

Appendix 2 – Press Release

New cash for local community projects

Local communities and voluntary groups are being encouraged by Bath & North East Somerset Council to apply for a share of £300,000 to offer constructive activities and projects that help communities tackle the issues that local people think are important. The £300,000 is being released from the £2.3 million Community Empowerment Fund set-up by the Council.

Small grants of up to £5,000 are available - the funding and award of the money is being made through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which is the organisation which brings together local public services, voluntary organisations, and community groups.

Councillor Francine Haeberling (Conservative, Saltford), Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council and Chair of the LSP, said, "The best ideas about how to improve local communities often come from the people who live in them. This is one of the guiding principles behind the Community Empowerment Fund.

"We are pleased that the Partnership is able to support local projects through this small grants scheme as the first element of the Community Empowerment Fund. We want people to play an active part in shaping the future of their community and make each grant go a long way and we look forward to receiving proposals from the community."

How to apply

Although the application process does not formally start until April, organisations are invited to approach the Partnership now for details so they can start developing their bid through cef@bathnes.gov.uk or call 01225 477669. More details are also available at www.bathnes.gov.uk/cef

To make things as simple as possible for local community groups, organisations applying will not need to be registered charities but must have a formal constitution or set of rules. Applications must also demonstrate evidence of community support.

The Fund explained

It was agreed by the Council's Cabinet that the overall Fund should be topped-up by £368,000 to £2.3 million by using a VAT refund it recently received from the Government giving an even greater opportunity for a range of local organisations to offer constructive activities for young people, support disadvantaged communities, help regeneration, and deliver local projects.

There are different streams of money that make-up the Fund.

- £1.3 million, including the money for small grants, is from the Local Strategic Partnership and is intended help deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- £420,000 - help disadvantaged communities, regeneration and localism projects;
- £150,000 – Youth Community Empowerment Fund
- £130,000 – Ward Councillor initiative

Further announcements about how the rest of the Fund will be spent to support activity in the area and build stronger communities will be made over the coming months.

The purpose of the Fund is consistent with the Coalition Government's Localism Bill which proposes to give greater public involvement in how local services are provided. The key principles setting the overall approach to ensure the most effective use of funds have been agreed. These are helping those who need it the most, promoting civic pride, local involvement in local situations, promoting democratic accountability, and investing for the long-term.

Some commitments have already been made by the Council to support Keynsham Time Out and Radstock Youth Centre, the Shout Out advocacy service, Bath Contact Centre, carers' activities including short breaks for disabled, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and for Victoria Hall, Radstock.

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Notes to Editors

The scheme is designed to help local groups to play a greater part in helping their community and to get involved in local decision-making. Over the two year life of the fund, £150,000 is available for capital spending such as equipment whilst the remaining 50% is for other costs such as training: groups can however apply for a mixture of both.

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