
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 16 FEBRUARY 2011**PORTFOLIO: YOUNG PERSONS, ADULT SERVICES, COMMUNITY CARE AND WELL-BEING, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY****REPORT FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE****SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 The decision has been made to reduce the Voluntary Sector Grants fund to £90,000 (down from £143,000 in 2010/11). The Executive is asked to consider which of the recommendations for the future allocation of voluntary sector grants in 2011/12, set out in section 3.3, should be followed.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Providing financial assistance to local voluntary and community organisations helps to generate a stronger Third Sector within the District.
- 2.2 Current policy drivers such as the 'Big Society' would be given additional impetus.
- 2.3 To allow officers to proceed with managing the voluntary sector grants fund in accordance with the decisions made by Members.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 In 2010/11 the amount allocated to the voluntary sector grant was £143,000. It has now been agreed that this fund should be reduced to £90,000.
- 3.2 In 2010/11 the voluntary sector grant fund was managed by top slicing an amount that was given to the larger groups in the District – the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service (RRAVS) and activerochford. These grants were allocated by Portfolio Holder decision and monitored through a service level agreement (SLA) process. The remainder of the fund was allocated to the annual small grants scheme whereby smaller groups could apply for a grant. Priority was given to those groups that worked with older people, people with disabilities or are disadvantaged and young people. A final decision on grant allocation was made by the Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-Being, Health and Community Safety. Funding was based on the following criteria:-
- Groups that are non-statutory organisations.
 - Groups that are formally constituted.

- Groups that operate in the not for profit sector.
- Groups that can clearly demonstrate their ability, through a grant award, to deliver benefit to the community within the grant year and to sustain their activities.
- Groups whose activities benefit residents of Rochford.
- Groups whose activities clearly contribute to or support the objectives of Rochford District Council's Corporate aims.

The following were not considered for funding:-

- Groups whose main aim is campaigning
- Activities or projects that promote religion.
- Groups that have uncommitted/unrestricted funds that could be used to fund the activity.
- Activities, the full cost of which can be charged for.
- Groups that have failed to conform to the Conditions of Grant Award in previous years.

An SLA was set up for groups receiving over £2,000 from the scheme. For those groups receiving smaller amounts, a sample of those re-applying were asked to complete a brief monitoring form stating how the grant was spent in the previous year.

- 3.3 Going forward Members now need to decide how the fund should be managed. Whichever option is selected, final determination could be undertaken through an Advisory Group comprising the Leader, the Portfolio Holder, a Member of the Opposition and two additional Members. Options for consideration are as follows:-

Option 1: To maintain the existing model. A pro-rata amount, based on the existing division of the fund, would be top sliced to the larger groups in the District which would include the CAB, RRAVS, activerochford. The remainder of the fund will be opened up for application to the Small Grant Scheme, which has supported smaller voluntary groups with grant funding.

Option 2: To scrap the small grants scheme. The small grants scheme would be stopped with the fund being distributed between the larger groups which could include the CAB, RRAVS, activerochford, Age Concern Luncheon Club and the three day centres for older people in Hullbridge, Rochford and Hockley. Other groups may be considered for funding but no application process from the groups would be involved.

Option 3: To dispense with historical funding decisions. Every voluntary organisation in the District, regardless of their size or previous grant allocations, would need to complete an application to secure funding.

Option 4: To rebrand the voluntary sector grant fund as a Big Society fund. Voluntary groups would be able to draw down a grant after completing an application which would need to be linked to a project based venture. Evidence would need to be provided as to how the project would meet Big Society aims.

- 3.4 Wyvern Community Transport may choose to be considered for a grant from this fund, particularly if their fund from Essex County Council is cut. The Disabled Go subscription has also been referred for consideration from this fund depending on which option is chosen.
- 3.5 The Council is signed up to the Voluntary Sector Compact. This agreement is between the voluntary and community sector and statutory organisations to improve their relationship for mutual advantage. The Compact is not a legally binding document but includes a series guiding principles. The funding section refers to statutory organisations adopting 'open, transparent and timely funding processes' and offering 'multi year funding'.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To delay making a decision.

4.2 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.3 Any delay in making a decision would inhibit local voluntary groups finalising budget plans for 2011/12. The Council's reputation could also possibly be tarnished and the goodwill generated with local groups harmed.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 £90,000 has been allocated to grants to the voluntary sector in 2011/12.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Regard needs to be made to the Equality Impact Assessment process as part of the overall budget reduction process.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Chief Executive

Background Papers:

None

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