

Community Led Housing Grant Scheme

Cabinet	16 December 2019
Report Author	Tim Willis, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Helen Whitehead, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary:

Towards the end of 2016/17 financial year the Council received £598,918 funding from the government to enable the delivery of 'community led' housing. The amount received was determined by the amount of second homes within the district, and the aim of the fund was to mitigate the impact of this.

The purpose of the Community Housing Fund is to enable and support community groups to create affordable housing to meet local housing needs. This can be new homes or empty homes brought back into use. These community groups are integrally involved in key decisions throughout the development process, and play a long term role in ownership and management of the homes.

This paper proposes to establish a community led housing grant scheme of £100,000 offering grants of up to £10,000 to help community groups with up front costs eg specialist, professional advice needed to bring housing projects forward such as planning appraisals, financial feasibility appraisals and housing needs surveys etc.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the proposal to establish a community led housing grant scheme, and
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods to approve individual community led housing grants to Community groups.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money	There is a £100k cost to this proposal which is fully met by the Housing Community Fund.
Legal	This proposal reflects the general power of competence that the Council has under s1 of the Localism Act 2011. This section replaced the well-being power set out in the Local Government Act 2000. It gives local

	authorities a wide discretion to undertake projects and proposals for the benefit of the local borough and residents.								
Corporate	<p>Priority 2: Supporting neighbourhoods</p> <p>One of the Council's key objectives is to ensure local residents have access to good quality housing, which meets people's changing needs and aspirations that is safe and affordable. This funding provides an opportunity to help meet this objective.</p>								
Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 981 1406 1240"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td>*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>A completed Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at annex 1.</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	*	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it		Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant) ✓	
Growth	
Environment	
Communities	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In the government's 2016 budget a £60million fund was announced to support community led housing developments in areas where the impact of second homes is particularly acute. This fund is to enable local community groups to deliver affordable housing units. It is used to provide technical support, revenue funding and enable capital investment, to make more schemes viable.
- 1.2 The funding has been allocated between local authorities proportionate to the number of second homes in the area and taking account of the affordability of housing to local people.

- 1.3 The total allocation for TDC for 2016/17 was £598,918 and was received in 2 tranches with payment of the second tranche subject to completion of an on-line questionnaire giving indicative proposals as to how the council might use the money in line with government objectives.
- 1.4 Government advised that further allocations from 2017/18 onwards would be dependent on how the 2016/17 allocation had been spent. However, since the initial allocation there have been no further announcements regarding the fund.
- 1.5 One of the council's key objectives is to ensure local residents have access to good quality housing, which meets people's changing needs and aspirations that is safe and affordable. This funding provides an opportunity to help meet this objective.
- 1.6 It is important to note that funding has been made available to the council to help communities take forward community led development in their areas and not to act directly as a developer or to project manage individual developments. The role of the council is to act as an enabler.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 The purpose of the Community Housing fund is to enable and facilitate community led housing opportunities and the criteria of community led housing are;
- That the community must be integrally involved in key decisions throughout the process
 - Community groups play a long term role in ownership, management or stewardship of the homes
 - Benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.
- 2.2 The funding is to build capacity within local groups such as improving technical skills. It is proposed that funding could be used for:
- Developing a project plan - business planning and financial appraisal
 - Legal costs related to settling up the organisation
 - Engaging consultants to advise on land acquisition, planning, design etc
 - Consultation events
 - Site Investigations
 - Financial viability/assessments

It is also proposed that supported projects should be encouraged to exceed the minimum standards included within the council's draft local plan for all new homes to be constructed to code level 4, therefore helping to reduce their environmental impact.

- 2.3 There is considerable flexibility around how the funding could be used locally and Thanet District Council have committed to providing revenue funding for individuals or organisations undertaking or facilitating community-led affordable housing projects.
- 2.4 In March 2017, the funding received was allocated as follows:

- To support the work of the council in tackling empty homes around the district: Work is on-going to tackle empty homes, with over 150 empty homes returned to use over the past year.
- To employ a CLH officer to undertake community engagement and co-ordinate with community groups, new and existing: This role has been undertaken within the role of the council's Housing Strategy Officer.
- To fund an owner occupier empty homes loans programme: This has been established and 5 owner occupier empty homes loans approved.
- To undertake a review of housing needs and supply within designated communities: Rural Housing Needs Surveys have been undertaken in the villages.
- Provide loan or grant support to enable community partners to bring properties forward for development.

2.5 In addition, the council has worked in partnership with neighbouring East Kent local authorities to maximise the amount of CLH delivered across East Kent. For example, we have facilitated a number of training events and a Community Led Housing Conference. The conference took place in June 2019 and was very well attended . Feedback from the event was very positive.

2.6 The funding has been used to support the following detailed spending below:

	Allocation to Community Housing	Spent and committed to date	Remainder
Empty Homes	233,918	233,918	0
Management overheads	17,000	17,000	0
Community Housing Enabler	80,000	80,000	0
Empty Homes Loans	150,000	100,000	50,000
Rural Needs assessments	18,000	18,000	0
Community Housing Enabling Fund	100,000	0	100,000
	598,918	448,918	150,000

2.7 In summary, we have allocated £100k of the funds to offer grants, therefore 10 grants of up to £10,000 each.

3.0 Options

3.1 To establish a community- led housing grants scheme with a total budget of up to £100,000 to help fund up front costs e.g. specialist, professional advice needed to bring housing projects forward such as planning appraisals, financial feasibility appraisals, housing needs surveys etc. We have already been approached by a local Community Land Trust requesting financial support. Grants can be used for help to set up a group, for organisations to attend training to learn new skills, for costs associated with carrying out consultation to gauge public opinion, as a contribution with the progression of a development for example site costs.

3.2 To continue to work with our East Kent Partners to promote training, forums and events for Community Led Housing groups.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods to approve appropriate individual projects and schemes so that funding can be spent in a timely manner and in accordance with government guidelines.

Contact Officer:	Ashley Jackson, Housing Strategy Officer
Reporting to:	Amena Matin, Housing Strategy and Projects Manager

Annex List

Annex 1	Completed Equalities Impact Assessment
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Background papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
Community Led Housing Questionnaire Response to MHCLG	https://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/community-led-housing

Corporate Consultation

Finance	Clive Bowen, Finance Manager
Legal	Estelle Culligan, Head of Legal and Democratic Services