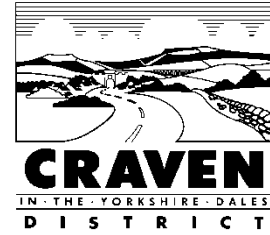


Policy Committee – 11th April 2017**COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND**

Report of the Director of Services

Lead Member: Councillor Richard Foster

Ward(s) affected: All

1. **Purpose of Report** –

To Seek Member endorsement for the use of the Government's Community Housing Fund Allocation and the process by which Community Housing Fund monies are allocated to specific community led housing schemes and further seek approval to top slice part of that allocation to the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategic Housing Partnership in order to provide additional support and specialist expertise.

2. **Recommendations** – Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the report and endorse how the Community Housing Fund is to be used within the Council's District.
- 2.2 Confirm that £18,179 of the Council's total Community Housing Fund allocation of £605,964 be transferred to the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Strategic Housing Partnership to provide additional support and expertise via a proposed 'Hub' in accordance with the decision made by the Partnership Board.
- 2.3 Grant approval for the Director of Services in consultation with the Leader, the Lead Member for Housing and the relevant Ward Member(s) and s151 officer to allocate Community Housing Fund monies to specific community led housing schemes in accordance with the criteria as set out in the report.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Government announced in December 2016 that it was awarding £60 million in revenue and capital via the newly created Community Housing Fund for those local

authorities to tackle the problem of high levels of second homeownership in their communities.

- 3.2 The Council has been awarded £605,964 from this allocation of which £302,982 has already been received and the 2nd tranche will be allocated in the coming weeks following our successful completion of a pro forma to Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) outlining an action plan for spend.

4. What is the Community Housing Fund

- 4.1 The purpose of the Community Housing Fund is to enable and facilitate community led housing opportunities. The criteria of community led housing are:
- That the community must be integrally involved throughout the process in key decisions;
 - Community groups play a long term role in ownership, management or stewardship of the homes;
- 4.2 Benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.
- 4.3 The first year of funding will be used to build capacity within local groups such as improving technical skills, setting up support hubs to offer advice, business planning and providing staff to review local housing needs.
- 4.4 Funding in the following years must then be used to deliver housing on the ground for local people.
- 4.5 Housing Officers in the sub-region recognised that that in order to deliver community led housing a structured and well planned approach would be essential. Most local authorities do not have sufficient capacity and the appropriate skill sets to move the agenda at pace.
- 4.6 Following a meeting of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Strategic Housing Partnership Board on the 20th February a decision was made that of those local authorities who received an allocation, 3% (£18,179 for Craven) of that allocation should be transferred to the Partnership so that they could create a 'Hub' that would provide the necessary skills and capacity required to the local authorities who received the allocation.
- 4.7 This 'Hub' would work alongside key stakeholders and provide the support and enabling services as set out in **Appendix 1**.

5. How will we use the Community Housing Fund in Craven

5.1 As mentioned previously in 3.2 above in order for the Council to receive its second tranche of the allocation we had to provide a summary of spending plans to the DCLG by the 10th March 2017.

Our summary plan submission included how –

- We would use part of the allocation as revenue to support to fund legislative, financial and technical expertise needed for community groups and further work with sub-regional partners to develop a 'Hub' from a pooled resource that can provide services which are not normally core local authority functions to support both existing groups and enable further community led activity.
- We would aim to buy land and or/build homes where needed and work with rural communities - currently three, in the district whose interest in community led housing stems from work on Neighbourhood Plans. Whilst these communities are at different stages, two communities already own land, including an exception site, which will potentially yield around 15 homes over the next 3 – 5 years.
- We would use existing plans within our Housing Strategy to deliver one of our key priorities, namely *'Work with partners to increase the supply of good quality new housing across all tenures and locations'*.
- A mechanism for agreeing allocations of Community Housing Fund monies that accord with national criteria (and the Council's successful bid) and in response to bids from community led housing groups is needed. This will ensure that applications from community led schemes are progressed in a timely and consistent manner.

5.2 It is proposed that bids for funding are considered and approved by the Director of Services in consultation with the Leader, the Lead Member for Housing, the relevant Ward Member(s) and the Council's s151 officer.

5.3 Parish Councils have been alerted about the Community Housing Fund and are aware of the funding opportunities available. A specific number of communities have expressed an interest, we will continue to work with those communities, assist with funding applications and progress schemes. We will also continue to work with other local communities to progress other opportunities and assist them with making any bid.

5.4 It is important that proposals for community led housing move forward swiftly. Proposals will therefore be considered on a first come first served basis, provided local involvement and a commitment to deliver new homes can be demonstrated. The fund is wide ranging and flexible and can be both capital and revenue. Bids

can range from a few hundred pounds (to buy in a particular expertise) to many hundreds of thousands (to help buy land or build homes); the latter being recyclable on completion and occupation of the homes. Bids are welcome from newly forming community groups to those that are well established and from those that have land already to those that have yet to find a site. Bids will be analysed against a checklist of criteria which are local community involvement, value for money and timescales for development.

- 5.5 Finally Officers will arrange a workshop for Members to give more information on Community Led Housing, progress on schemes and update them on the value of the Housing Partnership 'Hub' resource

6. Implications

- 6.1 **Financial and Value for Money (vfm) Implications** – The Community Housing Fund allocation is from additional funding allocated to the Council to tackle the problem of high levels of second homeownership in their communities. This funding is specific and is to be used only for its intended purpose, further guidance from DCLG on the rules attached to the allocation are awaited. We have already received the first tranche of funding and will receive the additional tranche in the coming weeks
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – There are no specific legal implications arising from this report other than the procurement of specialised services to establish the necessary skills required by the aforementioned 'Hub' to support individual local authorities and communities.
- 6.3 **Contribution to Council Priorities** – The recommendations directly contribute to a number of Council priorities, namely -

Enterprising Craven

'Determining future land allocations for housing and employment and securing affordable homes , improving infrastructure throughout the District and supporting business growth'

- 6.4 **Risk Management** – There are no risks associated with the report other than reputational risk should the Council fail to deliver on its promises that would might lead to no additional funding being obtained from the Community Housing Fund

- 6.5 **Equality Analysis** – The Council’s Equality Impact Assessment Procedure has been followed. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed on the proposals as completion of Stage 1- Initial Screening of the Procedure identified that the proposed policy, strategy, procedure or function does not have the potential to cause negative impact or discriminate against different groups in the community based on •age • disability •gender • race/ethnicity • religion or religious belief (faith) •sexual orientation, or • rural isolation.
7. **Consultations with Others** – Director of Services, Strategic Manager - Financial Services (s151 Officer), Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer
8. **Access to Information : Background Documents** – Not Applicable
9. **Author of the Report** – Wyn Ashton Environmental Services & Housing Manager; telephone 01756 706338-; e-mail:washton@cravenc.gov.uk

Note : Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

8. **Appendices** –
Appendix 1 – Community Housing Fund Hub Proposal