

Finance Committee Meeting 18 June 2019
Agenda Item 9:
Report of Community Connector Task and Finish Group

Background

1. At the last meeting of the Finance Committee (28 May 2019), it was agreed to recommend to Full Council that Ryde Town Council (RTC) enter into an agreement with the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) to receive a grant of £20,000, which would be match-funded by RTC to fund a one-year post of Community Connector, and that RTC would then provide a grant of £40,000 to Aspire Ryde to deliver the project.
2. This recommendation was approved by Full Council on 3 June 2019.
3. The purpose of this report is to update members on action taken since the Full Council meeting and to request them to approve the two proposed grant agreements, one between RTC and IWC and the other between RTC and Aspire Ryde, attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

Action taken since Full Council meeting

1. The Task and Finish Group met on 5 June to discuss the details of the agreements with IWC and Aspire. It was agreed to: (i) to liaise with the IWC to finalise the draft agreement already received; and (ii) to use the agreement with the IWC as a basis for the agreement with Aspire but to seek advice from Community Action Isle of Wight and RTC's Procurement Officer to ensure this was the appropriate approach.
2. A final agreement between RTC and IWC has now been produced and is attached as Appendix 1.
3. Advice has been sought from the Chief Executive of Community Action, Mike Bulpitt, regarding the agreement with Aspire. He confirmed that it is appropriate to use the grant agreement between the IWC and RTC as the basis of grant agreement that will now be required between RTC and the provider, Aspire. RTC will essentially be granting the total monies to Aspire to deliver the Community Connections Service in Ryde and Aspire will take on responsibility for employing the Community Connector, insurances, etc and will also need to give specific undertakings to RTC about the funding and a range of other matters. Mr Bulpitt did express some concern about the expectations of the 'Heads of Agreement' (i.e. the expected outcomes of the project), given that it is only a one-year post. He suggested that we try to renegotiate this with the IWC. However, since the Heads of Agreement are based on the Overview and Job Description drawn up in consultation with Aspire and already approved by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 16 April, this was considered unnecessary.
4. Advice has also been sought from RTC's Procurement Officer. He also confirmed that it is appropriate to use the agreement with IWC as a basis for the one with Aspire but recommended minor amendments to the former to ensure that RTC's interests are ensured. With his help, a draft agreement has been produced and is attached as Appendix 2.
5. Aspire has been kept informed of the above and ensured its ability to deliver the project under these terms.

6. Freshwater Parish Council and Newport and Carisbrooke Parish Council have been kept informed of the above and have informed us that they are adopting very similar approaches.

Proposed Way Forward

It is proposed that RTC sign the two grant agreements attached as Appendices 1 and 2. The key points of these agreements are:

1. RTC will receive a grant of £20,000 from the IWC.
2. RTC will provide a grant of £40,000 to Aspire to fund a one-year post of Community Connector.
3. In both cases, the funds will be provided in two equal tranches, the first upon signing of the relevant agreement and the second six months later. The second payment will be subject to the provision of the second quarterly progress report (see 8 below for reporting requirements).
4. The Job Description will be fundamentally the same as that agreed by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 16 April 2019.
5. Although based at Aspire, the Community Connector will cover the whole of Ryde and work with all appropriate partners and stakeholders.
6. The Community Connector will be required to work with anyone, irrespective of their religion and beliefs or of any of the other 'protected characteristics' in the 2010 Equality Act.
7. The project will be overseen by a Steering Group, composed of representatives of RTC, Aspire and such other stakeholders considered appropriate. The RTC representative will, as with any other representative to an outside body, be elected at a Full Council meeting.
8. Aspire will be required to submit quarterly progress reports to RTC and RTC to submit quarterly reports to IWC. These reports will be presented to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will also authorise the release of the grant funding to Aspire.
9. RTC will have to take out professional indemnity insurance of £2 million to meet the requirements of the agreement with the IWC. This will provide protection against claims for damages brought against the Council 'arising from dishonesty or breach of professional duty'. The cost of this is being sought from the Council's broker and will be reported at the meeting.
10. Aspire will be required to take out its own professional indemnity insurance of £2 million. It has indicated its willingness to do so.
11. The post-holder will be required to follow Aspire's safeguarding policy (for details, see <http://aspireryde.org.uk/governance>).
12. RTC will not be committed to provide any further funding for the post. It is, however, envisaged that RTC and Aspire will work together to seek further funding and the Finance Committee will have oversight of this.

Recommendation

That the Committee agree that the attached agreements with IWC and Aspire Ryde be signed and that, subject to any remaining due diligence, the first tranche of grant funding to Aspire of £20,000 be released.

Diana Conyers
Chair, Community Connector Task and Finish Group
14 June 2019