

CHESHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGY INNOVATIONS FUND

BACKGROUND

1 On 1 April 2004, Cheshire County Council established a new £50k fund, to be administered through The Cheshire Partnership, to support the delivery of the Cheshire Community Strategy outcomes and objectives and its seven key themes of:

- Innovation and New Ways of Working
- Positioning Cheshire in the Wider World
- Community Well-Being
- Valuing Diversity and Tackling Inequality
- Thriving Rural Communities
- Shared Prosperity
- A Sustainable Environment

2 As a means of encouraging innovation and new ways of working to improve quality of life and promote economic, environmental and social well-being across Cheshire, awards of up to £5k were available to any organisation or partnership operating within the administrative area of Cheshire County Council to enhance existing project activity or share best practice.

3 To be successful, projects had to:

- be innovative and inspiring, delivering benefits that would not otherwise be realised;
- be a development or enhancement of a currently successful project;
- be transferable to other parts of the county;
- contribute to one or more themes of and/or actions within the Cheshire Community Strategy;
- reflect the vision of the Cheshire Partnership; and
- be jointly submitted by two or more organisations to promote partnership working across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

In addition, applicants were encouraged to submit projects that would:

- aid understanding of individual partner roles and responsibilities;
- demonstrate support from an existing member of the Cheshire Partnership relevant to the locality and/or project;
- harness joint funding or 'in kind' contributions from other sources; and
- support the principles of sustainable development and/or citizenship.

4 The process for accessing funding was designed to be as simple as possible with applicants asked to submit a brief but comprehensive description of the scheme or project (including project timescale, costs, geographical area of coverage, criteria for success, key performance indicators and exit strategy) and details of how the

proposed scheme or project fulfilled the general criteria by the closing date of 31 December 2004. 68 applications to the Cheshire Community Strategy Innovations Fund were received from a cross section of organisations and partnerships representing all areas of the county by this date.

THE DECISION PROCESS

5 On 26 January 2005, the Cheshire Partnership Strategy & Monitoring Group met to undertake an initial sift of the applications against the agreed funding criteria. Whilst the Group acknowledged the worthiness of all applications received, it was felt that some should be funded from other more appropriate sources or reflected mainstream activity. Many also failed to demonstrate sufficient innovation in their approach.

6 As a result, only six applications requesting funding of just under £15k were approved at this first stage though a further 15 were shortlisted for closer inspection and consideration. To ensure effective probity and guard against 'double funding', background checks on all approved and shortlisted projects are currently being carried out prior to the issue of final approvals and grant agreements. These will detail the basis on which the grant has been awarded and expectations on both parties, particularly in relation to payment and project monitoring and review.

7 The Cheshire Partnership Strategy & Monitoring Group will meet again on 22 March 2005 to finalise this process.