

Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report title	Community Vaccine Fund
Decision designation	GREEN
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Jasbir Jaspal Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Wards affected	(All Wards);
Accountable Director	John Denley, Director of Public Health
Originating service	Communities
Accountable employee	Joanna Grocott Place Based Manager Tel 01902 555644 Email joanna.grocott@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	26 January 2022 Public Health Leadership Team

Summary

To seek approval for the City of Wolverhampton Council to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding and agree the broad principles for the allocation of grant funding for the Community Vaccine Champions programme provided by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as part of the ongoing response to Covid 19.

Recommendation for decision:

That the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Public Health and Well Being in consultation with the Director of Finance and Chief Operating Officer:

1. Approve the establishment of supplementary budgets totalling £185,000 fully funded by grants received from the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities.

That the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Well Being, Director of Finance and Director of Public Health

2. Approve that any payments are made to Voluntary and Community Sector groups in line with the specified criteria as set out in section six.

Signature
Councillor Ian Brookfield
Leader of the Council

Date

Signature
Claire Nye
Director of Finance

Date:

Signature
David Pattison
Chief Operating Officer

Date:

Signature
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal
Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Date:

Signature
John Denley
Director of Public Health

Date:

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The 'Community Champions' scheme, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, provided up to £25 million funding in January 2021 for a period of six months to support people shown to be most at risk from Coronavirus (Covid19) including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and others to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them.
- 1.2 Wolverhampton was awarded £474,000 in the first round of funding and led a programme which has supported interventions to reduce the disproportionate impact of the virus on certain communities by establishing networks of grassroots advocates or 'champions' from impacted communities and voluntary and community groups and other national or local actors who specialise in working with communities shown to be most at risk from Covid-19.
- 1.3 The fund has supported increased outreach and engagement through the recruitment and appointment of community champions and a wide reaching network, alongside targeted messaging and support to increase uptake and community ownership of COVID-19 guidance in inclusion health groups, young people and ethnic minority communities; empowering individuals to protect both themselves and those around them.
- 1.4 On 20 December 2021, the Minister for Communities announced that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) would provide up to an additional £22.5 million of funding to support those communities who have been shown to experience the lowest rates of COVID-19 vaccine uptake. This would be through a new scheme called 'Community Vaccine Champions'. This would build upon the work undertaken by the initial 'Community Champions Programme'. Wolverhampton's allocated has since been confirmed at £185,000 to progress this work with funding required to be committed by the end of March and activity started immediately to increase vaccine uptake in target areas and communities. The programme is expected to end in July 2022.

2.0 Progress - Community Vaccine Champions – Developing the Community Vaccine fund

- 2.1 Building on our Community Champions programme our aim is to enhance this offer in target areas in the city where vaccine uptake is at its lowest both geographically and in identified cohorts.
- 2.2 Our aim is to create a Community Vaccine offer that empowers those communities and cohorts in those areas of lowest uptake to engage and understand the challenges and barriers to vaccine hesitancy. Taking this intelligence and engagement our proposal is to support these organisations through the Community Vaccine Champions DLUHC programme funding to stimulate new ideas and potential solutions to support the objectives of the programme. This will be through the creation of a Community Vaccine Fund.

- 2.3 The principles of the fund are based on inclusion and accessibility and shared ownership of the challenge, in order to increase vaccine uptake in these communities and create opportunities for partners, voluntary organisations, community groups and individuals to have a voice and propose creative and innovative ideas.

3.0 Criteria

- 3.1 The Community Vaccine Fund criteria will link directly to the local and regional vaccine programme and Community Vaccine Champion DLUCH programme outcomes. The ideas generated through the fund will need to demonstrate that they will support more residents from those target areas to access the vaccine and vaccine booster.

4.0 Governance

- 4.1 A project group has been established through Public Health to implement the fund and set out governance arrangements. The group will be responsible for driving and delivering the Community Vaccine Fund, setting up key processes and procedures in order to 'go live' and moving forward will monitor impact and performance, linking into the wider programme governance which incorporates local and regional monitoring of impact.
- 4.2 The progress and impact of the Fund will be incorporated into monthly submissions to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 4.3 Successful applicants will need to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of the grants awarded and demonstrate how they have supported more Wolverhampton people to access the vaccine and increase overall uptake in the city, meaning more people are protected from Covid 19. This will be monitored on a weekly basis.

5.0 Application and scoring process

- 5.1 The proposed process will ensure that the projects and ideas that arise from the Community Vaccine Fund actually target and impact residents in the ten highest MSOA areas. Therefore, initially communities and community groups in those areas will be approached to invite them to put forward ideas and projects that will encourage and support those most hesitant in their communities.
- 5.2 There will be a clear evaluation process developed to ensure transparency and fairness. This will be based on the principles of a simple application process to ensure it is accessible for all, decision making is co-produced with key stakeholders whilst enabling a short-time frame to award funds. It is proposed that the applications will be broadly scored on impact, potential for sustainability, geography and value for money. The process will welcome opportunities to pilot new ideas and activities using the 'test and learn' process.
- 5.3 Applicants will need to submit a mini application their proposed new project, detailing the total cost, overview of outcomes and intended impact to their community and detail resources they need to build capacity to ensure their ideas come to life.
- 5.4 The evaluation process will be transparent, and funds will be allocated as grant funding. All successful applicants that have been awarded grant funding will be published to ensure transparency.

6.0 Financial award options

- 6.1 There are several options to administer and award the £100,000 Community Vaccine Fund, based on work to date it is likely that a grant will be made available for £1,000 as a development grant and subsequent funding will be awarded based on the number of residents supported to access the vaccine. This will be based on weekly reporting from successful groups and within the funding constraints of the Community Vaccine Champions grant funding. It is anticipated that initially up to twenty community groups will be able to access up to £5,000 in total over the lifespan of the projects.
- 6.2 Alongside this the remaining grant funding will be allocated to project management support to administer the fund as well as dedicated Public Health Behavioural Change resources to support groups with forming and implementing new ideas throughout the course of the programme.

7.0 Evaluation

- 7.1 The evaluation panel will be facilitated by the Council and will be made up of Public Health colleagues as well as representatives where appropriate from community and voluntary sector groups.
- 7.3 The decisions of the evaluation panel will be reviewed by a 'Moderation Panel' to ensure the correct processes and procedures have been followed and to complete any due diligence on those that are successful.
- 7.4 The recommendations of the Moderation Panel will be referred to the Director of Public Health to approve before the award is made.

8.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 8.1 There is only one real option to deliver and implementing the Community Vaccine Fund will promote a 'One-City' approach with the Council taking on a City and system leadership role to develop the Community Vaccine Fund.
- 8.2 The other option is to do nothing. This would lead to potentially not identifying a key strategy to address this significant challenge for the city. This approach also supports 'co-production' and inclusion principles.

9.0 Reasons for decision

- 9.1 To continue to respond to the ongoing impact of Covid 19 and the City commitment to ensure everyone has access to the vaccine, by providing financial and human resources to support the Community Vaccine Champions Programme.

10.0 Financial implications

- 10.1 On 20 December, the Minister for Communities announced DLUHC would provide up to an additional £22.5 million of funding to support those communities who have been

shown to experience the lowest rates of COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Wolverhampton has been allocated £185,000.

- 10.2 The grant is required to be committed by the end of March 2022, with the scheme expecting to be concluded by July 2022.
- 10.3 The grant funding will be utilised to implement the Community Vaccine Fund, as well as programme management support and establish a fixed term position within Public Health to support behaviour change in those identified communities.
- 10.3 This report therefore seeks approval to establish supplementary budgets totalling £185,000 fully funded from grant and make grant payments to voluntary and community organisations in line with the conditions of grant.

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11.0 Legal implications

- 11.1 The MOU provides a framework for City of Wolverhampton Council and the Department for Levelling up, Communities and Housing to collaborate on the Community Vaccine Champions, Local Authority Fund programme. The Council will be expected to comply with the terms of the MoU. This includes an obligation to account for how the funds are spent and to ensure that spending is in accordance with procurement and state aid rules.
- 11.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Local Authority a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do. In addition, S111 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the Council to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 11.3 Use of all personal data must be in accordance with data protection legislation.
- 11.4 In any circumstances where the Council is making payments to third parties it needs to consider the post Brexit subsidy control rules.
- 11.5 As the Council is subject to the Freedom of information Act and its decisions are open to judicial review, all its actions must be lawful and transparent to reduce the potential risk of financial and reputational damage.
- 11.6 That approvals are in place to ensure that appropriate officers can enter into all necessary legal transactions to give full effect to the Council's intention and ensure its interests are properly protected.
- 11.7 Once the Council has made decisions about payments to be made from the funds, further legal assistance will be required to document the terms and conditions for which the funds are given to ensure the Council's rights to enforce for breach are preserved.

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12.0 Equalities implications

- 12.1 As part of the city's response to Covid 19 providing effective and appropriate engagement and support is critical in supporting communities to respond to and live with Covid 19. The Community Vaccine Champions programme will have positive equalities implications as the initiatives set out in the programme are targeted at our most hard to reach communities in the city. An equalities impact assessment has been completed.
- 12.2 The Community Vaccine Fund will aim to tackle inequalities in the City given big disparities between different wards in vaccine uptake. The lowest uptake rates are St Peter's Ettingshall, Bushbury South and Low Hill, East Park and Bilston.
- 12.3 Applicants will be required to evidence the geographical areas in the city which will benefit from their project/ idea.
- 12.4 The process of the Community Vaccine Fund will be user-friendly and made accessible to everyone. This will be achieved through having a clear and fair application process that will be easy to understand. Applicants will also be provided with support through the process.
- 12.5 In addition, an equality analysis will be undertaken for the Community Vaccine Fund.

13.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 Communities and Community Champions will play a significant role in improving health and wellbeing facilitating access to communications and messaging, health and support services and reducing isolation.

14.0 Covid Implications

- 14.1 Community Champions will have a positive impact on tackling Covid 19 in communities by providing increased communications and messaging and support.

15.0 Schedule of background papers

- 15.1 Individual Executive Decision Notice: Covid Community Champions

16.0 Appendices

- 16.1 Appendix 1: Community Vaccine Champions Memorandum of Understanding