

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th December, 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Wanda King, Anthony Lovell, Gemma Monaco and Jennifer Wheeler

Also Present:

Councillor David Bush - Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism

Councillor John Smith (Worcestershire County Council)
Liz Altay, Tracy Furlow, Sally-Anne Osborne and Dr. Bill Spice

Officers:

Derek Allen, Kevin Dicks, Luke Samuels and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley and Farzana Mughal

66. REVIEW OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS POLICY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Head of Community Services provided Members with an overview of the draft policy and Councillor guidance notes in respect of the Councillor Community Grants Scheme.

Members were reminded that on 19th November, 2018, Full Council had agreed to change the way in which the Council allocated the grant funding to voluntary and community sector in Redditch.

The Committee was provided with full details in respect of the revised scheme. Members were advised that training would be provided to all Members which would be mandatory. In addition, guidance notes would be provided to all Members explaining the full process.

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Chair

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With regards to the scheme, this would be piloted for one year with it being evaluated during the year.

In discussing the revised scheme, Members highlighted some of their concerns and expressed the view that this scheme would be more onerous for officers. Some Members commented that the scheme was not transparent and that they did not feel comfortable with the process. Clarity was requested in respect of who would make the final decision in relation to the £350 that would be dedicated from each Councillor's allocated projects. Questions were raised about how funding would be spent in some wards where there were very few Voluntary and Community Sector groups that would be eligible to apply for funding. Members also expressed concerns that £20k would be cut from the budget for 2019/20.

Councillor David Bush – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism, stated that the new scheme would be beneficial for the people of Redditch and that the money would be fairly distributed across the town. Councillor Bush also noted concerns that the existing grants systems was too bureaucratic and often smaller groups that did not have access to professional bid writers struggled to secure funding. There were lots of wards in the Borough where grant funding had not been received in recent years and Councillor Bush suggested that the new system would help to address this problem.

A proposal was made for the Committee to endorse the resolution detailed in the report to approve the policy and guidance. On being put to the vote this proposal was lost.

A further proposal was made for the £20,000 that would otherwise be cut from the grants budget to be retained for use by all Members where needed to provide funding to address issues relevant to the town as a whole. This proposal was agreed.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council should retain the £20,000, due to be cut from the grants budget, to invest in town wide issues and issues of importance to Redditch.

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