

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview and Scrutiny      **DATE:** 14 January, 2010

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

#### **THE COUNCIL'S GRANT FUNDING – UPDATE ON THE REVIEW AND INFORMATION ON CURRENT PROCESSES.**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an update on the review of grant funding and support to the voluntary and community sector, and to provide information on the current grant making process.

##### **2. Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to note the progress of the review, and the current grant making process.

##### **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 Human Rights Act or other legal implications.

##### **5. Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Council is currently carrying out a strategic review of all its funding, commissioning and support arrangements with the local voluntary and community sector with the aim of developing a new, equitable and effective funding regime which delivers a thriving third sector able to work alongside the Council on its priorities. The review is scheduled to be completed by mid 2010 with new

arrangements to be introduced during 2010, and to be implemented by April 2011. This report provides information on progress made to date, with specific reference to the findings of an initial consultation with the voluntary and community sector that will inform the future Funding Strategy.

- 5.2 An internal steering group, chaired by the Director of Improvement and Development is leading the review and meets on a monthly basis to monitor progress. Research has been carried out on different models used in other local authorities to identify best practice and innovative ways of working. An extensive council –wide mapping exercise is underway to provide information on all grants and contracts provided by the council, and related support and monitoring arrangements.
- 5.3 An initial consultation has been 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.
- 5.4 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. The findings from the consultation have been analysed and will inform the future Funding Strategy as shown in the table in the table below:-

**Key Findings from the consultation with the voluntary and community sector.**

<b>Key Issue identified by the VCS</b>	<b>How we aim to respond to this issue within the new Funding Framework</b>
Not enough accessibility and transparency of grant and commissioning opportunities available to the VCS	Consider the development of Directorate Commissioning Briefs, ensuring all processes and timescales are open, appropriate and easily accessibly for all VCS and other providers. Central co-ordination and monitoring of Directorate commissioning and grant funding processes and systems.
Information is not always clear, with different approaches in different departments,	Develop agreed templates and processes for application, assessment and monitoring to used throughout the Council.
No single route of information	Development of a dedicated web-site for all grants and commissioning opportunities and on-going arrangements.
Not enough support given in completing applications, paperwork too lengthy and complicated for smaller organisations/organisations where English is not the first language.	Better signposting to VCS capacity building and support organisations through the web-site. Improved written guidance on how to complete applications. Paperwork requirement to be appropriate to level of grant funding. Work with SCVS to develop strategy to support organisations with language difficulties to access funding opportunities.

<p>Inadequate Level and Duration of Funding</p>	<p>Clarify all funding opportunities</p> <p>Where possible support funding opportunities longer than one year</p> <p>Improve signposting of VCS to other relevant funding sources</p> <p>Raise awareness of the Council's finite resources and efficiency savings across all services.</p>
<p>Small Grants (currently grants under £2,000 targeted at small and newly formed organisations)</p> <p>Over 50% of respondents stated that the ceiling for Small Grants funding should be between £2,000 to £3,000</p> <p>One year funding is inadequate for small organisations to develop, and funding should be increased in subsequent years</p> <p>30% of respondents wanted the small grants fund to be allocated an increased share of the total budget</p>	<p>Develop new criteria for Small Grants Funding to be informed by findings.</p> <p>Consider a three step, three year funding programme for Small groups with funding increasing incrementally (subject to satisfactory monitoring and project development) to support development and sustainability.</p> <p>Monitoring and paperwork requirement to be proportionate to level of grant funding.</p> <p>Consider increasing the budget allocation to smaller and newly developed organisations, taking into consideration that this will have an adverse affect on funding for larger established organisations.</p>
<p>Support needs – there was a long list of support needs included training, capacity building, development support, recruitment of volunteers, exploring different funding sources</p>	<p>Improved signposting to relevant training, funding sources and support services, locally, regionally and nationally through web-site and work of SCVS</p>
<p>Sustainability ideas included partnership bids for contracts, explore social enterprise options, joint working, mergers, share resources, improve internal systems</p>	<p>Raise awareness of statutory requirements for commissioning and procurement</p> <p>Support work of SCVS to develop partnership bids for contracts</p> <p>Work with SCVS's procurement project to make Council procurement processes accessible and transparent.</p>

## 6 Current Processes

We currently manage two grants programmes, the Small Grants Fund and the Longer Term Funding Agreement (three year arrangements). The process for allocating Small Grants funding is attached at appendix A. The Small Grants (grants under £2,000) are monitored through completion of self assessment forms.

For Longer Term Funding Agreements:

- Proposals and corresponding budgets are submitted for a three year period; and targets with outputs and outcomes are agreed annually at the time of renewal of

funding (February cabinet). The priorities and criteria for Longer Term Funding is attached at Appendix B

- The Longer Term Funded Groups are monitored on a six monthly basis against the agreed outputs and outcomes. Groups complete a monitoring form and receive an annual visit. Organisations are visited more often if there are issues of concern. All Longer Term Funded groups must provide a signed copy of audited accounts which are looked at as part of the monitoring and assessment processes. The second half payment of the grant is released on receipt of a signed copy of the organisation's audited accounts.
- There is also more informal monitoring, with officers attending AGMs, launches, and other events. Monitoring has also been carried out through questionnaires to service directorates that work more closely with individual groups to get professional feedback on the quality of the work being carried out.
- A summary report is provided to Cabinet annually on each organisation's performance in the previous year, with targets for the following year with recommendations for future funding.

## **7. Conclusion**

A draft Funding Strategy is being produced and will take into account findings from the consultation with the voluntary sector as well as findings from research carried out internally and at other local authorities. The Strategy will be widely consulted on both internally and with the voluntary and community sector, and reported to Cabinet Committee in 2010 for implementation from April 2011.

## **8. Appendices Attached**

A - Small Grants Fund process

B - Longer Term Funded organisations priorities and criteria.