

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	26 September 2018
Title:	Developing Services through Local Partnership – Parish and Town Council Investment Fund
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:

1.2 Endorses the approach set out in this report for developing the County Council's partnership with Parish and Town Councils (PTCs) and the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC).

1.3 Supports the specific arrangements proposed to operate the PTC Investments Fund of £500,000 which was approved by Cabinet in October 2017. These arrangements to include:

- PTC Investment Fund criteria allowing for revenue and capital investments usually up to maximum values of £30,000 - as set out in sections 6.4 to 6.8.
- A PTC Investment Fund governance structure which will include a Programme Board and Local Service Development Team approach – as set out in sections 7.1 to 7.2.
- Applications for investments greater than £5,000 to be considered at Decision Days for the Executive Member for Countryside and Rural Affairs, with delegated authority for decisions below £5,000 to be given to the CCBS Assistant Director - Culture and Heritage.
- The formal launch of the PTC Investment Fund in November 2018 in conjunction with HALC and utilising their forthcoming Annual General Meeting for that purpose.
- Associated collaboration and joint working with HALC, the outcomes of which will inform forthcoming negotiations over longer term County Council financial support for the organisation.
- Interim core support for HALC, from existing P+R funds, representing a stand still grant of £63,000 for the current year, in light of the delay to concluding negotiations associated with this work.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The County Council recognises the importance of partnerships with local communities in developing local resilience and ensuring responsive and sustainable services.
- 2.2 Through the partnership with HALC and PTCs, the County Council aims to empower local communities and support greater participation in the delivery of local services.
- 2.3 A new Parish and Town Council Investment Fund of £500k has been created to support this and encourage innovation in local service delivery. This fund will look to finance new schemes developed through the partnership which help to reduce a community's reliance upon the County Council's resources. This is not a standard grant scheme but an investment fund and as such will target areas of need and opportunity linked to future service delivery issues. Such targeting and piloting of new approaches will focus on areas mapped jointly with HALC and this will inform the type and level of support given. The process associated with the utilisation of the fund is set out in the report.
- 2.4. The County Council recognises certain areas of the County are also represented by active community groups. The Fund will therefore be available to support properly constituted community groups, particularly in unparished areas.
- 2.5. The purpose of this paper is to:
 - Set out the context and principles required for effective partnership working with PTCs (established through a series of consultation events).
 - Put forward criteria for the PTC Investment Fund and identify the associated work streams necessary to support an effective partnership targeting the delivery of more services at a local level.
 - Identify an appropriate form of governance and support for the management of the PTC Programme and Investment Fund.
 - Seek support for ongoing collaboration and joint working with HALC in securing these objectives.

3. Contextual information

- 3.1. The county of Hampshire is served by 28 Town Councils and 263 Parish Councils, which vary in size, capability and capacity. They range in population from less than 250, up to over 41,000. The PTCs work closely with their communities and provide crucial local knowledge, resources and resilience.
- 3.2. The relationship between PTCs and the County Council is supported through the County Council's partnership with HALC. The Cabinet's continuing vision for the importance and future role of PTCs aligns with HALC's vision, which is as follows:

'The Association envisages a growing number of parish and town councils throughout the County, serving their communities as the first tier of local government. It wishes to promote a future where principal local authorities recognise the positive contribution made by parish and town councils to local democracy. It aims to communicate effectively with local councils, and respond to their stated needs, in order to help develop the capacity to deliver consistent quality representation, information, facilities and services for all local residents'.

- 3.3. The diversity and pressures upon County Council Services and Departments has historically meant some have aligned and worked more closely with PTCs than others. This variance generates challenges in consistency and clarity around the County Council's approach in progressing the partnership.
- 3.4. Current County Council Services and Programmes directly involved with developing closer PTC partnerships include:
 - **CCBS Countryside Service** – Maintain strong working relationships with PTCs in the; management of Rights of Way, Conservation Sites and Country Parks. The introduction of three Community Engagement Rangers (CERs) in 2015 has greatly improved this partnership, demonstrated by more than a four fold increase in volunteering on the rights of way network.
 - **Rural Programme (Cross Department, led by CCBS)** – Directly tasked with developing and supporting services to our rural communities, as identified by the County Council's Rural Priorities. Examples include the Rural Communities Fund which provides grants for local service solutions, and financial support to Adult Services Village Agent Scheme (see below).
 - **Adult Services** – Lead a number of initiatives that provide for vulnerable adults. Previous years have seen investment in the Village Agents scheme. This has now developed and looks to build local connectivity and seek further investment towards establishing local partnerships and community led micro enterprises aimed at supporting vulnerable residents.
 - **ETE Waste Services** – Specifically the Fly Tipping Strategy, which looks to standardise the approach across the county. Recent investment from the Rural Programme supported the launch of a CCTV pilot in the County's problem hot spot areas.
 - **ETE Highways** (with support from the Countryside Service) – The Parish Lengthsman Scheme was first introduced in 2010, initially providing funding support for two clusters of ten parishes, to carry out simple and straightforward tasks such as; vegetation clearance and sign cleaning on highways and in parish areas. The Council's support for this scheme has steadily grown, with support provided to over 160 Parishes in 2017/18.
 - **Legal Services-** HALC and Legal Services operate a legal helpline that allows Town and Parish Councils to access 40 minutes free legal advice

from the County Council's Legal team. It also enables these councils to obtain legal advice on more complex matters from the County Council's legal team at competitive rates.

- 3.5. Culture Community and Business Services (CCBS) are actively supporting the County Council's initiative to progress the overall partnership approach. This is a natural progression given the department's long standing relationship with HALC and positive relationships with PTCs through both the Rural Programme and work with the Countryside Service (as referenced above). ETE also have very strong and established relationships with PTCs and will form a key part of the ongoing partnership approach. A new dimension which is being actively explored after the May event (referred to in 4.2.) is the role that local councils could play in supporting Adult Services in terms of 'joined up' support for more vulnerable or isolated members of the community.

4. Parish and Town Council Consultation – Key Principles for an Effective Partnership

- 4.1. The County Council recognises that partnership working at a local level is dependent on ongoing consultation. Since 2016, the County Council has facilitated a series of PTC workshops and hosted round table meetings, attended by Senior County Councillors and Officers, Parish Councillors and elected representatives from HALC.
- 4.2. The most recent dialogue took place at the 'Parish and Town Council Event' in May of this year. This was a well attended event that provided opportunity for open discussions and explored the value of localised partnerships between the County Council and PTCs. It highlighted the positive impact made by the Countryside Service's Community Engagement Rangers and both the challenges and opportunities facing Adult Services which local councils could support.
- 4.3. The key themes and principles that have emerged from these ongoing discussions with PTCs are as follows:
 - a) Accessibility of information and quality of communication by all partners is critical to the development of effective local working.
 - b) Dedicated support is needed to enable PTCs to take forward service delivery; ensuring opportunities and risks are effectively identified and managed.
 - c) A realisation that no 'one size fits all' in any approach to PTCs. There is a strong emphasis on difference in scale and the resources available to the local councils.
 - d) Potential for smaller PTCs to work as 'clusters'. Many already work effectively in this manner. For example, the existing Lengthsman Scheme.
 - e) There is a willingness to take on greater responsibilities, particularly among larger PTCs. This needs to be balanced by caution over capacity, resources and funding among smaller Councils.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The budget for the fund forms part of the agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy which was confirmed by Cabinet in October 2017 together with the overall purpose of the allocation.
- 5.2 As this is not a conventional grant stream, but an investment fund, the money allocated will not follow the standard corporate grant application process. The targeting of resources will be based upon a mapping of need and opportunity undertaken jointly with HALC. Any allocation will be based upon a business case compiled jointly between relevant officers of the County Council together with representatives of PTCs and HALC. No expenditure will be confirmed or authorised without specific Executive Member approval (or delegated Officer approval for investments under £5000) in response to a clear set of intended outcomes.
- 5.3 In unparished areas of the County consideration will be given to working with, and supporting, formally constituted community groups. Any such arrangement would be subject to appropriate levels of due diligence in terms of the allocation of funds. This would mirror existing requirements associated with financial support to outside bodies.

6. Parish and Town Council Investment Fund – Fund Criteria and Programme Governance Structure

- 6.1. The PTC Investment Fund is not a grant scheme but will run alongside wider grant programmes. It will be strongly focussed upon developing and piloting new, innovative and sustainable options for local service delivery. It will initiate local solutions for services that are important to local communities and where the longer term County Council funding is under significant pressure. It is therefore clearly aimed at providing start up funding for initiatives designed to reduce reliance upon County Council funding for service delivery in answer to the ongoing decline in resources.
- 6.2. In its approach the County Council will look to build upon the existing relationship with HALC and take account of the principles established through consultation with PTCs and local communities (section 4.3). This will inform ongoing discussions with HALC over the outcomes sought by the County Council, as part of its forthcoming dialogue and negotiation over long term funding for the organisation.
- 6.3. Due to a delay in concluding longer term negotiations approval is sought to provide interim core support funding to cover the current financial year. A standstill grant award of £63,000 is requested and HALC have confirmed that, following the very sad death of their late Chief Executive Steven Lugg, they have nominated an acting Chief Executive to conclude forthcoming negotiations with the County Council. All involved wish to pay tribute to Steven Lugg's very significant contribution to the sector, from both a professional and personal perspective.

6.4 Investment Fund Criteria:

The fund will have three primary purposes:

Capital Funding:

- To provide capital funding (usually up to a maximum of £30,000) to existing Town and Parish councils to enhance existing or provide new local infrastructure. Evidence will be required to demonstrate long term sustainability for management and maintenance of the asset/s.

Revenue Funding:

- **Community Resilience** - Provide pump priming revenue funding for schemes which either support the capacity of the County Council to deliver its services in the local area, or help to reduce a community's reliance on County Council services. For example, schemes which support local communities to be more resilient in managing their rights of way and green spaces. The usual maximum pump prime revenue funding will be £30,000 per scheme.
- **Training and Support, Increasing Local Capacity** – To fund training and supporting initiatives specifically for local council and community members that increase the local capacity and ability to deliver key aspects of local service provision. For example, Rights of Way Parish training workshops. The maximum revenue funding will be £10,000 per scheme.

Note: The 'usual' maximum funding limits listed above are intended as a guide. In a similar manner to other existing County Council Funds and Grants, all applications greater than £5,000 will be considered at the Executive Member Decision Day (see section 5.9 below for further details).

- 6.5 It is recognised that different PTCs have varying levels of resources and reserves, therefore some flexibility will be permitted in terms of the amount of match funding required. This will be dependent upon the value and financial saving the scheme will create in supporting County Council services.
- 6.6 Given the nature and characteristics of building local delivery schemes, match funding 'in kind' will be considered. For example, volunteer hours in a schemes development and delivery.
- 6.7 The County Council recognises certain areas of the County are also represented by active community groups. The Fund will therefore be available to support properly constituted community groups, particularly in unparished areas.
- 6.8 Further consultation will be undertaken with HALC regarding the roll out and launch of the Fund, with a view to agreeing the final details by the 15th of October 2018 and with the aim to formally launch in November 2018.

7. Establishment of a New Governance Structure for the Partnership:

- 7.1 This will provide the strategic lead, decision making process and operational capacity required to meet the partnership's goals. Suggested composition and role to include:

PTC and Rural Affairs Programme Board:

- Membership; Executive Member for Countryside & Rural Affairs, Assistant Director CCBS (Corporate Rural Lead officer) and the Head of Countryside and Rural Services.

Note: This membership would form the core of the board and fellow officers may be brought in subject to the nature of applications and growth of the programme.

The Programme Board will:

- Lead the County Council's approach to the PTC and HALC partnership, oversee delivery and report upon the management of the PTC Investment Fund. It will also ensure that the overall focus and direction of the programme remains targeted and effective.
- Review the business cases for local service schemes as presented by the Local Service Development Teams (see below). Schemes requesting investments greater than £5,000 will go for approval to the Executive Member for Countryside and Rural Affairs. Those below £5,000 to be determined through delegated officer authority to the Assistant Director - CCBS(Corporate Rural lead).
- Provide a similar function as the strategic lead and decision making body for the Rural Programme and offer advice and support to the Rural Hampshire Theme within the County Council's Commission of Enquiry supporting the 2050 Vision.

Local Service Development Teams:

- Membership; Rural Programme Team (co-ordination and development role), officers from the County Council departments committed to developing services through the PTC partnership, representatives from HALC and members of PTCs looking to actively engage in the local delivery of services.

The Local Service Development Teams will:

- Primary Role – Develop and seek authority and investment to deliver local schemes which support and/or reduce pressure on County Council services. In doing so they will undertake:

Stage 1:

- County Council officers will work with HALC on a mapping exercise which identifies PTCs either individually or in clusters that demonstrate a willingness and ability to support local service delivery in key areas.

Stage 2:

- County Council officers, HALC and the PTCs (identified and engaged through Stage 1) will jointly develop schemes that support areas of service delivery at risk, or where opportunities for new ways of working exist. The team(s) presenting the business cases to the Programme Board and (subject to approval) lead on local delivery.
- These joint Departmental and PTC business cases will; identify the County Council function that the investment is going to support, how that function is going to be supported as a result of the investment and through monitoring and review, report upon the viability and cost versus benefit to the County Council of expanding the scheme beyond the initial pilot area/s.
- Secondary Role - To develop and present to the Board solutions addressing the existing barriers to local service delivery as identified in PTC consultations (see section 4.3), specifically:
 - The improvement of communications between the County Council and PTCs for example, understanding key contact points and associated barriers.
 - The availability and access of essential information for PTCs, for example online toolkits.
 - Viability of developing dedicated support models for PTCs looking to actively engage in local delivery, for example review of the successes of the Countryside's Community Engagement Ranger model.

Note: The resources required to support the operational needs of these groups is to be identified during their development and funding approval to be sought through the Programme Board.

- 7.2 It is felt that the combination of a targeted service development team approach coupled with the support and direction of a programme board offers a form of governance most likely to deliver positive results.

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy	24.03.2014
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Cabinet on 16 October 2017	16.10.2017
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The proposal is expected to support all members of the community in maintaining access to important services and as such no negative impacts are anticipated.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Not applicable.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Supporting and facilitating local solutions helps address the logistic challenges behind service provision in rural areas, thus positively impacting transport needs

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The paper promotes the culture of self help and looks to develop local resilience enabling communities to adapt and respond to local challenges