

Copeland Community Fund Project Board

Minutes of meeting 27th November 2008, Bainbridge Room at Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven

Present: Councillor E Woodburn
Mr J Clarke
Councillor T Knowles
Councillor A Markley
Councillor D Moore

In attendance: F McMorrow, Copeland Borough Council; S Gorman, Cumbria County Council; Gillian Elliott, Cumbria County Council

1. Appointment of Chair of Board (for two year term)

Councillor Woodburn appointed to Chair the Board

2. Apologies for absence

None – all present

3. Disclosures of interest

None

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4. Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference were agreed as follows:

1. To manage, invest and distribute the Community Fund's assets in the best interests of the communities of the Borough of Copeland in accordance with the Co-operation Agreement dated 1 October 2008.
2. To make grants, loans and other payments and carry on such other activities as all the Parties think fit in accordance with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's Socio-Economic Policy but otherwise at the discretion of the Project Board to assist in the provision of benefits to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the inhabitants and area of the Borough of Copeland.

It was noted all board members present had signed the Members Undertaking.

5. Arrangements for Financial, Administrative and other support for the Board.

This subject was discussed, it covers issues including Appraisals, Claims, Payments and Monitoring and Evaluation. It set out what the work of the administration support might involve. A number of options and costings were set out in the report.

It was recognised that the Board will need to be clear about its strategy and programme before a final view could be taken on the options

Discussion highlighted a number of desirable principles

- No new delivery bodies to be established
- The Fund should be managed to be sustainable in the long term
- Operation will be low profile
- Aim for streamlined approval process i.e. light touch review if projects have been approved through other appraisal processes (e.g. NWDA)
- Delegation of some low value decisions outside board meetings to be considered. Delegations in agreement need to be checked to consider the scope for this.
- Focus will be on transformational projects as in NDA Socio Economic policy but need to allow for small amounts of funding for feasibility studies/capacity building.

6. Appointment of Independent Board Members

Agreed to advertise for the two places in Whitehaven News and Barrow Mail. Selection process must be open and transparent.

Appointments to be on a two year basis. Criteria needs to be drawn up.

No remuneration but expenses will be provided. Closing date should be the end of January 2009.

Agreed All Board members would be on the interview panel.

Everyone to be emailed to identify selection criteria.

Cumbria County Council will progress this action

7. Management and Investment of Community Fund Monies

A report by the Head of Financial Strategy at Cumbria County Council was considered. The Board felt that in the current climate only 'safe' accounts should be considered for investment. The funds should remain in such accounts until an investment strategy is agreed and reviewed at that time. It was confirmed no management fees will be payable in the meantime. The report recommendations were agreed as follows:

The Board:

- Notes the investment of £5 million in the Standard Life Money Market Fund as part of the County Council's treasury management cash investments.
- Considers a further report on its longer term options in light of decisions on the expected draw down of the fund

It was noted that the interest rate was at the time 4.81% but that average rates were expected to fall over the next three months to perhaps 3%.

8. Developing a Strategy for use of the Fund

- 8.1 A paper prepared by Copeland's Acting CEO was considered. It raised a number of key issues to be considered as a framework for developing a strategy. Discussion centred around these points and concluded:
- 8.2 After considering whether a 'community chest' type fund should be delegated to another body such as the Cumbria Community Foundation, it was decided not to do this at this time, particularly in light of the major annual donation of £500K recently announced by NMP. This position would be reviewed after 12 months. It was agreed that Copeland CF funding should initially be directed towards developing the capacity of Copeland based groups to access the latter funding and other community based funds. This is best done by supporting an individual or individuals to work with community groups to develop and deliver sustainable projects. Agreed that CCC would produce a paper on options for the next meeting.
- 8.3 It was agreed that within the framework of the NDA Socio Economic Policy as at April 2008, funding should be used to support delivery plans agreed for the Copeland area by either the Borough or County Councils.

- 8.4 The Board discussed whether eligibility for funding should be confined to certain elements of existing plans rather than all eligible activities. At this stage it was agreed that the Fund should look to fill gaps not provided for by other funding bodies. The flexibility of this fund was ideal for that purpose.
- 8.5 The Board considered the desirability of long term and short term investments. Whilst agreeing that the fund needed to be managed in a sustainable way the Board favoured some flexibility allowing short term investments. A more detailed strategy will need to be developed identifying how fund management risks will be managed in relation to different kind of investments.
- 8.6 The Board agreed not to rule out investments in assets, for example property, that might serve a purpose as a long term investment in a property portfolio whilst at the same time delivering economic development short/medium term benefits. Grant aid from other bodies for local projects could make property investment locally attractive despite the relatively weak property valuer growth market compared to high growth areas. Such ratios of other grant to Copeland CF grant and related proportion of asset ownership will need to be worked through.
- 8.7 Funding percentage rates to remain flexible as would size of grant at least to begin with.
- 8.8 Specific geographic areas in Copeland will not be prioritised. Funding to initiatives outside Copeland will be proportional to the benefit Copeland receives.
- 8.9 Careful consideration will need to be given to additionality as against the NDA's own Socio Economic fund. It is important that the CCF does not displace NDA funding in the area and the long term nature of the CCF fund management is recognised. NDA annual funds should be fully allocated before any CCF is agreed
- 8.10 Annual reports to the Board will be required from beneficiaries although more frequent monitoring information is likely to be needed by the accountable body (CCC).
- 8.11 The Board will not be consulting on its spending or investment strategy. As its spending will be in line with other strategies/programmes it is expected that sufficient partner support should exist before an application is agreed.

8.12 The Board will operate in a low profile manner. The public face of the Board will largely be through developing capacity to help the community access other funding schemes.

9. Communications

Press advertisement for independent Board members will go out so interest will be generated. A press release should be issued at that time. Draft press release should be circulated to all for comments.

10. Any Other Business

Funding for Drigg and Carleton Parish: Agreed letter should be sent to the Parish Council asking for their governance arrangements and how they will spend the money in line with NDA Socio Economic Policy. Explain that expenditure will need auditing every 12 months and a report to this Board will be required every 6 months. If this is satisfactory, payment should be made on 1st April 2009.

John Clark agreed to check the exact schedule for payments from the NDA into the funds

11. Future meetings

Agreed to meet monthly initially. Frequencies will be kept under review. Noted next meeting to be in January in view of Xmas/New Year. Potential meeting schedule to be circulated by Copeland BC.