

REPORT OF THE  
Chief Executive  
PART I

**303. CHANGES TO MEMBERS GRANTS**

1. The purpose of this report is to approve new funding from the Corporate Policy Reserve to provide additional funding for Members grants in the current year and to outline the arrangements for a new Members Environment Fund which will be introduced from the 2013/14 financial year.
2. The Leader of the Council has previously announced plans to increase funding for individual Members grants in order to fund further support to valuable community projects across the County and to provide funding to prioritise local needs in respect of environmental improvement works which would otherwise not be covered by existing improvement programmes.
3. The purpose of this report is to formally approve additional one off funding for community projects and to outline the arrangements for a new Members Environment Fund which will be introduced from 2013/14 onwards.
4. Members grants budgets were reduced from £10,000 per annum to £8,000 as part of the planned savings programme in 2011/12 and 2012/13 in response to reductions in Government grants.
5. However, it has been recognised what a valuable source of local funding these grants represent in terms of targeting small amounts of money at very specific local causes and projects, often attracting other funding that would otherwise not be secured.
6. Elsewhere in this report, are outline proposals for a new Members Environment Fund, which will not be introduced until the 2013/14 financial year in order for there to be sufficient time to properly set up the arrangements for how this will operate.
7. Given this delay in the implementation, it is proposed to utilise the funding that was set aside for this in the current financial year to provide an additional £5,000 for each Member to support further community projects to which the existing funding criteria will apply.
8. The one off cost of this proposal in 2012/13 is £390,000 and will be funded from the Corporate Policy Reserve. These additional funds will be available to spend from 1 October 2012.

### 304. MEMBERS ENVIRONMENT FUND

1. Members will be all too aware of the local concerns and problems surrounding local Highways, transportation and environmental issues. Small but important local issues around roads, pavements, footpaths, traffic calming, bus shelters and maintenance of grass areas and hedgerows are often not fully accommodated within the large prioritised strategic programmes that the County Council operates across the whole County.
2. It is therefore proposed to make available the equivalent of £10,000 per member per annum for a Members Environment Fund in order to address specific local issues in respect of environmental improvements.
3. Further detailed proposals for the operation of the new fund will be brought forward later in the autumn.
4. The total annual cost from 2013/14 onwards will be £780,000 and this will be met from the recurring element of the Corporate Policy Reserve and will be included as part of the detailed budget proposals that will be recommended to Council in February 2013.
5. The cost of the proposals in this report are shown in the table below :-

	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Increase to Members Grant Budgets	390		
Members Environment Fund		780	780
	<u>390</u>	<u>780</u>	<u>780</u>

6. Funding for the increases to the Members grants budgets in the current year are being recommended to Council as part of this report and proposals for the Members Environment Fund will be included as part of the 2013/14 budget proposals which will be submitted to Council in February 2013. Both of these items will be funded from the Corporate Policy Reserve.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the County Council:

- a) Approves an increase to the Policy and Resources budget of £390,000 in 2012/13 only to fund the increase in Members grants, to be met from the Corporate Policy Reserve. These additional funds to be available from 1 October 2012.
- b) Notes the proposed arrangements for the Members Environment Fund as set out in this report, which will be submitted as part of the formal budget proposals for 2013/14.