

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 4 MARCH 2020

PORTFOLIO: COMMUNITY

REPORT FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

SUBJECT: PROCESS FOR AWARDING VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS 2020/21

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To continue with the processes and procedures for allocating the Voluntary Sector Grants fund for the financial year 2020/21.
- 1.2 To agree that this process remains clear and transparent whilst aligning outcomes with those identified in the Rochford District Council (RDC) Business Plan relating to partnership working and links to the Joint Rochford & Castle Point Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS).
- 1.3 To agree that the Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Services (RRAVS) will receive top sliced funding from the same pot, based on outcomes aligned with the Essex County Council performance framework and the Castlepoint and Rochford Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Providing financial assistance to local community and voluntary organisations enables communities and helps to generate a stronger third sector in the District.
- 2.2 A close focus on Business Plan and HWBS outcomes will provide information and understanding of the wider system impacts of the voluntary sector grants fund in the District.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 Applications for small grants would be open to all voluntary sector groups that meet established criteria. Any one group can apply for revenue funding to a maximum of £1,000. No capital funding will be available.
- 3.2 All funding will be allocated subject to applicants demonstrating how their activities contribute to the HWBS outcomes, which aligns itself to the RDC business plan priority – Enabling Communities. These outcomes include:
 - Reducing levels of overweight and obesity;
 - Improving mental health and wellbeing (mental health, dementia, loneliness, child poverty/unemployment);

- Supporting people to lead independent lives and to stay in their own homes as long as possible; and
- Additionally, funding will be allocated subject to applicants demonstrating how their activities contribute to the Council’s Business Plan outcome of preventing homelessness.

- 3.3 After the closing date, it is proposed that a Member Advisory Group, set up by the Portfolio Holder, will advise on the allocations for the small grants scheme, using an agreed scoring system.
- 3.4 It is intended that the funding to RRAVS will be top sliced from the overall pot up to a total of £15,000. As a major funder of this organisation, the Council will assess the application from RRAVS separately and they will be asked to provide additional information on how their service meets the needs of local voluntary and community sector groups and local residents. They will also need to evidence how their service complements RDC’s Business Plan and outcomes, including the joint HWBS.
- 3.5 A scoring system for assessing small grant applications will ensure the process is consistent, open and transparent. This is particularly important if any decisions are challenged. The advisory group will also receive details of applicants that are currently receiving rental subsidy or non-domestic rate relief, or any other support from the Council. Unsuccessful applicants will be signposted to other agencies that may be able to offer support, for example, Big Lottery and Sport England.
- 3.6 A provisional timeline is set out below:

Activity	Deadline
Decision by Executive on process for 2019/20	4 March 2020
Open applications for small grants after budget allocation is set	12 March 2020
Close small grants applications	10 April 2020
Portfolio Holder to consult Member Advisory Group to determine small grant allocations from applications received	13 to 24 April 2020

- 3.7 For 2019/20 RRAVS received a £15,000 grant and a total of 9 awards were made in small grants ranging from £980 to £1000. RRAVS are asked to report quarterly on their performance, and the organisations receiving small grants complete a monitoring form at the end of the financial year. A highlight report from 2019/20 allocations is appended.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any delay in making a decision is likely to inhibit local voluntary groups finalising their budget plans for 2020/21 and impact on the good relationships developed with local groups harmed.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A sum of £25,000 is available to fund the scheme in 2020/21, and total allocations will be contained within this amount.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010. The EIA will be considered in determining 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.



LT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Assistant Director – People & Communities

Background Papers: -

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Voluntary Sector Grant 2019/20 Outcomes Highlight Report

Changes were made to the VSG process in 2019/20 that enabled us to look at applications for small grants up to £1000. They aligned with outcomes identified in the Rochford District Council (RDC) Business Plan and those strategically important Gold projects. This included homelessness, which involves partnership working and has strong links to our Joint Rochford & Castle Point Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS).

The vision set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to:

‘To create an environment that supports, encourages and maximises opportunities for everyone to lead healthy, active, fulfilling lives and maintain their independence for as long as possible.’

As a board we will achieve our vision by working collaboratively with partners to support and empower communities and residents to take control of their own health and wellbeing. We will provide them with the skills and services to make positive changes and enable further opportunities for people to live well within the district. As a council, aligning the funding has enabled us to reflect on the achievements of the grants against the outcomes.

Funding was allocated subject to applicants demonstrating how their activities contribute to the HWBS Strategy outcomes:

1. Reducing levels of overweight and obesity	
1.1	Increase the number of residents participating in regular physical activity by creating more opportunities i.e. through increased active travel and use of open spaces and leisure facilities
1.2	Deliver targeted approaches to the most inactive groups (e.g. older adults, low income groups and people with poor mental health) to encourage them to lead more active and healthier lifestyles
1.3	Encourage workplaces, leisure facilities and food businesses to promote healthier eating by increasing the provision of healthier food and drink choices
1.4	Educate and equip residents with the skills and knowledge to eat well and adopt healthy eating principles
1.5	Increase provision of weight management services and the number of referrals in CP&R
2. Improving mental health and wellbeing	
2.1	Reduce social isolation and loneliness through increased participation in activities (including physical activity) and strengthening connections within the community
2.2	Improve opportunities for those with mental health issues and disabilities to find employment, affordable, stable housing and access public services
2.3	Continue raising awareness of dementia and supporting those living with dementia to enable them to live well
2.4	To help young people build resilience and effective coping strategies, and to access immediate and relevant information, activities and longer-

	term support (where needed) from organisations across Castle Point & Rochford, to improve their mental health
2.5	To raise awareness and understanding amongst young people and their families that mental health is a personal issue, which can impact on different people in different ways and it is not just a stereotype
3. Supporting people to lead independent lives to stay in their own homes for as long as possible	
3.1	Reduce our highest housing hazards across private housing (falls and excess cold) to minimise the risk of falls, fractures and ill health, particularly during the winter months
3.2	Increase residents' awareness of preventative measures they can take and their knowledge of/access to support services
3.3	Support residents to live safely at home through the provision of disabled facilities grants (DFG) and adaptations that meet the needs of those with disabilities or life-limiting conditions to enable them to continue living independently in their own homes

A range of grants were allocated as highlighted in the table below:

	Organisation and Project	Funding Allocation Agreed	H&WB Action Alignment
1	Active Christian Trust - The Megacentre, Rayleigh. Adoptive Families Support Group	£1000	2.1, 2.4, 2.5
2	4 th Rochford Scout Group - John Howard Hall, Rochford	£1000	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5
3	1 st Hawkwell Scout Group - Hockley	£1000	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5
4	SCAFT	£1000	2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.2
5	Christchurch URC - Rayleigh	£980	2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3.2
6	Wyvern Community Transport	£1000	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1
7	Bar'n'Bus	£1000	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5
8	Carers First	£1000 was awarded by the committee members on the provision that the organisation looks at activities that would also include male carers.	2.1, 2.2, 3.2
9	Kaos Youth Club	£1000	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5

As detailed in the table above, and shown additionally in the Appendix A Highlights, the grants given out in 2019/20 were able to achieve a range of outcomes across the H&WB Strategy actions. These actions and outcomes were in the majority focused on reducing levels of overweight and obesity and improving mental health.

By focusing more closely to Business Plan, Project work and HWBS outcomes, it has enabled us to generate information that informs our understanding of the wider system impacts of the voluntary sector grants fund. It has also enabled us to review the development of the projects, share information about sessions and opportunities and link up organisations that are looking to achieve similar outcomes.

Through continuing to ask applicants to align with these outcomes for future grants, we can more clearly understand the reach and impact of these projects across the district, and also review how we might continue to improve the outcomes in these areas with future support and additional opportunities for funding for new ideas and projects.

It will also enable us to understand more about the projects journey across a period of time and ensure that all grants awarded are used to support the project, as well as to consider the sustainability of the project after the funding period ends.

Throughout the period of the grant RDC provides support in various ways; by linking them up with other groups doing similar projects and work to let them share practice, consider outcomes and look at future opportunities to develop together/align. We will also share with community groups any access to additional funding such as the CIF Essex fund, Active Essex monies etc. We also share key communication about the project across the health and wellbeing network, enabling the projects to gain local support and recognition, ensuring where appropriate referral and access information is clear.

Within the application process and guidance, we ask organisations that are applying to think about how their project will be sustainable once the VSG funding ends. We ask that the projects and organisations consider sustainability throughout the life of the funding, and where needed, to seek locally appropriate advice and guidance through channels such as RRAVS.

Appendix Highlights

Bar'n'Bus

The organisation used the funding to purchase equipment to support their activities with young people across the district. The activities came under the priority Improving mental health and wellbeing; however, outreach sessions all have a physical activity element.

The work that has been undertaken with this equipment includes:

- Detached Youth Work Sessions - Weekly sessions afterschool on Mondays engaging 20-30 young people in Rayleigh High Street and Skatepark. Specific conversations

around sexual health, drugs and alcohol, physical health, identity and values on a regular basis

- Summer Project Work - Twice weekly programme through the summer holidays using football cage resource and street artist (with additional costs to organisation). 10 sessions delivered with average attendance 40-50 young people per session
- Thursday Evening Mobile Unit - Support existing weekly provision with football cage at regular intervals throughout the year.

Outcomes achieved through grant:

Weekly Sessions – 30/week across the year (40 sessions) = 1200 engagements

Summer Programme – 10 sessions with 40 young people = 400 engagements

Total Engagements since April 2019 = 1600

Outcomes achieved for Young People include:

- Access to positive, healthy physical activity
- Access to advice and support
- Regular engagement with supportive, positive adult worker
- Opportunities to try new activities
- Increased confidence
- Listening ear providing helping with sense of worth and therefore improved mental health and wellbeing
- Increase engagement within education
- Reduction in risky behaviours
- Access to sexual health advice and support
- Access to advice and support regarding substance misuse

Case Study

Frank [not real name] engaged in a summer outreach programme, being involved with the football cage and meeting workers for the first time. Frank regularly hangs out in King Georges Playing Fields, mainly at the skatepark. Frank's group do not engage with other mainstream youth work activity and can be involved in low level criminal and anti-social behaviour. Following summer engagements, Frank has continued to engage with workers on detached sessions who have been able to help Frank explore healthy lifestyle choices and address challenging behaviours. Frank struggles with mainstream education and is at risk of exclusion. Through links with his schools, workers have been able to provide additional, in school support and mentoring for Frank, helping him to stay in education and have a space to be listened to about the issues that affect him. Frank has stated that through these engagements he feels that he trusts workers and knows they 'have his back'. School are supportive of the ongoing work taking place and are pleased with the engagement Frank makes within the school. Workers continue to speak to Frank about risky and challenging behaviours but feel that he is more able to understand the consequences of his actions than previously and make more informed, wiser choices about his life.

Kaos

The funding received was spent to cover hall hire costs that gave 8- 15-year olds a safe place to go in their communities.

The young people have an opportunity to take part in a range of activities including teaching them to cook basic food, games for social interaction, peer support, access to advice, support and information, help them with self-confidence and social skills.

Outcomes achieved through grant:

40 - 50 children attend any given session, with session run weekly through the year and the youth club is seen as a key support for young people in their community. This equates to 1600+ engagements with young people over the year.

Feedback from a 15-year-old girl who regularly attends the sessions:

'I think that although being at youth club allows the children to make friends, being able to go regularly or to go away for a longer period and doing team activities together allows them to make even more friends as well as experience new things'

Christchurch URC - Rayleigh - XL Mentoring Project

The XL Mentoring project identifies young people from the local community and secondary schools, who will benefit from a 1:1 mentoring relationship and matches them with a mentor. The project trains the community mentors, initially and on-going to facilitate this relationship and supervise and support them with trained coordinators.

Outcomes achieved through grant:

- This year the XL-Mentoring project has supported 11 mentoring relationships. The mentees come from a range of backgrounds and the reasons for their needing our service has ranged from social isolation, emotional well-being, gender issues, inappropriate behaviour online, negative attitudes towards others, depression and low-self-esteem, anxiety, self-harming, inappropriate behaviour, including anger management, and young carers.
- The project is also supporting and developing 11 mentoring relationships, two of which have just started, with training planned for two new mentors to join the team as well as planning another recruitment drive soon. We have a waiting list of four young people.
- The project has been able to offer first aid training to mentors and mental health first aid training, which is very useful as many of the young people have mental health issues.
- Equipment was purchased in the form of question cards and mood cards. This has given mentors a chance to engage the young people in conversation when this can be difficult at the beginning of a relationship, so they have been and will continue to be a great help.

A case study:

Yp (young person) was referred by the secondary school because of depression and low self-esteem. He was matched to a mentor in Sept 2018 and they have met regularly, and the relationship is continuing. The mentor has been able to report that the Yp is happy to come to their meetings at the café. He reports that together they have been able to make a revision plan for the Yp who is coming up to important exams, and also to help the Yp think outside of his current viewpoint and consider his future aspirations. This has been helpful to the Yp and he has been able to write emails and to gain several offers of work experience in his chosen field. All this has helped Yp gain self-esteem, which has also had a positive effect on his mental health.

Wyvern Community Transport

The community transport has sixteen active volunteers all at different stages of their training and, hence, their roles. The volunteers are all either minibus drivers, passenger assistants or helpers observing and learning the various volunteer roles. Once ready they are all MiDas trained which is the CTA standard.

The volunteers are all involved in differing roles according to their experience/training, which are associated with transporting our members to their choice of destination. Some travel to medical appointments whilst others to their clubs and so on.

Outcomes achieved through grant:

- Midas trained 3 of our Volunteers at £150 pp each amounting to **£350**.
- Recruited more active volunteers, which has enabled the organisation to provide more journeys to members. Volunteers out of pocket expenses to date this financial year have amounted to **£1,209.12** and will be more by the end of this financial year. This larger amount is a result of having more active volunteers.
- Enabled more passenger journeys that supported more members who would otherwise be isolated in the homes. The door to door accessible service enables them to live their lives as fully as possible.

The organisation didn't have enough funds to purchase a new wheelchair as hoped, (partly because the Midas training went up from £100 pp to £150pp), but this is still a future aspiration and they hope they will be able to cover this expense from future funding applications.

Carers First

Photo showing some of the carers who attended a day at Leigh Sanctuary

The carers day at Leigh Sanctuary allowed carers to enjoy some therapeutic treatments, to have an opportunity to socialise and gain peer support from other carers and allowed them a break from their caring role. With the grant received the organisation was able to fund the cost of the venue and also to help with transport costs for those carers for whom public transport is difficult to access and who, therefore, are at increased risk of social isolation.

Outcomes achieved through grant:

- The day allowed carers to improve both their physical and mental wellbeing and for a time to focus on themselves not their cared for.
- The Leigh Sanctuary day was aimed at female carers, who all gave positive verbal feedback about the health and wellbeing benefits which the trip provided and how they would use this learning more in their daily lives.

The other part of the grant is intended to be used for a similar day event for male carers from Rochford but has unfortunately been delayed due to extended staff sickness in the Team. After listening to the wishes of male carers registered with them, the organisation are looking to book a meal/activity in Southend so that they too can experience the opportunity to relax, spend some time away from their caring role and benefit from peer support to enhance their health and wellbeing.

Additionally, Carers First have started a very successful Carer Wellbeing Group in Hockley during this year, which meets monthly at Bramerton Community Church during the morning on each second Wednesday of the month and which has over 20 carers accessing the service on different dates.