

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 2nd December 2010

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT**

DRAFT VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDING POLICY

1 Purpose of Report

This report presents the Draft Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Policy for all future commissioning and grants funding and other support including use/lease arrangements of Council property by Slough Borough Council to the voluntary and community sector.

2 Recommendation

Members are requested to consider and comment upon the policy and make suggestions for improvement where considered appropriate prior to this report, with those amendments, being presented to Cabinet on 13 December 2010.

Note: At the time of drafting (to meet print deadlines), this paper is expected to be presented to CMT on 3 November 2010. If, after that meeting, CMT requests changes, a supplementary paper outlining those changes will be produced which will accompany this paper to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2010.

3 Community Strategy Priorities

Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion
Being safe, feeling safe
Prosperity for all

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no additional financial implications emanating from this report.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no legal implications. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out.

5 Supporting Information

In 2009 a Voluntary Sector Review Steering Group, led by the Director of Improvement and Development, was set up to develop a new strategic approach to the Council's funding arrangements with the voluntary and community sector. This was to include making the link of any funding activity with the community strategy priorities and the LAA, ensuring accountability, accessibility and consistency in all funding transactions with the VCS, and reviewing funding priorities and criteria in line with changing needs of the local community.

Work was done on researching different models used in local authorities to identify best practice and innovative ways of working, and an extensive council –wide mapping exercise provided information on all grants and contracts provided by the council, and related support and monitoring arrangements. A consultation was carried out with the voluntary and community sector to gain their views on current systems and provision, as well as to identify training and support needs and sustainability and development themes for the future. The consultation was sent out to 350 organisations based or working in Slough. A range of funded and non-funded organisations responded to the consultation, from some very small community groups with no paid staff through to large well established organisations.

This policy sets out the Council's revised role in providing funding for the voluntary and community sector in Slough. The policy integrates with SBC's Commissioning Framework.

As stated in the main document there is a very active Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Slough which is valued by the Council and the wider community. The new Policy explains that financial restrictions will require the Authority to seek closer alignment of activities funded through VCS organisations with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Policy points to the opportunities that will become available to VCS organisations by the adoption by the Council of a corporate approach to commissioning (the Strategic Commissioning Framework). The Policy points out that there will be management obligations, such as the provision of management information, payment for specified deliverables etc.

In relation to "support in kind" the Policy proposes that where buildings are made available to VCS organisations there should be a presumption that such facilities will be shared with other voluntary / community groups. Where possible the Council should be aware of the cost of "support in kind" eg lost opportunity cost of making premises available.

There are also proposals in the Policy to continue the Corporate and Small Grants Funds, for small schemes and to build capacity , thereby maintaining a vibrant voluntary sector. The Policy states several principles to improve how the Council and VCS organisation will work together during funding application and payment stages.

The Policy is still subject to consultation with the voluntary sector.

6 Appendices

Draft Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Policy