Events Advisory Group.

Cost:	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Year 4
	20k	20k	£20k	£20k

(c) Neighbourhood Focus Groups

In order to improve how people feel about their neighbourhood it is important to understand what people believe makes for a good neighbourhood. Although we have a lot of survey data for the borough it is not specific to our neighbourhood forum areas and doesn't provide much depth. It is proposed to hold focus groups in each neighbourhood forum area involving local Councillors

to explore these issues in more detail. This information will be used to inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plans. A follow up exercise is included in the spend profile as part of the feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

Cost:	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Year 4
	15k	0k	15k	0k

(d) Neighbourhood Newsletters

Neighbourhood newsletters could be produced alongside the Rossendale Alive newspaper. These would focus on local events and services as well as details of local Councillors. A budget of £10k per annum for 4 years is suggested.

(e) Environmental Initiatives Budget

A further £20k per annum could be allocated for the Environmental Initiatives budget in years 2 to 4 of the programme.

Total allocation

The spend profile for these options against total allocation is set out below. This profile can be reviewed for 2009/10 if the decision is taken not to appoint an additional Community Engagement Worker.

	Total £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £
Grant Available	540,000	95,000	175,000	270,000	0
Spending Proposals					
2 Community Engagement Workers (1 in yr1)	289,100	41,300	82,600	82,600	82,600
Neighbourhood Newsletters (2 per year)	40,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Increase Environmental Initiatives Programme	60,000	0	20,000	20,000	20,000
Neighbourhood Focus Groups	30,000	15,000	0	15,000	0
Neighbourhood Event Grant	80,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Total Utilised	499,100	86,300	132,600	147,600	132,600
Balance of Grant		8,700	51,100	173,500	40,900

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 Financial implications are noted within the report. The project is to be fully funded from external central government grant resources.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The terms of reference of the neighbourhood focus groups require an amendment to the Constitution. This will be taken to the next Council meeting

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7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 The proposals positively contribute to the Council's ability to meet level 3 of the Equality Standard and are articulated within the Human Resources Strategy.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The allocation of the Area Based Grant budget as proposed will, amongst other things, support a strengthened and cohesive community within Rossendale, enable Members to fulfill their role as community leaders and ultimately lead to improved outcomes for local people and their quality of life.

9. RECOMMENDATION

9.1 That Full Council is recommended to approve the allocation of the Area Based Grant as set out in section 4. of the report.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Discussions have been held with Councillors.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Not at this stage. An equality impact assessment will be carried out on the individual elements of the programme.

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

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Contact Officer	
Name	Carolyn Wilkins
Position	Chief Executive
Service / Team	Executive Team
Telephone	01706 252428
Email address	carolynwilkins@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Our Shared Future, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007.