



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Executive Board

Date: 4th April 2007

Subject: Release of General Fund Reserves 2007/08

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to release funds to support a number of initiatives totaling £870k as detailed below

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 Further to the Month 9 financial health monitoring report where a projected increase in the level of general fund reserves carried forward into 2007/08 was reported, this report seeks Members approval to release funds to support a number of one off initiatives which were not accommodated in the 2007/08 budget.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The position reported at month 9 showed a projected surplus of £5m, of which £4.3m is required to support the 2007/08 budget. As reported verbally at the meeting of the 9th February 2007, additional surpluses are now forecast as a result of a further review of the Council's debt portfolio. The final position will be reported to Executive Board in June, however in the interim the Director of Corporate Services is satisfied that there will be sufficient additional surplus available to support one off commitments in 2007/08.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 Spend on the following initiatives is proposed:-

£k

➤ **Area Committees** 500

It is proposed to allocate £50k to each area committee on a non recurring basis, with the area of spend to be determined by each committee. Representations have been received from some area committees that there is insufficient funding available to undertake reviews of conservation areas and residents only parking initiatives. Members may wish to indicate that where these representations have been received that the area committee should be expected to use this additional funding accordingly.

➤ **Cultural Activities** 60

○ **Jazz on the Waterfront**

£30k is required to support a two day summer programme of jazz concerts in the centre of Leeds, Jazz in the City will incorporate a number of large and small venues. Catering for a variety of styles, this will be a revived jazz festival for Leeds and will attract both people in Leeds and visitors to the City.

○ **Art Gallery exhibitions and group**

£30k will be used to extend and support the art gallery exhibitions programme to build on the huge success of last years programme which had been supported by the Arts Council. The Art Gallery is currently undergoing renovation work which includes the creation of a significant new exhibition space at the entrance. This budget will be used to attract new exhibitions and also create our own. The outcome will see a significant increase to user figures.

➤ **Co-location costs with the Chamber of Commerce** 50

It is proposed to co-locate the entire Business & Enterprise and Tourism divisions (excluding Gateway Yorkshire staff) with Leeds Chamber (including the organisations the Chamber currently hosts), Leeds Media, Leeds Financial Services initiative and possibly Marketing Leeds. By sharing offices and working more closely together the various organisations believe there will be major benefits to customers and to the economic development of the city, such as:

- a single gateway for the customer
- a more co-ordinated approach thereby facilitating a more effective voice for Leeds regionally and nationally
- a sharing of intelligence and expertise
- a wider range of services available to customers
- improved access to a broader range of businesses
- increased co-operation and a reduction in competition between agencies

To enable the co-location, new desks and equipment will need to be purchased and IT and telephony services ideally linked to the Council network. These one off set up costs have been estimated at £50k.

➤ **Town and District Car parking study** 60

Members at their meeting of 20th September 2006 endorsed the development of a general approach to car parking in town and district centres. Initial work is required to establish the appropriate parking assessment criteria and framework. £60k will enable two studies to be

Total **670**

3.2 The 2006/07 outturn report will be presented to Members at the June Executive Board and will comment on the final reserves position for the year.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 This request is in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Executive Board is requested to approve the release of £670k from general fund reserves to support the above initiatives.