

additional papers 2

# Executive Committee

Tue 29 Jul  
2014  
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2  
Town Hall  
Redditch

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL



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Ivor Westmore  
Democratic Services**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: 01527 64252 (Extn. 3269)  
e.mail: (meeting contact)[@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:(meeting contact)@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)**

# Welcome to today's meeting.

## Guidance for the Public

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### ***Agenda Papers***

The **Agenda List** at the front of the Agenda summarises the issues to be discussed and is followed by the Officers' full supporting **Reports**.

### ***Chair***

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. Generally to one side of the Chair is the Democratic Services Officer who gives advice on the proper conduct of the meeting and ensures that the debate and the decisions are properly recorded. On the Chair's other side are the relevant Council Officers. The Councillors ("Members") of the Committee occupy the remaining seats around the table.

### ***Running Order***

Items will normally be taken in the order printed but, in particular circumstances, the Chair may agree to vary the order.

***Refreshments*** : tea, coffee and water are normally available at meetings - please serve yourself.

### ***Decisions***

Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are the democratically elected representatives. They are advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals and do not have a vote.

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# Executive

## Committee

Tuesday, 29th July, 2014

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

### Agenda

#### Membership:

Cllrs:	Bill Hartnett (Chair)	John Fisher
	Greg Chance (Vice-Chair)	Phil Mould
	Juliet Brunner	Mark Shurmer
	Brandon Clayton	Yvonne Smith
		Debbie Taylor

#### 5. Voluntary Sector Task Group - Final Report

(Pages 1 - 20)

Councillor Pat Witherspoon

To receive the final report of the Voluntary Sector Task Group.

(Report to follow)

**All Wards**





# Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

Tuesday, 22nd July, 2014

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), and Councillors Roger Bennett, (substituting for Councillor Gay Hopkins), Andrew Brazier (substituting for Councillor Carole Gandy), Natalie Brookes (substituting for Councillor Joe Baker), David Bush, Andrew Fry, Alan Mason, Paul Swansborough and Pat Witherspoon

### Also Present:

Mr Roger Hill, (Co-opted member of the Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group)

### Officers:

E Baker, S Green, D Hancox and S Hanley

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

## EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES

### 14. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Former Councillor Roger Hill was welcomed back as a co-opted member of the Task Group. Councillor Pat Witherspoon, as Chair of the group, delivered a presentation outlining the work and the final ten recommendations of the group (Appendix 1). Councillor Witherspoon thanked her fellow Members and Officers for their support during a long and detailed investigation.

Following the presentation the Grants Officer provided additional information:

- A coffee morning was held following the launch of the Grants Programme, which had proved very popular, with the last event being attended by over 50 members of the Voluntary Sector.

.....  
Chair

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 22nd July, 2014

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- BARN also attended this session to assist with applications and had delivered a series of social media workshops via the training programme funded by the Council.
- A funding feedback session was also being considered and it was hoped that this would assist organisations to source funding from elsewhere in order to become more self-sustaining.

Members of the group also responded to a number of questions covering the following areas:

- The role of the apprentice and the need for this to include specific training.
- The difficulty in providing training for Grants Panel Members and of taking formal minutes at its meetings. It was felt that these would be time consuming and were not appropriate, although it was acknowledged that a formal list of action points could be recorded.
- It was acknowledged that the Panel needed to be open and transparent in view of the significant sum of money involved and to ensure that the Council complied with the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.
- The Redditch Hour on twitter and how this would be administered and how those of other areas were maintained.
- Members were keen to ensure that volunteers were rewarded for their work and suggested a prize giving event should be held for this purpose.
- How the group had established that the grants awarded to groups provided the Council with value for money.
- Match funding and how currently those in receipt of a grant were encouraged to seek funding from other sources. There was a danger that smaller groups would be unable to access other funding and would be unable to continue if this were made a pre-requisite of an application.
- The monetary value of a volunteer, which was estimated at approximately £11 per hour. Members were informed that a piece of work would be undertaken in the future to try and ascertain the monetary benefit to the Council of the work carried out by the groups who were successful with their grant applications.

In respect of recommendation 5, the Framework Agreement for the Provision of Debt and Budgeting Advice, the Committee noted that whilst the first year of this framework had been secured additional funding would be needed to support the framework in the following two years.



# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Tuesday, 22nd July, 2014

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## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) the following should be addressed in relation to the Council's grants programme:**
  - a) the timescales for the Council's grants process should be reviewed to ensure that decisions are made in sufficient time to enable Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to plan constructively for the year ahead;**
  - b) the geographical spread of the client base for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations should be taken into account by the Grants Panel as part of the scoring process when considering applications for grants;**
  - c) the template for the Council's application form for Council grants should be reviewed;**
  - d) action points should be recorded at meetings of the Council's Grants Panel;**
  
- 2) the following actions should be taken in respect of the members of the Grants Panel:**
  - a) formal training should be provided to Members of the Grants Panel;**
  - b) wherever possible members of the Grants Panel should visit Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that have been awarded larger project grants as part of the monitoring process. These visits should take place before the second instalment of funding is provided to the organisations;**
  
- 3) the implications of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 should be considered by Officers to ensure that the Council's grants process is amended as and when required. Officers should ensure that any changes that are made to the process in response to these requirements take account of local needs;**

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Tuesday, 22nd July, 2014

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- 4) the Council should employ an apprentice to support the work of the Grants Officer. Consideration should be given to sharing this apprentice with a Voluntary and Community Sector organisation;
- 5) the *Framework Agreement for the Provision of Debt and Budgeting Advice to be Delivered Within the Locality areas in Redditch* should continue to be supported by the Council for the foreseeable future;
- 6) an informal working group of Council Officers should be formed to discuss and share knowledge about current joint working with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. These informal meetings would also provide an opportunity for different teams to identify further opportunities to work with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and highlight any duplication of work;
  - a) dedicated space should be introduced on the Council's intranet to allow Officers working with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and / or volunteers to share information;
- 7) the following actions should be taken in relation to the Staff Volunteering Policy:
  - a) the policy should be refreshed and promoted;
  - b) a taster list of local volunteering opportunities should be advertised on the "Briefcase" section of the Council's intranet for the consideration of staff. In particular, consideration should be given to advertising volunteering opportunities that would help to address the Council's strategic purposes;
- 8) a Staff Award should be created to recognise the voluntary work carried out by members of staff;
- 9) the Council should work with local businesses and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to introduce a "Redditch Hour" on twitter and other social networks;

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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- 10) a Voluntary Sector Event should be held on a regular basis to help promote
  - a) the work of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to each other as well as potential customers;
  - b) volunteering opportunities to local residents; and
  - c) a prize giving awards ceremony should form part of this event.

This event could potentially be aligned to existing events that are already take place.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 9.00 pm





## Appendix 1 Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group

Councillor Pat Witherspoon, Chair,  
Councillor Andrew Brazier and Roger  
Hill

July 2014



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# Introduction

First of all - Please could we take questions at the end!

- The review was launched in October 2013.
- You have our report attached. Anything recorded in the report was based on the evidence we were provided with during the review.
- A key aim of the review was to assess the Council's grants process to ensure that it was transparent and value for money.
- The work of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group was taken into account to help minimise the potential for duplication.
- Members gathered evidence in a variety of ways.
- This included interviews with Council Officers, the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Chair of the Grants Panel.
- We reviewed appropriate documentation both from Redditch and external sources.
- We also consulted with leading, local representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector...



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# Consultation

We were keen to consult with representatives of a range of Voluntary and Community Sector Groups. We visited two bodies, BARN and the Sandycroft Wellbeing Centre, which were selected due to their extensive links to other Voluntary and Community Sector Groups...



# Consultation Findings

...and we also issued a survey which was designed to obtain feedback from a greater number of Voluntary and Community Sector groups.

The key findings of this consultation were:

- Alternative sources of funding can be obtained by groups from a range of funding providers including the national lottery and other public sector organisations.
- A number of groups have been or will be affected by the removal of Worcestershire County Council's Supporting People and Future Lives funding.
- Some groups rely on Redditch Borough Council for funding, including a small number of groups that were found to be reliant on Council funding by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008.
- The Council provides other forms of support to the sector in addition to grants, such as concessionary rents on Council properties.

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## Recommendation 1 (a – d) Changes to the Grants Programme

Current arrangements	The group's proposals
Meetings of the Grants Panel take place throughout the year and recommendations are reported to the Executive Committee in early spring, (usually in March).	The Grants Panel's recommendations should be reported to the Executive Committee earlier in the calendar year to enable groups to plan more effectively for the new financial year. We found that in some cases groups were not taking on new clients in the first few months of the calendar year because they couldn't guarantee they would have the funding needed.
Applications for funding are scored by the Grants Panel in line with a particular scoring criteria. The location in which the applicant is based and whether clients living outside the Borough will benefit from the project is not considered as part of the scoring process.	The Grants Panel should take into account in future both the locations where the applicant is based and where the project will be delivered as part of the scoring process. Every attempt should be made to prioritise funding for Redditch based groups that deliver services to Redditch residents.
The template for the application form for project grants is based on the version used by Worcestershire County Council as proposed by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008.	Whilst recognising that Officers do provide guidance to groups that are struggling to complete their applications we feel that the form could be simplified to encourage a greater number and range of eligible groups to apply for funding.
Informal notes are taken at meetings of the Grants Panel.	Formal minutes in future should be taken during these meetings to ensure that the process remains robust and accountable. Any declarations of interest should also be reported to the Executive Committee.

## Recommendation 2: Members of the Grants Panel

Current arrangement	The group's proposals
<p>Member training – We have received conflicting information on this point. Early in the review they were advised that informal, on-the-job training is provided. At the end of the review Members were informed that formal training is offered. However, the training does not currently form part of the formal Member Development programme.</p>	<p>However, formal training should be consistently provided to members of the Grants Panel. This should form part of the Council's corporate Member Development programme.</p>
<p>Officers visit groups in receipt of grant funding as part of the monitoring process. Members of the Grants Panel have been encouraged to visit groups in the past but this has not happened consistently.</p>	<p>Wherever possible members of the Grants Panel should visit groups in receipt of funding as part of the monitoring process. These visits should take place prior to groups receiving their second instalment of grant funding.</p>

**Recommendation 3: The implications of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 should be considered by Officers to ensure that the Council's grants process is amended as and when required. Officers should ensure that any changes that are made to the process in response to these requirements take account of local needs**

- The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 details key points with implications for Council grants programmes.
- It is designed to enable greater transparency within local government.
- This will require Officers to publish detailed information in future years about grants awarded to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations. Greater detail will need to be provided than has been published in previous years.
- Relevant Officers have been provided with a copy of the code.
- These requirements should also be communicated to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations so that they understand the reasons why this amount of information needs to be published.

**Recommendation 4: The Council should employ an apprentice to support the work of the Grants Officer. Consideration should be given to sharing this apprentice with a Voluntary and Community Sector organisation.**

We believe that there would be a number of benefits to employing an apprentice to support the Grants Officer potentially in partnership with a Voluntary or Community Sector group:

- The apprentice could provide office cover and ensure a consistent point of contact is available in the Grants Officer's absence.
- The apprentice could gain work experience in both local government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- The apprentice could gain useful transferable skills from working in both the Public and Voluntary and Community Sector.
- The apprentice could help to maintain positive working relationships between the Council and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and address any potential areas for misunderstanding.

**Recommendation 5: The *Framework Agreement for the Provision of Debt and Budgeting Advice to be Delivered Within the Locality areas in Redditch* should continue to be supported by the Council for the foreseeable future.**

- The framework has already been developed and agreed.
- It has particular relevance to supporting residents who require help managing their finances and debts.
- The support provided in line with the framework could help some of the most vulnerable residents living in Redditch.
- The framework is also important to the Council as it links directly to some of our strategic purposes.
- The group is keen to ensure that the Executive Committee commits to supporting this framework for the foreseeable future.

# Recommendation 6: Informal Officer Working Group

Current arrangements	The group's proposals
<p>There are numerous Council services that work with a variety of Voluntary and Community Sector groups as well as volunteers as detailed in the group's final report.</p>	<p>An informal officer working group should be established to provide officers with a chance to communicate about the work they are doing.</p>
<p>There is a section of the Council's intranet dedicated to grants . No information is listed in this area at the moment.</p>	<p>This section of the intranet could be developed further and used by Officers to share information about the work services are doing.</p>



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## Recommendations 7 and 8: Staff Volunteering Policy and Staff Award for Volunteering

- There has been a Staff Volunteering Policy since 2011.
- Staff can ask to volunteer 16 hours of working time per year. (Approval is required from their manager).
- To date only five employees have volunteered in line with the policy.
- Feedback from staff (and their managers) has been positive.
- The policy is due to be refreshed and this could provide a useful opportunity to promote volunteering.
- We feel that a taster list of volunteering opportunities could be promoted on the “briefcase” section of the intranet.
- We are suggesting that the list should be linked to the Council’s strategic purposes.
- The group also believes that a staff award recognising the work of staff who volunteer would help to promote this policy to staff and demonstrate the Council’s commitment to volunteering.

## **Recommendation 9: The Council should work with local businesses and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to introduce a “Redditch Hour” on twitter and other social networks.**

- Many towns and cities in the country that have developed recognised “hours” on social media.
- This includes Worcester, Droitwich Spa and Malvern in Worcestershire.
- These hours provide Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, businesses and public sector bodies with a local networking platform.
- There is currently no “Redditch hour” on social media.
- Council Officers have indicated that introducing a “Redditch Hour” could be a positive development for Redditch, including for the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- The Council could help by supporting the launch of the Redditch Hour and helping to promote it at the local level.



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## Recommendation 10: Voluntary Sector Event

- A number of the witnesses interviewed during the review were enthusiastic about the possibility of an event to help them:
  - network with other groups;
  - promote their services to potential customers; and
  - promote volunteering opportunities to potential volunteers.
- This could be linked to existing events.
- The Council could support the event for example by acting as host or helping with promotions.

Any questions?



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