

STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

4 NOVEMBER 2020

STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

4 NOVEMBER 2020

(MINUTES EXTRACT)

1. NEIGHBOURHOOD PROPORTION OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY – SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT OF BIDS FOR 2020 FUNDING

In attendance: Mark Andrews (Head of Planning Design and Engagement); Sheron French (Projects, Programmes & Engagement Manager); Ellie Dukes (Policy & Engagement Officer); and Councillor Mrs A Rolf – Cabinet Member (Stronger & Safer Communities).

The Board received an update on the Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) and considered a broad overview of the draft bid allocations for the 2020 round of funding.

For the draft 2020 allocations and prior to the introduction of the report by Officers, the Chairman recommended that, to ensure complete transparency, the Board should not be drawn to consider the detailed merits of any individual applications. Some Members of the Board represented the Wards from which the applications for funding had originated and may or may not have been involved in supporting the submission of the individual bids.

As a result of the report, the following questions and lines of enquiry arose:

- In comparison with last year, the 2020 applications appeared to originate from well supported organisations who, no doubt, had the skills and expertise to apply for funding. Previously, the Board had tried to encourage smaller groups and/or individuals to make applications and assurances were sought that everything was being done to promote NCIL within the community. The Board also suggested that further refinements to the process should be considered to strengthen the availability of support to potential applicants given that some applications this year had lacked the required level of project detail. The Cabinet Member suggested that additional work could be undertaken with, e.g. Parish and Town Councils to help identify smaller groups who may have projects suitable for funding given their close links with their local communities.
- From the report, the Board highlighted the six projects that would be reviewed in the New Year and sought further information from Officers as to what work had already been undertaken with those applicants to seek the full project information and costings. Officers explained the typical support that was available for applicants and the challenges that Covid-19 had brought about for this year's round of bidding. Officers also explained that some applicants were more proactive in seeking the support needed to submit complete bids. Others were not which resulted in the need for the post-submission work that the report detailed.
- Further information was requested on the allocation of funding and the considerations given to those applications, specifically, where there were obvious cross-boundary impacts from a planning development. Officers explained the current NCIL criteria and how it was applied, as simply and logically as possible, to projects that were located near to a boundary. The Cabinet Member also had discretion to take account of any projects that had clear cross-boundary or Borough-wide benefits within the allocation of funding when making a decision.
- The Board also asked how applications made for individual Wards were determined when they had clear benefits for neighbouring Wards as well. Officers explained that in those circumstances, the Cabinet Member would be invited to make a decision based on such scenarios. If no applications were received from an individual Ward, then the Cabinet Member could be invited to utilise those unallocated funds for a

STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

4 NOVEMBER 2020

lower-placed project originating from a neighbouring Ward but with clear benefits to those cross-boundary communities. The Cabinet Member recalled how adjoining Wards, affected by a development, could benefit from a project and how NCIL monies could potentially be jointly allocated. In addition, any reallocation of unused funds would always be considered in consultation with the Councillors from the Wards which unused funds may be drawn from to avoid depriving those Wards of potential projects in future years.

RESOLVED

That subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board made the following unanimous **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the **Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Stronger & Safer Communities**:

- (i) That the proposed allocations for the 2020 Neighbourhood CIL, as set out in the report, be supported;
- (ii) That further work be undertaken by Officers to aid the completion of six further incomplete funding applications as set out in the report and, where able to, those applications be reviewed again in the New Year by the Cabinet Member;
- (iii) That the Cabinet Member exercises discretion, in consultation with Officers, to make any refinements to the funding allocations as deemed necessary in advance of her Cabinet Decision Session to ensure this year's funding allocations are as beneficial as possible to Solihull's communities; and
- (iv) That Officers continue their work to strengthen the awareness of NCIL funding within local communities. This should now include additional consultation with e.g. Parish and Town Councils to help identify smaller, informal community groups that could still have valid projects to bring forward.