

Report to: Portfolio Holder for Housing  
 Decision Date: 9 January 2025  
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier  
 Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director for Housing, Health & Wellbeing  
 Lead Officer: Robyn Henry, Tenant Engagement Officer

<b>Report Summary</b>	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open, Non-Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Community Chest Year-Round Availability
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To set out the current Community Chest Grant Scheme and amend timeframe for applications
<b>Recommendation</b>	That the Portfolio Holder for housing extends the application window for Community Chest Grant Scheme available to all year round.
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	Continue with two specified time frames in the year for people to apply to the fund, limiting applications and tenant-based projects
<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	The recommendation will enable the Council to support via way of increased Community Chest applications, more tenant-based projects and wider improvements to communities across the district.
<b>Decision Taken</b>	As per the recommendations

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Community Chest Fund was launched at the end of 2021 and has been running on a scheduled programme to date. The fund is open to applicants for a few weeks, twice a year for people to submit their requests to receive up to £1,000 per project. The Community Chest Fund is designed to give tenants of Newark & Sherwood and council staff the opportunity to identify areas that may be made better, safer, cleaner, and greener by the injection of a small amount of funding.
- 1.2 The money is provided from the Housing Revenue Account so must be spent on improving the amenities of social housing tenants or areas which social housing tenants' use.

- 1.3 The scheme has received 65 approved applications and spent just under £47,000 over the 3 years. Applications have varied from improving communal gardens, organising a spruce up day at South View in Newark, providing tenants with garden tools to grow their own vegetable, having entertainers in our extra care housing schemes, fitting more notice boards and helping new community groups start up, to name just a few of the projects.
- 1.4 The grant can be used to support a range of projects that will specifically improve amenities in or around social housing areas, including projects with the aim of:
- Resolving community identified issues.
  - Reducing anti-social behaviour around social housing.
  - Supporting safety and security measures.
  - Increasing wellbeing and mental health of tenants.
  - Tackling issues relating to waste management, litter and dog fouling.
  - Helping vulnerable groups or individuals.
  - Supporting tenants into education, learning and volunteering opportunities.
- 1.5 When the Community Chest fund is open, the Tenant Engagement team record the applications received, what project the applicant is requesting and the amount being requested. A meeting is then held with the Community Chest panel to decide on whether the applicants have met the criteria for their requested amount. The panel is made up of two tenant engagement officers, two tenants and two councillors, one being the portfolio holder for housing.
- 1.6 When an application is accepted or declined, the tenant engagement team go back to the applicants and let them know the outcome. The tenant engagement team then facilitate purchasing the materials/event for the applicants to help achieve the end goal.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposal is to make the fund open for application all year round. Benefits identified by involved tenants are:
- Increase accessibility to the fund so projects can be implemented quickly.
  - Enables the scheme to be used in conjunction with other funding schemes to increase groups accessibility to more funding pots - widening the scope and benefit of projects
  - Encourages wider participation through knowledge of the fund and be advertised continuously.
  - Becomes part of the regular work stream for the Tenant Engagement team.
  - Becomes a regular tenant engagement activity.
- 2.2 Quarterly panel meetings would be implemented to manage applications with the fund split into £5,000 pots over each quarter with unspent funds carried over into remaining quarters.
- 2.3 To ensure a fair approach to how the money is being allocated, we will record which wards are receiving the money and for what kind of project to help the panel make better informed decisions.

### **3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have referred to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

#### **Financial Implications (FIN24-25/3785)**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report, the £5,000 required each quarter is already in the budget, allocated as per which schemes get accepted.

#### **HR & Equalities Implications**

- 3.2 There are no HR implications.
- 3.3 There are no anticipated implications for tenants or applicants with protected characteristics – the fund is promoted on numerous channels and support is available with making applications if requested.

#### **Tenant Implications**

- 3.4 The proposal is endorsed by the involved tenants that sit on the Tenant Engagement Board as it is advantageous to tenants that there is better access and opportunity to apply to the Community Chest fund at a time that suits them.