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| Title | Recommendations of the Grants Review Panel on interim funding of the Voluntary and Community Sector |
| For further information about this report please contact | Bernadette Allen Tel: 01926 456020 Bernadette.Allen@warwickdc.gov.uk |
| Service Area | Customer and Information Services |
| Wards of the District directly affected | All |
| Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 | No |
| Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number | 6 th January 2011, 28 th July and 3 rd February 2010 Executive |
| Background Papers | Review of Grants with the VCS Sector – 6 th January 2011, 28 th July and 3 rd February 2010 |

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|---|-------------|-----------------|
| Contrary to the policy framework: | | No |
| Contrary to the budgetary framework: | | No |
| Key Decision? | | Yes |
| Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number) | | Yes |
| Officer/Councillor Approval | | |
| With regard to officer approval all reports <i>must</i> be approved by the report author's relevant Deputy Chief Executive, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s). | | |
| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
| Deputy Chief Executive | | Andrew Jones |
| Chief Executive | | Chris Elliott |
| CMT | | Bill Hunt |
| Section 151 Officer | | Mike Snow |
| Legal | | |
| Finance | | Mike Snow |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | | Cllr Les Caborn |
| Consultation Undertaken | | |
| Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report. | | |
| Member Review Grants Panel Warwickshire County Council – VCS Relationship Manager | | |
| Final Decision? | | Yes |
| Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below) | | |

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report asks the Executive to consider the recommendation of the Grants Review Panel in respect of interim arrangements for the funding of the voluntary and community sector prior to the introduction of new commissioning arrangements in April 2012. It also notes timescales for the presentation to the Executive Committee of detailed arrangements for commissioning, development of an integrated grants scheme and outcomes of the review of community development activity.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees to the Grants Review Panel recommendations that the current funding agreements with the voluntary and sector continue without amendments up until 31st March 2012.
- 2.2 That the Executive notes that the Members Grants Panel will continue to work on (i) commissioning arrangements for the allocation of funding to the voluntary and community sector from 1st April 2012 and (ii) outcomes of the review on Community Development Activity and that a further report will be brought to the 10th August 2011 Executive meeting.
- 2.3 That the Executive agrees to the Grants Review Panel recommendation to use 2011/12 as a transitional year to allow for developing and piloting an integrated grant scheme to be fully operational from April 2012. It is proposed as an interim measure from April 2011, to offer a single gateway for grant applicants by introducing a single application for applying to the Sports, Arts Development and Capital Grants Schemes.
- 2.4 That the Executive welcomes the conference session being arranged to engage the voluntary and community sector organisations about the new commissioning arrangements.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Grants Review Panel considered all eighteen current grant agreements, which are agreements with voluntary and community organisations for delivering services, against the funding priorities and areas for commissioning agreed by the Executive in January.
 - 3.1.1 The Panel considered a number of factors: procurement rules; providing funding recipients the opportunity to change/redefine their work ahead of the grant agreements being terminated; the County Council's report to Cabinet outlining arrangements for funding from 1st April 2012 and changes within the public and third sector due to funding cuts. The Panel decided that it would be prudent to maintain the current funding arrangements up until 31st March 2012.
 - 3.1.2 All current recipients will be informed of the decision in writing. Effectively, the current recipients will be given over 11 months notice of the ending of the current funding arrangements. This is in accordance

with the Compact Agreement we have with the third sector, which pledges at least 3 months' notice of changes.

- 3.1.3 The Grants Panel are proposing that a conference session is arranged with current funding and potential recipients seeking funding from the Council. The purpose of the conference is to allow grant recipients and other third sector organisations to showcase their work, ask the Panel questions and for the Panel to set challenges to the grant recipients organisations to demonstrate how they can contribute to the Council's Funding Priorities. The outcome of the conference will be to use the information to help inform the development of the commissioning arrangements
- 3.2 On 6th January, the Executive agreed to the Grants Review Panel's recommendation that an Integrated Grants Scheme be developed for grass roots activities offering a single point of access for district wide, community forum and capital funding. The Panel discussed the merits of launching an Integrated Grant Scheme and were initially keen for this to happen as from 1st April 2011. However the Panel understand the benefits of working with partners during 2011/12 to develop a fully integrated grants scheme. Therefore as an interim measure it is proposed as from April 2011, to offer a single gateway for grant applicants by introducing a single application form for applying to the Sports, Arts Development and Capital Grants Schemes. This will mean that from 1st April 2011, any organisations seeking funding from Warwick District Council will be required to complete a single application form and submit this to the Community Partnership Team. The Community Partnership Team will then forward the application to the relevant party for processing. The Small Grants Scheme will not be launched until Autumn, as it is intended that funds from this Scheme will be used to pilot an Integrated Grant Scheme.
- 3.3 It is intended that new commissioning arrangements be developed for consideration by the Executive in August. The Community Partnership Team in conjunction with the Head of Customer and Information Services alongside other partners will lead on this area of work. This will ensure that there will be more than six months to prepare for and implement the new arrangements, providing new and existing voluntary organisations the time to plan and put in place new or reduced services. As the delivery of community development activity is closely linked to the future provision of funding in targeted geographical areas, it is proposed that the review of such activity be run in parallel and also be reported to the Executive in August.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Two other options were considered by the Grants Review Panel. These were:
- 4.1.1 The Panel looked at all 18 current funding recipients and considered:
- Continuing the existing arrangements for 8 existing recipients until April 2012;
 - Reduce funding for 3 recipients until April 2012;

- Cease funding for 7 existing recipients after giving appropriate notice;
- Retain the funds available by reductions to existing arrangements, to enable voluntary organisations to apply during 2011/12 financial.

This option was not recommended by the Panel as it is proposed to provide the current funding recipients with the opportunity to change/ redefine their work ahead of their grants being terminated. The Panel are proposing that a conference session is arranged with current funding recipients and other third sector organisations, which build awareness of the areas District Council and other partners will be commissioning work in the future and will provide funding recipients with the opportunity to influence the emerging commissioning arrangements

- 4.1.2 Replacing all grant agreements with new arrangements mirroring those to be implemented from April 2012. The Panel considered that this was not viable at this time as the new commissioning arrangements have yet to be determined.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The financial implications are that for the transitional year of 2011/12 the existing levels of funding to voluntary sector organisations of £280,600, subject to inflationary increase where appropriate, be continued. There is no budgetary impact, as this is within the current 2011/12 budgets.

6. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 The provision of service level agreements allows the Council to demonstrate its Community Leadership responsibilities by supporting the Third Sector.
- 6.2 Any Grant Awards made should support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategies and Corporate Business Improvement.

7. **BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 The Executive asked the then Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a review of grants to voluntary organisations in 2003/04. As a result of this request a small sub group, known as the Members' Grants Review Panel, was formed to carry out the review. The Panel made a recommendation to defer the review of the Large Grants to allow at least one year's performance monitoring to be considered. This recommendation was supported and as a result a new Panel was formed in 2005/06 to review the Large Grants.
- 7.2 The Panel also recommended that the grants were awarded on basis of 3 year Service Level Agreements as from April 2008 with reviews in time for the financial year 2011/12.
- 7.3 The scope of the review was broadened to include the full range of grants to the voluntary and community sector including the community bidding pots that the Council provides. Therefore it was agreed that a report

outlining the Grants Review Panel's recommendations on the future allocation of all funding to the voluntary and community sector would be brought to the Executive meeting on 6th January 2011.

7.4 The Grants Review Panel has been meeting on a regular basis since June 2010 to consider proposals for the future allocation of funding to the voluntary and community sector. The Panel put forward a set of recommendations to the Executive in January 2011 where it was agreed that:

- the allocation of funding to the voluntary and community sector be undertaken through a combination of commissioning and the introduction of an integrated grants scheme for grass roots activities;
- transitional arrangements be put in place in 2011/12 to allow time for specific commissioning arrangements developed; and
- the current arrangements for the delivery of community development activity in the district be scrutinised to determine how this can be most effectively delivered in a multi-agency setting and in line with the overall priorities for the allocation of the funding to the voluntary and community sector.

The Executive also agreed that the Grants Review Panel be retained to oversee the implementation of the review recommendations for presentation to future meetings of the Executive.

7.5 In coming to the decision on the future allocation of funding, the Grants Review Panel carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on both the review process, and the final set of recommendations to the Executive.