

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

8th September 2015

VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME 2016/17

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| Relevant Portfolio Holder | Councillor Bill Hartnett, Community Leadership & Partnership inc. Voluntary Sector |
| Portfolio Holder Consulted | Yes |
| Relevant Head of Service | Judith Willis, Head of Community Services |
| Wards Affected | All |
| Ward Councillor Consulted | N/A |
| Key Decision | |

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report contains recommendations as to the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants process for 2016/17. See Appendix 1. The theme titles are aligned with the Council's strategic purposes.
- 1.2 In addition the report recommends changes to update & improve the scoring matrix and Grants Policy - See Appendices 2 and 3. The Executive Committee is also asked to consider in advance how it will deal with any underspend in the grant at the end of the financial year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee are requested to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) **the themes and percentages of funding be allocated for the 2016/17 voluntary and community sector grants process as set out in Appendix 1;**
- 2) **the scoring matrix and Grants Policy be updated as set out in Appendices 2 and 3; and**
- 3) **any underspend in the grants at the end of the year be put back into balances.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The current budget for Grants for 2015/16 is agreed at £241K, it is anticipated in this report that this will be agreed for 2016/17.

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Background

- 3.2 Each year the grants team look at how the Grant Programme can best serve the local VCS while aligning the programme to the Council's Strategic Purposes. For an overview on how the 2015/16 grants programme aligned to the strategic purposes see Appendix 3.
- 3.3 The Grant Programme includes the Stronger Communities grants which enable over 20 small groups to deliver a wide variety of projects. Examples of projects funded to date for 2015/16 include:
- Work with 20 Redditch young mums;
 - Educational day trip;
 - Freedom Domestic Violence programme;
 - Weekend junior fishing;
 - Older Peoples' Choir;
 - Support and improve wellbeing of carers; and
 - Community Smoothie Bike.

A full list of all funded organisations is published on the Council's website.

Legal Implications

- 3.4 The Council needs to continue to ensure that it has a transparent and fair grants scheme, ensuring that we comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.
- 3.5 Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to incur expenditure which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. The direct benefit accruing must also be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.
- 3.6 There is a further power to make grants to voluntary organisations providing recreational facilities under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 In response to the recommendations of the Voluntary Sector Task Group report of 2014, the scoring matrix was updated for 2015/16. The Grants Panel at its meeting on 23rd June 2015 recommended a further update as follows as attached at Appendix 2.

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3.8 The Grants Panel further requested a review of the Council's Grants Policy to reflect recent learning from the existing process. A copy of the proposed policy showing the proposed amendments is attached as Appendix 3. The key changes are as follows:

- Encouragement of joint/partnership bids (5.4 of the Policy);
- Restrictions on number of applications (5.5 and 5.6 of the Policy);
- Not funding structural purchases (6.6 of the Policy);
- A process to deal with organisations which scored the same (9.8 of the Policy).

3.9 The themes and proposed split of funding for the 2016/17 Grants programme have been updated to reflect the Council's Strategic Purposes and customer demand as follows:

| Strategic Purpose | Funding allocation 2014/15 | Funding allocation 2015/16 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Help me to be financially independent | £95,000 | £85,000 |
| Help me to live my life independently | £53,000 | £65,000 |
| Provide good things for me to do, see and visit | £9,000 | £6,000 |
| Keep my place safe and looking good | £15,000 | £15,000 |
| Help me run a successful business | £50,000 | £50,000 |
| Stronger Communities Grant Programme - 3 rounds per year | £15,000 | £16,000 |

From the £241,000 budget, £4,000 is retained for the delivery of training to the VCS and to facilitate external funding workshops/events.

3.10 Deadlines dates for both the main grants programme and the Stronger Communities grants programme have been set in order to ensure the smooth delivery of the programme. The timetable also takes account of the Overview and Scrutiny recommendation that sufficient time is given to enable Voluntary & Community Sector organisations to plan constructively for the year ahead. See Appendix 5 for timescales.

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- 3.11 To enable the Council to deliver its grants programme, Officers will need to continue to work closely with the Communications Team to ensure that a full and informative guide to the new procedure is implemented and that Officers are engaging with the full range of VCS organisations and groups within the local area.
- 3.12 By working closely with BARN & local VCS organisations on delivering our long term training & support, we can ensure that the sector will receive an agreed standard of training with the Council ensuring that we receive value for money. Outcomes initially identified are:
- **Increase volunteers skills in bid writing**
 - **Facilitate events that invite external funders to Redditch**
 - **Encourage partnership working within the Boroughs VCS**
 - **Social Media workshops**
 - **Event to raise awareness of local VCS organisations**

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.13 The 2015/16 grants programme has supported 12 projects under the main grant fund with 21 projects/events being funded in the first two rounds via the Stronger Communities fund.
- 3.14 The 2015/16 Grants Programme received 20 applications from organisations, with the programme seeing 3 new organisations applying to the programme who had not applied to this fund previously.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Where needed the Grants Officer identifies external funding streams and invites external organisations to host events to raise awareness of the funding streams they have available to the local VCS. Officers have also made themselves available for one to one sessions to support funding applications for both internal and external opportunities. Redditch Borough Council's grant programme is widely advertised both locally and county wide.
- 4.2 The proposed changes to the Grants Policy (referred to in 3.8) alleviate the risk to the Council from any organisations receiving funding and then subsequently closes. It also encourages organisations to be not solely reliable on this grant funding.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Themes and funding split
Appendix 2 - Scoring Matrix Template

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Appendix 3 - Grants Policy
Appendix 4 - Overview of aligning to strategic purposes
Appendix 5 - Timetable - Main Grants Programme and Stronger
Communities Grants

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Local Government Transparency Code 2014
- Voluntary Sector Task Group Report 2014

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Judith Willis
E Mail: judith.willis@redditchbc.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext. 3348