

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 7 June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER/S: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: External Funding Team Update

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update to Corporate PPB on the work of the External Funding Team in securing external funding resources into Halton.

The Report covers the following issues:

- An update on the team's key activities and priorities;
- Emerging issues in external funding;
- Funding statistics for the period 2021-2022.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Corporate PPB:

- i. note the content of the report;

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Report focuses on the period April 2021-March 2022; statistics are included for this period and a comparative review of the last five year financial period (between April 2017 and March 2022).

3.2 The External Funding Team's role is to help maximize external funding into the Borough. The Team is responsible for preparing medium to large-scale funding bids (primarily over £50,000) on behalf of Council colleagues, public sector partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, with the aim of maximising external funding opportunities for Halton.

The Team comprises 5 posts and in the period 2021-22 the cost of the Team was £149,615. The Team secured £13.4 in 2021-22. This means for every £1 spent on the Team, £89.56 was secured in external funding.

The Team focuses mainly on the following funding sources: Government, European, National Lottery, Landfill Funding, Trusts and Foundations.

Key functions of the Team include:

- Maintaining a strategic approach to funding to ensure the most appropriate bids from Halton are submitted and internal competition is averted;

- Undertaking funding searches for specific projects; bid writing and development of supporting documents, e.g. policies and business plans etc.;
- Dissemination of funding information to target audiences, mainly via the production of monthly Funding Bulletins on a range of themes, including a targeted local authority one;
- Lobbying funders, developing strong relationships with key funding bodies, and participating in key forums to ensure Halton gets its fair share of funding;
- Developing strong partnerships with Council colleagues, and the voluntary and private sectors where appropriate, to submit joint bids.
- Develop and deliver an Annual Training Programme for HBC colleagues and partner organisations to enable capacity building.

Team Capacity

The Team currently has only 3 full-time members; one member of the Team moved to another position within HBC and we have one team member on a short secondment. Therefore, we are prioritising specific pieces of work, for example, a Levelling Up bid for HBC and a number of functions have been reduced. For example, we ordinarily produce a range of 10 funding bulletins on a variety of themes each month; for the current period we will produce one bulletin identifying new and key funds.

Emphasis over the period 2021-22 has been on:

- Post-Covid recovery – supporting bids to secure funding with post-Covid recovery themes; many funders' criteria still relate to supporting beneficiaries to emerge from the Covid period
- Supporting the delivery and monitoring of Halton's Borough of Culture programme
- Ensuring the remaining ESIF (European Strategic Investment Fund) is secured, spent and monitored
- Starting to immerse ourselves in the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and associated programmes e.g. Levelling Up

Examples of schemes supported include:

- Supporting the drafting of a Levelling Up bid for Halton Lea
- Delivering and ongoing strand of Halton's Borough of Culture programme – Celebrating Halton's Heritage, a £200k programme based at St Marie's which runs to Sept 2022
- Supporting Regeneration colleagues on a range of schemes, including Town Deal for Runcorn Old Town/Station Quarter, Unlock Runcorn, Foundry Lane, Astmoor, Hydrogen
- Supported HBC colleagues with a range of bids, including Changing Places Toilets, Family Hub Transformation Fund, Transport for Loneliness funding
- Supporting the Council's Climate Action Plan with the identification of funding streams
- Led on the delivery of Halton's allocation of the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund and the Welcome Back Fund.
- Supporting a range of community-based schemes, such as Windmill Hill Big Local, Open 360, Nightstop CNW, Halton Play Council, CAB
- Trustee role & funding lead for Catalyst Science Discovery Centre & Museum Limited.

- Support a number of local and sub-regional forums, including Cultivate: Halton Local Education Partnership, Halton Heritage Partnership, Liverpool City Region Heritage Officers Group.
- Take the lead on Visitor Economy for Halton and on the Connecting Cheshire Digital Partnership.

We continue to look at how we can further support HBC colleagues to bid for funding for priority schemes in order that we do not miss out on any appropriate funding streams. The Team produces a monthly Local Authority Funding Update which highlights current funding streams available for local authorities.

3.3 - Funding context and emerging issues

3.3.1 External Funding Environment – Challenges and Opportunities

Much funding, including National Lottery still has a post-Covid focus and we are supporting a number of voluntary sector groups to access this.

Funders are also generally placing more emphasis on environmental sustainability /impact across all types of projects and programme; this aligns with the Government's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Team will be looking to ensure that all bids supported consider green measures in relation to their projects. We are supporting the Council's Climate Action Plan through identifying and applying for funding, including LCR's Community Environment Fund.

The Government is starting to release funds via its Shared Prosperity Fund, billed as the replacement for the European Structural Funds programme; funds released include Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund. The Team is tracking all of these funds and prioritizing bids that HBC decides to submit.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) is also the conduit for funding streams including One Public Estate, SIF, Town Centre Fund, Community Environment Fund and the Team supports colleagues to access these funds where appropriate.

The External Funding Team, working in close collaboration with other Departments, needs to ensure well-planned, competitive, sustainable and, where possible, innovative projects are put forward for Halton's priorities.

The External Funding Team aims to respond to any changes in the current funding environment and maintain knowledge of new strands of funding; the Team maintains regular contact with some of the key funders, including landfill funders, Lottery funders and European and Government funding bodies.

The External Funding Team is able to provide the necessary expertise and experience regarding current bid-writing best-practice and key funder priorities and act as a liaison point with the funders. In a highly competitive field, the Team provides a critical yet objective eye to highlight both the threats and opportunities within each organisational plan, project proposal and chosen funding body.

Case studies from the past 12-months in which the Team played a key role in securing and monitoring important grant investment to the Borough include:

Changing Places Toilets – the Team supported Property Services colleagues to secure £195,000 from this funding stream for the installation of three changing places toilets in Halton

Welcome Back Fund – the Team led on the implementation of this Government allocation of £293k to support the return to the high street, open spaces and visitor attractions and this scheme concluded on the 31st March.

2 x Ways to Work extensions were secured from the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) pot through bids drafted by the Team to the value of £12.5m.

3.3.2 Capacity and Demand

Demand for the service remains high; the Team received 87 requests for funding in 2020/21, many of which remain active with ongoing support.

The Team works to full capacity which means decisions need to be made at times about where to allocate support, allowing the ability to respond to new enquiries and priorities, manage tight deadlines for bids, horizon scan to ensure opportunities are not missed etc.; Importantly, the Team does not drive projects, but specialises in sourcing funding and bid-writing; the Team does not 'own' bids, the 'owner' needs to drive the project as the specialist in that particular area.

The table below summarises the funding secured by quarter in 2021-22:

Quarter	Funding Secured
1	£342,500
2	£12,660,000
3	£114,730
4	£270,677
TOTAL	£13,388m

Enquiries can be broken down into internal and external as follows: 59 from external organisations and 28 from HBC colleagues.

We are currently monitoring projects worth £36.4 million, have submitted bids worth £2 million and have pipeline projects of £3 million. Our pipeline list gives a current profile of the projects the Team will be supporting over the coming year; this pipeline is subject to new priorities being identified – should this be the case, the new projects will be discussed with the Operational Director and relevant Portfolio Holder.

3.4- ESIF Programme

The Team manages the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) on behalf of HBC; this includes both project development and bid-writing. To date the Team has helped secure £30m ESIF grants since Jan 2016. No further funding is likely to come through to Halton now from the ESIF programme.

In the last 12 month period the secured two further LCR-wide ESF grants to extend the Ways to Work programmes to the value of £12.5 million.

The Team continues to supporting the Ways to Work Programme

Ways to Work

The Employment, Learning and Skills Division and 14-19 Programme Team secured European Social Fund (ESF) funding to deliver the **Ways to Work Project**. The Team has been providing intensive continued support in checking and monitoring ILM spend, making quarterly claims to the Combined Authority, carrying out procurement exercise for specialist mentors/coaches, preparation for external audits, change controls submitted to DWP and close liaison with the Combined Authority Compliance Team.

3.5 Liverpool City Region and Cultural/Visitor Economy work

The Team continues to undertake some key work with Liverpool City Region and Halton partners in relation to Visitor Economy and Culture:

- The Lead Funding Officer sits on the LEP's Visitor Economy Officers Group and is currently delivering the Halton element of a SIF funded Destination Management programme, worth £102k for Halton; and on the Liverpool City Region Heritage Officers Group.
- The Lead Funding Officer leads on the remaining strand of Halton's Borough of Culture programme, the Celebrating Halton's Heritage project.
- The Team supports Cultivate: Halton Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) which is currently bidding to Arts Council England for a £1 million scheme to deliver a quality arts and cultural programme for children/young people in Halton.
- The Lead Funding Officer sits on the LCR Culture Officers Group which is currently delivering The World Reimagined and Bridge to Bamboo programmes.
- The Team is also supporting bids to the LCR Community Environment Fund 2022

3.6 - Training

The Team delivers a free Training Programme which is available to HBC colleagues and externally to the voluntary and other public sector partners. The courses were delivered from a range of community venues in Widnes and Runcorn with the aim of increasing the quality of bids and capacity building; the courses are being delivered online between January and July 2021 due to Covid restrictions, with the support of Halton and St Helens VCA.

The Annual Programme consists of:

- 4 x half-day bid-Writing sessions
- 2 x half day Monitoring and Evaluation sessions
- 2 x half day Now You've Got Your Grant sessions
- 2 x Developing a Fundraising Strategy

The training sessions are continually updated to improve bid-writing skill levels among both internal and external colleagues and also give a greater understanding of the context in which funding bids are submitted helping to ensure that bids are prioritised and of the highest possible quality.

3.7- Charging Policy

Executive Board agreed in July 2018 that the Council should pilot a Charging Policy for a period of 12 months, specifically for bid-writing support for external agencies. The pilot was completed in August 2019 and it was agreed the Policy should be rolled out on a permanent basis. £32,000 in fees has been generated by the Team to date.

It is vital that staff across the whole Council implement the Charging Policy where it applies and seeks the support of the External Funding Team to do this where needed.

3.8- Funding Data

3.8.1 - Funding Secured

The table below shows details of the funding secured by the External Funding Team between April 2017 and March 2022. In 2020-21 the Team helped to secure funding of £13.4m.

Year	Funding Secured
2017-18	£2.08m
2018-19	£3.12
2019-20	£6.07m
2020-21	£12.7m
2021-22	£13.4m

The total funding secured by the External Funding Team in the 5 year period was **£47.37m**

3.9- CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Team's workload remains extremely busy; we are currently managing with a reduced staffing level on a temporary basis and have had to prioritise accordingly.

Focus very much will be on the emerging UK Shared Prosperity Fund and working with colleagues to ensure Halton bids for these funds where appropriate. At the same time we will continue with our remit to support our voluntary sector colleagues to secure funding to deliver their vital services across the Borough.

The external funding environment remains vibrant and we look forward to securing further investment into the Borough in the year ahead to support the corporate vision and key strategic schemes going forward.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

All projects that request support from the External Funding Team must be supporting at least one of the Council's priorities.

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton**
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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None under the meaning of the Act

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Active Projects

The table below shows the current caseload of the External Funding Team

Steph Projects
HBC Levelling Up Fund – Halton Lea
Catalyst SDC and Museum – Heritage offer upgrade
Halton LCEP - general costs
HBC Regen Green Growth Programme – supporting 2 key strands
LCR Culture Working Group – supporting two key projects
LCR Visitor Economy Working Group – delivering SIF funded destination marketing project
HBC Borough of Culture 2021 – delivering Heritage Lottery Fund project
Steve Projects
Windmill Hill Community Hub – St Berteline’s CE Church – refurb and upgrade
CAB Core Funding (and Special Projects)
Open 360 Digital Inclusion Hubs – Three Venues in Runcorn and Widnes
Halton Play Council – new transport
Halton Haven Hospice – various projects
CHI Café Extension – Canopy and Doors
St Mary’s Church, West Bank - Improvements
Open 360 Digital Inclusion Hub – Six Month Community Project (Hallwood Park and Palace Fields)
HBC Family Hub Local Transformation Fund (FHLTF)
HBC Changing Places Toilets (CPT) Fund
Trinity Safe Spaces – Faith New Deal Pilot Fund
HBC DfT Loneliness With Transport Fund (LWTF)
Recharge & Restore CIC Mental Health & Wellbeing for Vulnerable Women (LCR Cares)
Sara Projects
HBC Town Deal – monitoring and claims
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) – delivery/monitoring and claims
Welcome Back Fund (RHSSF phase 2) – delivery/monitoring and claims
Celebrating Halton’s Heritage – Culture HQ – delivery/monitoring and claims
Ways to Work 3.0 - ESF 1.3 YEI Extension More Developed – Inclusive Labour Markets – monitoring and claims
Ways to Work 5.0 – ESF 1.1 Extension Transitional & More Developed – monitoring and claims

3MG RGF project - monitoring
Sci-Tech Daresbury RGF projects - monitoring
Louise Projects
LCR Apprenticeships Hub – ESF bid- guidance
Castner Kellner Electrochemistry Research and Development Centre -Ineos SIF Bid
Jonathan Projects
Wat Phra Singh Temple – running costsand capital work
St Pauls Building Project – capital work
St Lukes – All Churches Trust Bid – capital work