

WPBC Management Committee

11th July 2017

Community-led Housing Fund

For Decision

Portfolio Holder(s)/ Briefholder

Cllr Taylor, Housing

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

S Hill, Strategic Director

Report Author:

Paul Derrien

Statutory Authority

Local Authority Acts 1972 and 2011

Purpose of Report

- 1 To agree the council's spending proposals and priorities for use of the Community-Led housing fund.

Recommendations

- 2 To allocate the community-led housing fund of £430,315 to community-led housing schemes as detailed in the report.

Reason for Decision

- 3 To ensure that the Community-Led Housing funds are spend on appropriate projects to increase the number of community led affordable homes developed.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

- 4 In April 2017 the local authorities in the Dorset Council Partnership received funds for community-led housing from the DCLG. The funds received were

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|------|------------|
| NDDC | £238,057 |
| WPBC | £430,315 |
| WDDC | £1,365,432 |

The total national fund is for £350 million over a five year period. It is likely that there will be opportunities to bid for further funds in the future, although the process is not yet clear. However, it will be important to have

established a good track record in delivering community-led housing schemes to ensure bids have the greatest chance of success.

- 5 The funds are aimed to increase the delivery of community-led affordable homes of all tenures. The amount each Council received was based on the number of holiday homes in the area and the affordability of housing. The DCLG expect that some of these funds will be spent on building up capacity and expertise and helping form community groups. There are no time limits for when the funds need to be used.
- 6 Community-led housing is, as described by the DCLG, about local people playing a leading and lasting role in solving local housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities in ways that are difficult to achieve through mainstream housing. In Dorset most community-led schemes have involved a partnership between a CLT and a Housing Association with support from the Wessex Community Land Trust Project.
- 7 The Council were first made aware of this funding on 23rd December 2016. Half of the allocated funds were paid shortly after this time. In order to qualify for the rest of the grant a form had to be completed detailing the plans for using this fund. This form is attached at appendix 1, although it should be noted that our plans have evolved since this was submitted. This was completed in February and the remaining funds for the Councils were received in March 2017.
- 8 It is proposed that the grant for Weymouth and Portland is used to fund a partnership with the Wessex Community Land Trust Project (Wessex CLT), to increase staffing resources, to support emerging CLT and provide grant for capital projects and site acquisition.
- 9 A number of Local Authorities are in discussions with Wessex CLTs about setting up a regional resource. Wessex CLT are experts in the field of community-led housing and have supported a number of projects across Dorset, Devon and Somerset. This will cost £5,750 per year. The cost of this has been negotiated on the amount of DCLG funding. It is proposed that £23,000 is allocated to a four year agreement with Wessex CLT. We will be able to end this agreement if it is felt this is not delivering for WPBC.
- 10 An additional post to promote and support community-led housing would be required. This would work across the three Council areas and would be jointly funded. It is recommended that £40,000 is allocated to fund this role for a period of three years.
- 11 The bulk of the funding should be set aside to support community housing groups, the majority of which as expected to be community land trusts. These groups will, in addition to officer support, require funding to be an established group and to cover legal fees. It is also important for community groups to be able to instruct architects and other specialists to ensure that the community has control over a project. It is recommended that £150,000 of the funding is set aside for this. An application process will be set up for community groups to apply for funding and for this to be monitored.

12 The one area that is making progress in setting up a CLT is Portland. This emerging CLT is receiving support from Locata and Wessex CLT and has the potential to deliver affordable homes for local people. It is proposed to set aside £50,000 for Portland CLT costs including legal fees and professional help to assist in acquiring a site. These funds will be paid in stages when work is undertaken by the group.

13 It is proposed that the funding is allocated as

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Funding | £430,315 |
| Wessex CLT | £23,000 |
| Staffing | £40,000 |
| Portland CLT | £50,000 |
| CLT set up costs | £100,000 |
| Capital grant and site acquisition | £217,315 |

Implications

Corporate Plan

14 This project will assist in meeting the following objectives from the Corporate Plan:

Build strong, inclusive and sustainable communities that empower local people to influence and provide the services that matter most to them.

Secure initiatives that will increase the supply of housing and affordable homes that are built .

Financial

15 This will ensure that the funds from the DCLG will be spent in accordance with the plans sent to the DCLG in February 2017. By spending and committing funds for community-led housing projects then WPBC will be in a good position to bid for further funds in the future.

Equalities

16 All homes allocated as result of these funds being spend will be allocated in accordance wit the Dorset Home Choice Policy and any community groups set up will be open and transparent organisations with published rules. All homes provided will be designed to meet local housing needs, this will include an evaluation of accessibility needs of potential occupiers.

Environmental

17 These funds will allow communities to lead on housing developments in their areas. Community groups are likely to insist that homes are well designed, appropriate to the local area and to higher than normal levels of energy efficiency.

Economic Development

- 18 The funds will boost house building which will have a positive effect on the local economy. These funds are also likely to lead to homes being built in villages that will help rural sustainability.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

- 19 This will help ensure funds are spent on appropriate projects.

Human Resources

- 20 An additional post will be required to help the delivery of community led housing.

Consultation and Engagement

- 21 DCP employees have attended a number of events to promote community-led housing. This is likely to be a positive story for the Council and more promotion of this will help more communities to come forward.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - WPBC submission for community-led funding

Appendix 2 - DCLG community-led housing advice

Background Papers

DCLG Funding letter to WPBC

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Report Author: Paul Derrien

Telephone: (01305) 252447

Email: pderrien@dorset.gov.uk

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