

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Scrutiny Committee – 15 January 2019

Call-in, by Councillors Libby Lisgo and Richard Lees, of the decision made by Executive Councillor Jane Warmington to agree to the appointment of Somerset Community Foundation to manage the processing of the TDBC Partnerships Grants Fund through a variation of the existing services contract.

Executive Councillor Jane Warmington's decision announced via an all councillor email on 7 December 2018 was as follows:-

“Seeking approval further to a decision made on the above date, for the appointment of Somerset Community Foundation to manage the processing of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Partnership grants fund through a variation of the existing Services Contract.

The Partnership Grants Fund has been managed internally by Council officers to date and for the year 2018-19 grants were awarded to eight organisations totalling £178,920.00. Owing to changes in structure and personnel at the Council it is no longer sustainable to continue to deliver the Grants Fund in-house. The Council does not want the opportunities for Voluntary & Community Sector organisations to apply for funding to disappear and it is expected that a significant amount of funding will be made available for the year 2019-20.

In order to make the most effective use of all the grant schemes the Council needs to ensure that applicants can maximise match funding from other funders for their projects in the district. Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) has a proven track record for maximising match funding for local authority grants and already manage various small grant fund programmes on behalf of the Council through contractual arrangements which have proved to be successful.

Authority is now sought to include within the grant funds that SCF manage, the Partnership Grants Fund which has previously been administered in-house. SCF will carry out services relating to the promotion of the Fund, call for and receipt of applications, initial analysis and providing recommendations to the Council's Grants Panel. This is similar to services they already provide for other grant funds and they have proved to be an invaluable partner in assisting the Council with these processes.

The total amount available to be distributed through the Partnership Grants Fund process will be allocated during the budget setting process in February 2019 and shall be notified to SCF at that time.

This decision has now been called in by Councillors Libby Lisgo and Richard Lees for the reasons set out below:-

- (i) A lack of detailed information and concern about the unintended consequences of this change which is felt deserve a public explanation,
- (ii) A lack of discussion over the principle of using an external organisation for this, concerns around transparency and reporting back to Members. More

detail required on how this will be reported back to the Council and how it is ensured any funds are equitably distributed?

- (iii) How the overall picture of the utilisation of this and the other funds managed by Somerset Community Foundation are managed across the area.

Once the Scrutiny Committee has heard the full debate on this matter, it will have two options open to it:-

- (1) To support the challenge and refer the decision for further consideration** (stating the grounds for justifying that request) – where the matter will be considered again by Executive Councillor Warmington.
- (2) To decide to take no further action** – in which case the decision of the Executive Councillor Warmington of 7 December 2018 will stand.

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Appendix A – Decision Form signed on 01/10/2018 and published 07/12/2018

Appendix B – Call-In Request Form submitted 13/12/2018

Appendix C – Background Information submitted to Councillor Lisgo via email on 13/12/18