STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL **AGENDA ITEM NO**

HOUSING COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2017 **9**

Report Title	**COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND**
Purpose of Report	To seek authority to allocate Community Housing Funds received from DCLG to qualifying projects.
Decision(s)	**The Committee RESOLVES to:** **(1) Approve the commitment of the Community Housing Fund to provide a community housing enabler; and** **(2) Delegate authority to the Policy Implementation Manager to allocate the remaining funds to community housing groups.**
Consultation and Feedback	DCLG has been consulted about the proposals outlined in the report and have endorsed them as being in accordance with their guidelines.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. (Any costs associated with the Community Housing Enabler will be grant funded from DCLG) Adele Rudkin, Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk Risk Assessment: The primary risk is that the project fails to deliver additional affordable housing. These risks are mitigated by using an experienced provider to host the Community Housing Enabler post.
Legal Implications	No legal implications arise from this report Alan Carr Solicitor Tel: 01453 754357 Email: alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Pippa Stroud, Policy Implementation Manager Tel: 01453 754099 Email: pippa.stroud@stroud.gov.uk
Options	DCLG has produced guidelines covering the allocation of this funding. This sets out various options which are dealt with in the report. Further funding from DCLG is reliant on the authority providing satisfactory evidence that the money is being spent in accordance with DCLG objectives.

Performance Management Follow Up	Community Housing indicators will be included in performance monitoring for Housing Committee.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix 1 – Letter to Chief Executives Appendix 2 – Funding Guidelines.

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 In January 2017, DCLG awarded the District Council a total of £149,478 to support community-led housing development. Half of this funding has been received to date with the second half held by DCLG, pending their formal acceptance of our proposals for utilising the funds.

1.2 **Community-led housing** is defined by DCLG as being about local people playing a leading and lasting role in solving local housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities in ways that are difficult to achieve through mainstream housing.

1.3 Guidance received from DCLG requires that schemes are 'truly community-led' but also states that routes to delivery for community-led housing schemes 'are the same as in any other industry-standard housing scheme', suggesting that communities may work in partnership with a local housing association or developer, or can work on standalone projects.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 We have already received an approach from a CLT group seeking some or all of the funding to support a site at Eastington. We have also received an offer from a Community Housing Fund advisor to discuss how the funds might be used; this advisor charges £400 a day for his services. Stroud Commonwealth has also approached us to ask for funding; their approach focuses on facilitating self-build.

2.2 £149,000 is no small sum of money but is not enough to provide significant capital funding to housing development projects, given that the average build cost of a 2 bedroom house is now over £100,000, not including land, externals or fees. As an alternative, a capacity building approach is suggested in order to maximise the use of the funding to support new community housing development in the longer term.

2.3 Gloucestershire Rural Housing Partnership, a consortium comprising the rural Local Authorities in Gloucestershire, local housing associations and Gloucestershire Rural Community Council has for some years jointly funded and employed a rural housing enabler who works directly with parish councils to identify housing need and support affordable housing development in those parishes.

2.4 It is proposed that this model is replicated by using the funding to support the part-time employment of a community housing enabler

specifically to build capacity at grassroots level and work with communities to examine the full range of suitable affordable housing development options, from conventional development routes to self-build, co-housing and housing co-operatives. This post would be hosted by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council in order to capitalise on their position as experienced and respected community capacity builders, and cost approximately £30k per annum.

2.5 Forest of Dean District Council is also interested in using their DCLG funding to support a community housing enabler role; as a result, there may be an opportunity to jointly fund a full-time post covering the two local authority areas which would reduce the annual cost of the post to around £25k per annum, per authority.

2.6 Initial conversations have been held with DCLG who have endorsed the following approach to the use of the funding:

- Support the employment by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) of a 'Community Housing Enabler' on a part time basis for three years, at a cost of approximately £30k per annum. A three year commitment would be required as a minimum due to the long lead time required to build community capacity and bring forward community housing schemes.
- Use the remaining funding to provide a small pot of grant funding for newly emerging community housing schemes such as the Eastington CLT, and for organisations such as Stroud Commonwealth to support community self-build.

3. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Employing the enabler role via GRCC would allow us to shape the work of the enabler while allowing that role to maximise the established relationships that GRCC enjoys with both town and parish councils and community groups. GRCC has a strong track record of working positively and collaboratively with the District Council to deliver affordable rural housing and community projects.

3.2 Use of the residual funding to provide grants to newly emerging community housing groups can help those groups to attract additional external funding to support housing development. Additionally, providing support to local organisations with a broader remit, such as Stroud Commonwealth could help bring forward self-build and other community development opportunities.