
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 21 SEPTEMBER 2011

PORTFOLIO: YOUNG PERSONS, ADULT SERVICES, COMMUNITY CARE & WELL-BEING, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

REPORT FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS 2012-13

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To put in place a procedure for allocating the Voluntary Sector Grants fund that is fair, transparent and compliant with the new Best Value Statutory Guidance.
- 1.2 To open applications to all voluntary groups operating in the District except for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service (RRAVS) who will receive top sliced funding from the same pot based on the previous year's performance in relation to their Service Level Agreements.
- 1.3 To follow a specified timeline that is in line with Best Value Guidance as outlined in the report.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Providing financial assistance to local voluntary and community organisations helps to generate a stronger Third Sector in the District.
- 2.2 Local authorities are required to adhere to the new Best Value Guidance (further details in section 3.2 and 3.3).
- 2.3 A timely and transparent process is required. Applications would be open to all voluntary sector groups that meet with established criteria (the same criteria to be used as in the 2011/12 funding round - see Appendix 1). After the closing date and once the budget has been agreed, a Member Advisory Group assembled by the Portfolio Holder would meet (comprising the Leader, the Portfolio Holder, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources given his budget responsibilities, the Leader of the main opposition party and two additional Members) for decisions to be made on allocating funding, using an agreed scoring system, to groups that submitted applications. Funding to the CAB and RRAVS would also be determined through the advisory group.
- 2.4 The CAB and RRAVS funding allocations, due to the nature of their work, will not be assessed in the same way as smaller more locally focused voluntary groups. The Council is the major funder for these two organisations which is not the case for other voluntary groups. Assessing the grant allocation for the

CAB and RRAVS separately, against additional criteria and performance data, will enable a more informed decision to be made.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

3.1 The suggested timeline would be:

Activity	Deadline
Procedure for 2012/13 put forward by PH holder. Decision by Executive	21 st September
Open applications – notify affected groups of top slicing arrangements	10 th October
Close application process	21 st November
Amount allocated to voluntary grants pot determined at full Council in advance of overall Budgetary Agreement	13 th December
Determine grant allocations from applications/top slicing through Member Advisory Group	14 th December with 16 th December in reserve
Local groups notified of decisions	End of December 2011

- 3.2 In June the Government consulted on a light-touch Best Value statutory guidance to replace the statutory guidance “Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities” and there are plans to repeal the two statutory duties, i.e. the duty to involve and the duty to prepare a sustainable community strategy. This guidance came into force in early September.
- 3.3 The new guidance provides an expectation for voluntary and community organisations in their relationships with authorities. It also aims to be more explicit about the scope for authorities to consider social value in their functions and allow them appropriate discretion in considering the circumstances of individual cases. The statutory guidance requires authorities to consult a wide range of local persons, including local voluntary and community organisations and businesses, before deciding how to fulfill our Best Value duty. This requirement applies at all stages of the commissioning cycle, including when considering decommissioning services.
- 3.4 The guidance requires authorities to be sensitive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations and small businesses. Authorities should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts (i.e. no greater than they take on themselves) and, in particular, an authority intending to reduce or end funding or other support that will materially threaten the viability of the organisation or the service it provides should give at least three months notice to both the organisation involved and the public/service user.
- 3.5 A scoring system for assessing applications will be set up to ensure the process is consistent, open and transparent. This is particularly important if

any decisions are challenged. This will be devised by officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

- 3.6 For 2011-12, following a decision by the Executive, the applications to the voluntary grants pot were open to all voluntary groups, regardless of size or historical funding decisions. Priority was given to those groups that worked with older people, people with disabilities or are disadvantaged and young people. A Member Advisory Group met to review the grant allocations. The Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care & Wellbeing, Health and Community Safety had the final sign off. Service Level Agreements were set up for organisations that received £2,000 or more in grant funding.
- 3.7 The Council provides additional assistance to the voluntary sector through the Staff Volunteering Scheme and the GRANTnet service.
- 3.8 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 of guiding principles. The funding section refers to statutory organisations adopting 'open, transparent and timely funding processes'.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any delay in making a decision would inhibit local voluntary groups finalising budget plans for 2012/13. The Council's reputation could also possibly be tarnished and the goodwill generated with local groups harmed.
- 4.2 The Council would also be open to challenge for not adhering to the Best Value Guidance and the local Compact Agreement.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A decision on the amount of funding to be allocated to the voluntary grants pot will be made by Council on 13 December 2011.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

For further information please contact Paul Warren (Chief Executive) on:-

Phone:- 01702 318199

Email:- paul.warren@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

Grants to Voluntary Organisations Application Guidance

Rochford District Council operates a Voluntary Sector Grant scheme which aims to support local voluntary and community organisations. The following information provides details on how to apply for a grant and how the Council will assess your application and make decisions relating to the grant and the amount awarded.

1. Background

The Council has a small annual budget for grants to voluntary groups to assist in the delivery of their organisations activities. The grants are normally allocated once a year. Any organisation that has been funded in previous years that does not submit an application will not receive funding. Organisations will need to show how they contribute to one or more of the Council's Corporate Aims which are listed below:

- Making a difference to our people
- Making a difference to our community
- Making a difference to our environment
- Making a difference to our local economy

In addition, the Council will give priority to organisations that provide a local service either solely or mainly for the following priority groups:

- Older people
- People with disabilities or who are disadvantaged
- Young people

2. Eligibility Criteria for Applications

Applications will only be considered from groups meeting all of the following requirements:

- 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 District.

Groups whose activities clearly contribute to or support the objectives of Rochford District Council's corporate aims.

What groups/activities will NOT be considered for funding?

The following will not be considered for funding:

- Groups whose main aim is campaigning.
- Activities or projects with the main aim of promoting 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.

The Council will fund those organisations that it considers to be making the best use of any award in light of the above criteria. Further information may be requested in support of any application.

3. Award of Grant

An application form needs to be completed for all requests for grant funding. The closing date for the receipt of completed applications is posted on the Council website. Grant applications are initially sifted by officers with a final decision taken through an advisory group of Members chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-Being, Health and Community Safety.

All grants are awarded subject to the following conditions:

- The Council reserves the right to monitor and evaluate the performance of any recipient has been used for the agreed stated purpose and to assess the associated community benefit.
- The organisation will observe all relevant statutory obligations including those relating to staff, health and safety and the need to get any permissions, consents and licences required.
- The organisation will ensure that adequate insurance is in place to cover any liabilities that may arise. A copy of such insurance should be provided to the Council on request.
- The organisation needs to inform the Council of other income and grant funding received in the application process.
- The organisation needs to inform the Council of how equality and diversity is demonstrated in service delivery.
- The Council retains the right to include information on projects and initiatives awarded grant funding on the Rochford District Council website.

- Applications from organisations who work with children and young people and vulnerable adults will be required to produce details of their protection procedures and policy on request.
- The Council reserves the right to apply additional conditions to the awarding of a grant, depending on the nature of the application.

The Council will inform all applicants as soon as possible after an application has been formally considered. Applicants will be advised whether or not their application has been successful and the level of the grant awarded. The decision of the Council is final.