

Report of the Responsible Finance Officer

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grant and Establishment of New Bank Account and Earmarked Reserve

This report seeks approval from Full Council to implement appropriate financial controls for the management of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant awarded via Epping Forest District Council for the refurbishment of Chigwell Community Hub and Victory Hall. The signed funding agreement with Epping Forest District Council requires that the grant funding is clearly identifiable and ring fenced for the agreed project. In order to comply with this requirement and to strengthen the Council's financial governance, it is proposed that a separate earmarked reserve and a separate bank account are established for this project.

Under the terms of the agreement, Epping Forest District Council will contribute £60,401 towards the project and the Council will contribute £12,080.20 from its own resources. It is proposed that a new earmarked reserve be established, to be titled Chigwell Community Hub and Victory Hall Refurbishment, comprising £60,401 from Epping Forest District Council and £12,080.20 from the Council, as set out in the signed agreement. This will ensure that both the external grant and the Council's contribution are clearly identified within the Council's accounts and reserved solely for this project.

In order to further ring fence the funds and provide additional protection for public money, it is recommended that a new interest bearing savings account is opened specifically to hold and manage the project funds. This will also support compliance with Financial Services Compensation Scheme protection, which currently covers up to £85,000 in total across all accounts held with a single regulated bank or building society. It is proposed that the balance presently held in the existing earmarked reserve for Victory Hall refurbishment is transferred into this new account once opened.

Council is asked to consider approving Councillors Jefcoate, Costa, Morgan Skingsley and Braha as authorised signatories for the new bank account, with the Responsible Finance Officer appointed as account administrator. This will provide an appropriate number of signatories for internal control purposes while allowing day to day administration to be managed efficiently by the Responsible Finance Officer.

The Council is therefore requested to resolve to establish a new earmarked reserve titled Chigwell Community Hub and Victory Hall Refurbishment in the sum of £72,481.20 made up of £60,401 from Epping Forest District Council and £12,080.20 from the Council, to approve the opening of a new interest bearing bank or building society account to hold and manage these project funds, to approve the transfer of the existing earmarked Reserve for Victory Hall refurbishment into the new account once opened, to approve Councillors Jefcoate, Costa, Morgan Skingsley and Braha as signatories to the new account with the Responsible Finance Officer as account administrator, and to delegate authority to the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to identify and open an appropriate interest bearing account and complete all necessary documentation.