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REPORT

Cllr John Cole-Morgan Portfolio Holder for Community and Housing

EXTERNAL FUNDING OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report::

- 1.1 To consider the appointment of an External Funding Officer

2. Introduction and Background:

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 March 2004 the Community & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommended that consideration be given to the establishment of a 'Corporate External Funding Officer' under a fixed term contract funded by the additional revenue that such a post could be expected to secure.
- 2.2 The Cabinet considered this recommendation and following further research reached the view that the Council should employ an External Funding Officer direct and part of the postholder's remit would be to support South Wiltshire community and voluntary organisations. Discussion in Full Council subsequently led to a deferral of any decision on this principally due to concerns from the Area Committees about the way the post would be partially funded via the SWAG budget
- 2.3 At its meeting on 24 May 2004, the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommended "SDC enter into a formal agreement with the Central Bidding Unit of Wiltshire County Council, whereby, one officer from that unit will dedicate some, or all, of their time, to Salisbury District Council and for that time be based in Salisbury".
- 2.4 Whilst the Resources Scrutiny Panel's views differ from those of Cabinet on the precise role and our relationship with the County's Central Bidding Unit, there does appear to be a consensus about the benefits of employing an External Funding Officer.
- 2.5 The Portfolio Holder for Community and Housing has discussed the differences with Chairman of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel particularly with regard to the role of the officer, how the post should be funded and whether it should be based within Wiltshire County Council's Central Bidding Unit.

3. Recommendations:

3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Community and Housing and the Chairman of Resources Scrutiny and Review Panel recommend that:

1. An External Funding Officer's post should be created on a two year fixed term contract.
2. The roles and responsibilities of this officer will be divided equally between working on projects that support the Council's Corporate and political objectives and supporting community and voluntary organisations.
3. That objectives and SMART performance targets are set that clearly define the outcomes expected for both areas of work.
4. The post should be funded from the Council's 'Invest to Save' Budget and will be based within Salisbury District Council. The hope (and likelihood based on other local authorities) is that the post will pay for itself in a short time.
5. that a total budget of £70,000 over two years be approved from the invest to save/improve revenue funds.
6. That a working party made up of members from both Resources and Community & Housing Scrutiny and Review Panels be set up to review the progress of the successful applicant. It is suggested that an initial review be undertaken after 8 months and then a further review after 14 months.
7. If the postholder is as successful as we all envisage, the funding can be reviewed within the second year to secure recurring funding either through a reduction in SWAG (on the basis that any shortfall will be outweighed by successful external funds generated by the officer) or by a recurring growth bid.

4. Invest to Save:

4.1 In February as part of its budget setting process for 2004/05 the Council approved a total of £150,000 revenue over two years for invest to save/improve schemes.

4.2 In June the Council approved a set of criteria against which it would test schemes these are listed below together with comments specific to this proposal:

Criteria	External Funding Officer Proposal
Political Priorities	Yes-The Project brief can be tailored to achieve maximum impact
Corporate Plan	Yes - Meeting the Financial Challenge
Cross Cutting Schemes	Yes -The Officer would work across all service areas
Partnership working	Yes - The Officer would work with the voluntary sector and other authorities
Legal/Health and Safety	Possible -if there are any external funding streams identified for this purpose
Service Improvements linked to Performance	Possible -depending on the funding streams identified
Return on Investment	Yes -subject to review and further reports as stated

4.3 The total net cost of the funding officer post will depend on results and should be self-financing, the investment including on costs and direct expenditure is estimated at £70,000 over the two years.

5. Implications:

- **Financial:** If the recommendations are accepted, a total budget of £70,000 over two years will need to be set aside from the invest to save/improve revenue funds, savings against the Council's overall budget will be identified in future reports and shown in the relevant portfolio plans
- **Legal:** None
- **Human Rights:** None
- **Personnel:** If these arrangements are approved, one additional full time officer will be employed by the Council on a two year fixed term contract. This will mean that the Council accepts all the normal responsibilities of an employer. Due to relatively recent changes in employment legislation, the individual recruited will have the same rights as any permanent employee at the expiry of the contract in terms of opportunities relating to redeployment if the duties of the post terminate after two years. If, however, the duties of the post continue but SDC wishes to terminate the individual post holder's contract, this could result in an unfair dismissal claim unless other policies/procedures (e.g., Capability) have been followed and exhausted.
- **Community Safety:** None
- **Environmental:** None
- **Council's Core Value:** Providing excellent Service; Being fair and equitable; Supporting the disadvantaged; Meeting the financial challenge; Improving the performance of the Council; Building the capacity of the Council
- **Wards affected:** All