

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Wednesday 17th March 2010:**  
**Item 5: Call-in and Pre-scrutiny**

During a meeting of the Executive Committee on Wednesday 10th March Members considered a number of recommendations from the Grants Panel for Voluntary Sector Grant Applications for 2010/11. Councillor Diane Thomas, the Chair of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group which reviewed the third sector funding framework in 2008, is proposing that the resolutions agreed at this meeting of the Executive Committee should be called in.

Councillor Thomas has a number of concerns about the decisions the Executive Committee made in relation to this item. These are outlined below for members' consideration.

- 1) The Executive Committee approved the Third Sector Task and Finish Group's recommendation that the Shopping, Investing and Giving (SIG) funding framework should be utilised by Redditch Borough council from 2010/11. The Executive Committee therefore has the responsibility to require Officers to implement this funding framework as well as to ensure that all Councillors understand the system. Councillor Thomas is, however, concerned that the decisions agreed on Wednesday 10th March appear to indicate that this has not, in fact, happened and she questions why this is the case and has been allowed to occur.
- 2) The report that was presented during the Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday 10th March stipulated that it had not been possible in the short timescale since the Grants Policy was approved by the Council in – 2008 to implement the shopping element of the funding framework in 2010/11. Councillor Thomas has been informed that there were capacity problems in terms of Officer support which prevented the Council from implementing this element of the funding framework.
  - a) Was the Leader of the Council informed about these capacity problems?
  - b) If so, when?
  - c) Is there any intention to implement the shopping element of SIG in 2011/12?
- 3) The funding criteria approved in the Council's funding policy stipulates that funding will be provided to support organisations delivering projects. Councillor Thomas is concerned that the following organisations, which have traditionally received funding from the Council, have not secured the money to finance new projects: Age Concern Redditch District; Redditch Citizen's Advice Bureau; Redditch Play Council; the Sandycroft Wellbeing Centre; and Where Next Association. Questions need to be asked as to whether the following evidence has been provided, as required, by all applicants when applying for Council funding:
  - a) information indicating that the grant will be used to finance a new project; and
  - b) a copy of the organisation's accounts.
- 4) The five organisations (referred to above) were provided with written notice two years ago that they might not remain eligible for Council funding. They

were advised to search for additional sources of funding from other organisations and to demonstrate that they had attempted to do so when applying for funding from the Council from 2010/11. Councillor Thomas is concerned that evidence has neither been provided nor sought to demonstrate that this has occurred.

- 5) Redditch Borough Council has improved the Voluntary Sector Compact. This commits the Council to working within the terms set out in the Compact's Funding and Procurement protocol. Councillor Thomas is concerned that evidence has not been provided to demonstrate that the Council is complying with this Compact and suggests that such evidence should be provided before the recommendations of the Grants Panel can be approved.
- 6) Many members of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group are extremely concerned about this situation. They question why they spent six months completing their very detailed review if the Council's funding arrangements are not going to change.