

**Report title: Opportunities – Partnership and Funding**

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| <b>Meeting</b>   | <b>Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee</b> |
| <b>Date</b>  | <b>13 December 2024</b>                           |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b> (if applicable)  | <b>Cllr Tyler Hawkins (Corporate)</b>             |
| <b>Key Decision Eligible for Call In</b>   | <b>No<br/>N/A - scrutiny</b>                      |
| <b>Purpose of Report</b><br>For information, to provide an update to Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) on the activities associated with identifying and pursuing opportunities that support council priorities.   |   |
| <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For OSMC to note the contents of the report</li> <li>• In the course of their work programme, for OSMC to support efforts to embed consideration of partnership working and funding opportunities into the discovery and design phases of our programmes and projects</li> <li>• For OSMC to provide suggestions on areas of work where they believe further consideration of partnership and funding opportunities can add value</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Reasons for Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSMC receives a wide range of reports relating to the OSMC work programme, and are well-positioned to support early consideration of partnership and funding opportunities as part of their pre-scrutiny responsibilities</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Resource Implication:</b> None. This is a current and fully-resourced programme work.   |   |
| <b>Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> &amp; name</b>   | Rachel Spencer-Henshall – 4/12/24                 |
| <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</b>  | N/A not for decision                              |
| <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?</b>   | N/A not for decision                              |

**Electoral wards affected:** All

**Ward councillors consulted:** None

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes

## **1. Executive Summary**

The report updates on the council's efforts to pursue partnership and funding opportunities aligned with the Council Plan and partnership strategies, which include the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Inclusive Economy Strategy, the Environment Strategy, and the Inclusive Communities Framework. These frameworks guide the council's priorities and activities, which are influenced by changing demographics, regional programmes, and government policies. The report highlights the importance of external funding, which is increasingly competitive, and the role of the council's central corporate coordination function in enhancing funding processes and bid quality.

To address funding challenges, such as tight deadlines and the variety of funding sources, the council has implemented a monitoring system and invested in strategic relationships with key funders. Recent efforts include building relationships with the National Lottery Community Fund. Strengthening resilience of the community and voluntary sector is also crucial for achieving shared outcomes across Kirklees, and we are making proactive efforts to improve support in this area.

## **2. Information required to take a decision**

The report provides an update on the council's efforts to identify and pursue partnership and funding opportunities. It aims to inform Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) about activities related to identifying and pursuing opportunities that support council priorities.

The Council's priorities are set out in the Council Plan, which sets out the vision, shared outcomes, principles of our ways of working, and medium-term priorities for the Council.

As set out in the Council Plan, our activities as a council also contribute to the priorities set out in the four top-tier partnership strategies: the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Inclusive Economy Strategy (in development), the Environment Strategy, and the Inclusive Communities Framework. Further information about the Council Plan and partnership strategies can be found here: <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/policies-and-strategies/index.aspx>. These are in turn complemented by various partnership groups, including ward-specific partnerships and our high-level strategic partnerships, including the Kirklees Partnership Executive, Health & Wellbeing Board, and Communities Board. At a regional level, we proactively work through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to support positive outcomes for Kirklees.

Through our partnership groups and other local, regional, and national networks we constantly monitor the circumstances and context in which the council and partners operate. Changes of all kinds from demographic changes, changes in local community activity, regional programmes and funding, changes in government policy, and international events all have a significant effect on the council's and partners' activities. These are monitored at a team, service, directorate, council-wide, and partnership level, including through our risk management processes.

Alongside risks created by these changes, external events and contextual changes can also create positive opportunities, making it possible or easier to do something. One of the clearest examples of opportunities is in external funding.

By external funding we mean funding that comes into the council or a partnership from any source outside the council. External funding comes from a wide variety of sources. This includes national funders like the National Lottery and Arts Council as well as government departments.

To support the Council's efforts in securing external funding and pursuing the right kind of external funding, the council has had a small central corporate coordination responsibility for this area since 2018. This helps to identify and share news about opportunities, support collaboration and avoid duplication between council departments and partners, and provide support to improve the quality of bids for competitive external funding. This is particularly helpful when there are tight timescales. In 2022 this was bolstered with the recruitment of a full-time member of staff to support the work. An External Funding Framework has been developed, setting out the cross-council principles for pursuing external funding. It ensures:

- A consistent, strategic approach
- Collaboration, not duplication (internally or with external partners)
- Robust, high-quality applications in a highly competitive landscape
- Correct internal protocols are followed; IIAs used
- Optimal income generation
- Maximum impact for our shared outcomes

Community and voluntary activity (including volunteers, community groups, and faith and belief groups) is key to delivering shared outcomes across Kirklees. We provide proactive support to VCSE organisations through information sharing and working together on partnership bids where relevant and possible.

Support has been provided to VCSE organisations through proactive information sharing from the central corporate function of the opportunities available to them, via council services and direct to partners such as Third Sector Leaders (TSL), Fresh Futures and Kirklees Youth Alliance.

Internally, partnership bids are encouraged as they can be stronger. If a fund is identified which the Council and VCS are eligible for, the External Funding & Resources Officer encourages dialogue to explore the potential for collaborative funding applications and projects.

### **Recent challenges and progress**

Several challenges make the work more complicated and difficult. Tight deadlines have been a persistent challenge, particularly with government funding pots, alongside the sheer variety and volume of external funding organisations to monitor. Colleagues are naturally very busy delivering existing services, with increasing demand, which makes it difficult to allocate resources required for high quality, robust bids. The often-tight deadlines from funders can also be a challenge, particularly when time is already at a premium and the complex, time consuming nature of internal processes and rules. To partly address this, we have invested a small amount of money in a system also used by other councils that enables effective monitoring of a wide variety of different funders. Fund finding can be a laborious task. We now have the comprehensive search and alert tool, GrantFinder, at our disposal with unlimited licences. This tool is used by the External Funding & Resources Officer as part of information sharing activities and by key staff in each service to carry out their own searches. It has, to date, halved the staff hours invested in manual searches. This is also helping us identify opportunities earlier, which in turn gives us longer to consider the application and what we might need to put forward to maximise the chances of success. Other sources of funding opportunities include:

- gov.uk – fund finder and departmental newsletters
- Industry newsletters, e.g. research bodies, Youth Endowment Fund, and WYCA

Another more recent challenge is that government departments and national funders appear to be announcing fewer funds in recent months. We are unclear on the reasons for this but believe

it is influenced by three key factors: government budget pressures; the government undertaking a spending review, creating temporary uncertainty about medium-term financial commitments; and the development of further devolution arrangements, which raise questions about the way in which funds are managed. We are monitoring all of these through various networks in order to help us plan ahead. At the same time, we continue to pursue any opportunities that align with our priorities and our organisational or partnership capacity.

A discovery project in 2023 involved conversations with all directorates and we mapped where relationships with key strategic funders were strong and where there were areas for further development. Off the back of this piece of work, we have put additional effort into building a relationship with the National Lottery Community Fund, with further work in this area underway. Our relationships with funding partners helps in the following:

- Providing advice and insight into how we improve/elevate our bids
- Highlights where strategies are aligned and mutual objectives
- Provides us with early alerts to funding calls
- Opens up opportunities to proactively pitch for additional funding
- Provides intelligence and information about activity in the district to complement what we know through our services

As funding opportunities become even more oversubscribed, we aim to explore these types of opportunities further, building on those we already have with National Lottery funds, Sport England and Arts Council England. With this in mind, the project will require a refresh in the spring in response to new budgets, new challenges and opportunities, the expected increased availability of government funding programmes, and the pending relaunch of the National Lottery Community Fund strategy.

Accessible internal resources will soon be published which provide visual, easy to understand guides and checklists which will help officers to:

- take a step-by-step approach to the external funding process
- take an informed, strategic approach to determine whether a fund, and its conditions, is right for Kirklees (the 'Go/No Go' process)
- develop high quality, robust bids
- navigate the council's rules and procedures, such as FPRs, CPRs, KDNs and schemes of delegation
- ensure all legal bases are covered
- engage the right support services at the right time ensuring a smooth, expedited process at key moments, e.g. sign-off of funding agreements
- understand what monitoring and evaluation is required of them internally and by the funder

Work is also underway on building a comprehensive database and dashboard for a real-time overview of activities, and on developing ways in which we can effectively support schools in accessing external funding.

To improve internal communication and accuracy of central records the central support function aims to set up virtual external funding groups for each council service which will ensure a 'Think Funding' focus, enable more effective two-way information sharing of opportunities and applications. These groups will also provide forums in which council officers can quickly access direct support from the central function, facilitating a more effective external funding programme.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

### 3.1 Council Plan

The external funding programme of work is a key deliverable of Priority 1 of the [current council plan](#) – “Address our financial position in a fair and balanced way.”

The deliverable states “Increase the amount of new external funding for projects in Kirklees, particularly through working collaboratively with partners such as the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Homes England and central government.”

In addition, the External Funding Framework sets out some principles that support delivery of the priorities and ways of working set out in the Council Plan:

- as part of the ‘Go/No Go’ process by which we decide whether a funding opportunity is right for Kirklees, includes a recommendation that any funded project should address at least one of the council’s Shared Outcomes.
- stresses throughout that a ‘*People, Partners, Place*’ approach is one of the keys to success in both the development of funding bids and the delivery of funded projects.

### 3.2 Financial Implications

Increasingly public services are delivered in partnership, and we can support each other to ensure sustainability of each other’s services. Our budgets are interdependent. Something we do impacts pressures on other partners, and vice versa. Particularly important for the community sector too, where financial sustainability tends to be a higher risk.

In-kind support alleviates pressure on VCS and aids their own efficiency.

The ‘Go/No Go’ process, by which we decide whether a funding opportunity is right for Kirklees, strongly recommends that the financial viability of any proposed project for which we aim to gain external funding is a key consideration, specifically:

- what impact, if any, the successful project will have on your service area’s core budget, e.g., delivery costs, staffing, evaluation, end of project reports and dissemination of findings;
- the application and project delivery are time and cost efficient for the Council

The Framework is also explicit that Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules should be adhered to at all times and the Finance team be consulted at every appropriate step.

If the Framework and Procedure Rules are followed, the financial implication of any successfully progressed funding opportunities can only be a positive one for Kirklees.

The external funding programme of work is a key deliverable of Priority 1 of the current council plan – fair and balanced budget.

We can’t rely on external funding especially in an increasingly competitive funding environment. However, external funding is an important part of resourcing our priorities and we are constantly looking for opportunities to use external funding to support the financial sustainability of our services.

### **3.3 Legal Implications**

The External Funding Framework is explicit that the Council's Legal Service should be consulted at every appropriate step, from project development to funding agreements, through to project delivery. If these recommendations are followed, there should be no legal implications.

### **3.4 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)**

While there are no specific requirements for the delivery of the External Funding Framework and programme of work, as well as ensuring Finance and Legal are consulted appropriately (as stated above), both do provide guidance that:

- The Audit team is engaged at the appropriate time to enable them to prepare for any requests from funders or other bodies
- Full use is made of Integrated Impact Assessments when developing a project and that they are used to provide evidence of equitable decision making, something which many funders now seek

## **4 Consultation**

In the course of specific external funding opportunities, consultation takes place as appropriate. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

## **5 Engagement**

- Broader partnership working, e.g. Partnership Exec, WYCA meetings, etc.
- Ongoing engagement with other councils to learn best practice
- Regular contact with external funding peers at neighbouring local authorities to discuss best practice, problem solving and potential collaboration.
- Regular contact with various third sector organisations, Third Sector Leaders, Police, University of Huddersfield and NHS to identify potential opportunities for collaborative bids and projects

## **6 Options**

### **6.1 Options Considered**

In production of the External Funding Framework, a number of options were considered around content and process. These have led to the Framework we have today.

### **6.2 Reasons for recommended Option**

- OSMC receives a wide range of reports relating to the OSMC work programme and are well-positioned to support early consideration of partnership and funding opportunities as part of their pre-scrutiny responsibilities.

## **7 Next steps and timelines**

- For officers to continue to embed the external funding framework, which includes continuing the monitoring of opportunities as set out in this report

- In the course of their work programme, for OSMC to support efforts to embed consideration of partnership working and funding opportunities into the discovery and design phases of our programmes and projects
- For OSMC to provide suggestions on areas of work where they believe further consideration of partnership and funding opportunities can add value

## **8 Contact officer**

- Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships, and Corporate Planning, [stephen.bonnell@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.bonnell@kirklees.gov.uk), 734 89 (01484 221000)
- Paul Mitchell, External Funding & Resources Officer, [paulg.mitchell@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:paulg.mitchell@kirklees.gov.uk), 778 73 (01484 221000)

## **9 Background Papers and History of Decisions**

Not applicable

## **10 Appendices**

None

## **11 Service Director responsible**

Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation