

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.

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Chair

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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.

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;**

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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;

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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