

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

18th September 2012

VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME 2013/14

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bill Hartnett, Community Leadership & Partnership inc. Voluntary Sector
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis, Acting 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 2013/14.
- 1.2 Members are requested to recommend the continuation of delegated authority of final approval in respect to the Stronger Community Grants to the Head of Community Services.
- 1.3 The report also contains changes to the Voluntary & Community Sector Grants policy. (See point 4.4 for proposed changes & appendices 3 for full policy document).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RECOMMEND that

- 1) **the following themes and percentages of funding be allocated for the 2013/14 voluntary and community sector grants process:**

- i) **Independent Communities = £135,000 – see 3.3.1**
- ii) **Community Development = £ 55,000 – see 3.3.2**
- iii) **Thriving Communities = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.3**
- iv) **Community Welfare = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.4**
- v) **Stronger Communities Grant Programme = £ 15,000 – see 3.3.5**
- vi) **£1,000 be allocated from the Grants budget for the use by the Grants Team to deliver:**
 - a) **networking and promotional events;**
 - b) **advertising and communication support;**
 - c) **newsletters;**

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(See paragraph 3.3 for background & full breakdown of theme splits and key project support areas);

- 2) **delegated authority for final approval in respect to the Stronger Community Grants to the Head of Community Services be continued; and**
- 3) **the changes detailed at paragraph 4.4 designed to strengthen the Voluntary & Community Sector Grants Policy be approved.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The proposed splits are based on the Grants budget for 2013/14 being set at £241k (based on no increase on budget from 2011/12) with 5k rolled over from 2012/13 grants budget.
- 3.2 The total budget for grants to voluntary organisations for 2013 – 2014 is £246,000.

Background

- 3.3 Over the last few years there has been significant change in the funding environment. Redditch Borough Council wished to continue to support those projects, programmes and initiatives that best advance its strategic objectives and that deliver the best possible services to the local community. In doing so, changes to the way grant funding was allocated demonstrated the Councils commitment to distributing the grant aid available efficiently and effectively, and underpinned our approach of making the process of grant aid as open and transparent as possible.

The introduction of the Stronger Communities Grant programme in 2011/12 strengthened the impact of the grants programme by ensuring a funding stream was made available to the community organisations delivering at grass roots level.

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Over the last 3 years, because of its open & transparent process, the grants programme no longer is viewed as just being for “the chosen few” and has achieved an increase in:

- ❑ Projects delivered
- ❑ Organisations applying
- ❑ Advertising opportunities
- ❑ Good local community relationships
- ❑ External Funding relationships

For 2013/14 the proposed splits reflect the needs within the local Voluntary & Community Sector at a time where all sectors have had to cut their cloth accordingly, where funding streams are being cut. The themes objectives aim to:

- ❑ Support & sustain services already being delivered within the town,
- ❑ Support findings already being identified from the Councils Transformation process
- ❑ Align with the Council’s strategic purposes.

3.3.1

<p><u>Independent Communities</u> <u>Recommended funding = 135k for the Delivery of Projects under the “Independent Communities” Banner</u></p> <p>80k – Investing Grant To deliver: Financial and Debt advice within the Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Free, independent and confidential advice, with a focused outcomes on housing benefit issues & supporting residents at risk of losing their homes <p>30k - Investing grants - Maximum grant of 10k for each project submitted For delivery of on-going support for local services to include outcomes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Build Capacity❑ Build Volunteering & skill sharing opportunities❑ Explore & highlight external funding opportunities <p>25k - Investing Grant For delivery of a financial support project with outcomes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Support for those in financial difficulties including<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. one to one support2. group workshops3. ongoing financial independence support❑ Pilot for an outreach project/worker to support residents in accessing the correct benefit entitlement
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3.3.2

Community Development

Recommended funding: £55k for the delivery of projects under the “Community Development” Banner.

40k Investing Grants – Maximum grant of 40k for a project to deliver: Childcare and Holiday schemes into the Town:

- Discounted childcare for local children with specific criteria for discounted places to be allocated to ensure the full benefit is gained from those families who have the highest need.
- Discounted Holiday play schemes for local children that have outcomes linked into education and health and well being priorities

15k Investing Grants – Maximum grant of 3k for each project submitted

For delivery of projects that support:

- Activities to encourage family participation
- Learning & Personal Development projects for those on low incomes
- Intergenerational/Cross cultural projects
- Breakfast Clubs
- Local Community Clubs
- Supporting local residents back into work
- Work Clubs
- Projects to encourage Enterprise in young people

3.3.3

Thriving Communities

Recommended funding = 20k for the delivery of projects under Thriving Communities

20k Investing Grants-Maximum bids for each project submitted of 4k

For delivery of projects that support the Council’s Safe Green & green priorities.

- Support for Community improvement projects
- Support for Troubled Families – Focus on teenagers with complex needs
- Domestic & Behavioural abuse projects
- Youth Clubs & Youth support projects
- Older Peoples Clubs
- Project to provide furniture/removal services to families in need.
- Homelessness in young people

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3.3.4

Community Welfare

Recommended funding = 20k for the delivery of projects under Community Welfare Banner – also links into the LSP priorities

20k Investing Grants - Maximum bids for each project submitted of 4k

For delivery of projects that support the Council's Community welfare priorities.

- Projects that support healthy lifestyles.
- Focus on Mental Health and Support.
- Projects that improve social isolation.
- Confidence building projects (soft skills) for residents with low/medium level mental health issues.
- Projects that tackle alcohol & drug issues.

3.3.5

Stronger Communities - Community Grant Fund – Total £15k - For the delivery of local grassroots community projects/events £15k Giving Grants Maximum bid of £500.00 per project submitted in each round

For delivery of projects: Hosted by local community groups - these groups will not need to be formally constituted but will be required to have a recognised role within the community they represent

- Community participation projects.
- Three Rounds at £5000 per round for community grants in 2012/13
- Community groups invited to bid for up to £500 for delivery of local projects/events.

3.4 The 'Shopping' element is part of the Councils SIG framework and is delivered under the Councils procurement process. The Grants programme in 2012/13 supported a 3 year training programme with a total budget of 15k. The programme was offered out under the Councils tendering process. 15 organisations tendered for the opportunity. Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) were successful in their bid to deliver the programme and the first workshop is booked for Tuesday 9th October 2012.

3.5 Funding for Local Diamond Jubilee Celebrations – On the 3rd April approval was given to use an unallocated balance from the Grants programme of £7,660.00 to support local communities in hosting Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the remaining balance has been rolled over into the 2013/14 Voluntary & Community Sector Grants Programme– There were applications from 5 community groups to this fund.

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Legal Implications

- 3.6 The Council needs to continue to ensure that it has a transparent and fair grants scheme.
- 3.7 To ensure that we continue to support the sector to move forward and deliver projects that provides value for money.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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

- 3.10 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. See appendices 1 & 2 for timescales.
- 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 continuing with delegated approval for the Stronger Communities Grants by the Head of Community Services the Council can ensure that the process is smooth and efficient.
- 3.13 By working closely with BARN on delivering our long term training & support programme via the shopping element, 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:
- What impact will developing these skills have on performance?
 - Which skills needs are the most important to long term success?
 - Which skills needs are the most urgent?

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- 3.14 Local Authorities will be expected under the “Big Society” banner to support and help build capacity and up-skill those organisations operating within the third sector.
- 3.15 Redditch Borough Council will be looking to review the property portfolio as a whole; this review will include those properties currently occupied by VCS organisations.

The aims of this review are to:

- Provide suitable and affordable accommodation to VCS organisations in Redditch.
- Understand and unlock the value of property assets in Redditch.
- A clear, consistent and formalised property management relationship between the Council and VCS tenants.

These aims are in recognition of the social value that VCS organisations bring to the borough through operating from Council properties, and the Council’s commitment to fostering and demonstrating this value.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.16 The 2012/13 grants programme has supported 20 projects from 18 organisations under the main grant fund with 22 projects/events being funded in the first two rounds via the Stronger Communities fund.
- 3.17 Following an Overview and Scrutiny Committee review in 2008, a more transparent and inclusive grants scheme was agreed. The 2011/12 Grants Programme received applications from 35 different organisations, with the programme seeing 7 new organisations applying to the programme who had not applied to this fund previously.
- 3.18 Awards for All funding for the Redditch is at a low level, the Grants team have invited the Awards for All Team to host a workshop on the 14th September 2012 for identified local groups to attend. The workshop will be specific to groups who have:
- Already applied for funding from Awards for All
 - Currently have submitted an application
 - Have applied but been unsuccessful
 - Been identified as meeting the criteria to apply to the fund

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There is a risk that the Council could be criticised for failing to support the local Third Sector organisations or community groups in up-skilling and building the capacity to become self sustaining. To mitigate this risk, Officers have put into place a provision of a 3 year Training and Support programme delivered via the shopping element of the grants programme to help build capacity and skills in the Sector. Identified external funding streams and invited external organisations to host events to raise awareness of these funding streams. Officers have also made themselves available for one to one sessions to support funding applications for both internal and external opportunities. The grant programme is widely advertised both locally and countywide.
- 4.2 Officers are proposing changes in line with audit recommendations to strengthen the VCS Grants Policy.
- 4.3 In line with recommendations from the Voluntary & Community Sector Grants Programme being audited we have identified areas that the policy could be strengthened. In order for us to maintain an open and transparent process the following changes are proposed:
- 4.4 Changes proposed (highlighted in Bold italic):

Purpose of Grant Funding

The Council provides grants to assist the development of a vibrant voluntary and community sector that delivers projects and activities of value to the local community.

Funding will only be provided where it can be demonstrated that a defined impact will be made. Organisations should demonstrate an outcomes focus in applications for funding.

The Council will require that all grant awards support Council objectives. The specific objectives to be supported will be made clear in all publicity relating to each grant opportunity. Demonstrating support of Council objectives may include:

- a) ***linking grant awards to an approved list of Council priorities, (please see Website for the current list of priorities). The Council also reserve the option of including LSP or other priorities as identified by Redditch Borough Council***

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- b) the Council choosing one or more specific outcomes in advance that will be achieved with the grant award. This will be particularly appropriate for individual departments wishing to make grants available to support the delivery of a particular service aim

7.7 – Payment schedules will balance the need for the Council to ensure proper accountability for use of public money with appropriate recognition of cash-flow issues that may be experienced by voluntary and community sector organisations. The general principle will be that payment is made in advance of project delivery, with instalment frequency and size commensurate with the overall size of the grant awarded. General guidelines for payment schedules are:

- a) Grants of a total of **£1,000** or less will be paid in full in advance of the project being delivered, payment will be made to successful applicants within 1 month of the submission deadline date, with monitoring information required following the project; ***unless the projects delivery timescales dictate the funding be paid in full.***
- b) Grants of between **£1,000** and £10,000 will be paid in two instalments of 50% each. The first instalment will be paid in advance of the project being delivered. The second instalment will be paid after satisfactory monitoring information has been supplied on the progress of the project. For projects lasting one year, the second instalment will usually be due to be paid six months after the start of the project.
- c) Grants in excess of £10,000 will be paid by quarterly instalments in advance of project activity. Each instalment will only be released after satisfactory monitoring information has been supplied on progress of the project.
- d) ***Grant applications to the Voluntary & Community Grant Programme will not be part funded.***

4.5 *Monitoring will be signed off by Grants Officer before each quarter payment is due, with any concerns being discussed with Chair of Grants Panel or Head of Service.*

4.6 *All applications to the Stronger Communities Grants will be assessed by the Grants Panel with the Head of Community Services having final approval of applications to the Stronger Communities Grants.*

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- 4.7 ***Approval timescales will be indicated year on year in conjunction with launch & deadline timescales for the current Grants programme. These will apply to projects commencing 1st April of the following year*** – allowing successful applicants to place the project into their delivery calendar and to apply for match funding grants and giving unsuccessful applicants feedback and enough time to secure funding from alternative channels.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Process for Main Grants Programme

Appendix 2 - Process for Stronger Community Grant Programme

Appendix 3 – Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy for Award of Grants by Redditch Borough Council to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.

Worcestershire Compact: Link to Web-pages:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/vcs-unit/worcestershire-compact.aspx>

7. KEY

- SIG – Shopping, Investing and Giving**
- BME – Black Minority Ethnic**
- LSP – Local Strategic Partnership**
- VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector.**

‘Place-Shaping’ – Local authorities are strategic leaders in place-shaping responding to residents' ambitions and aspirations and working with partners to deliver relevant services.

‘Third Sector’ – The voluntary sector or community sector (also non-profit sector) is the sphere of social activity undertaken by organisations that are for non-profit and non-governmental. This sector is also called the third sector.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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