

**8 September 2014
Agenda Item:7**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2015-18 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GRANT AID PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek agreement of the main priorities for the 2015-18 Nottinghamshire County Council Grant Aid Programme

Information and Advice

2. At the Grant Aid Sub-Committee on 21 July 2014 members resolved that:-
 - The two financial levels of working with the Voluntary & Community Sector are maintained:- a Grant Aid programme that contributes to service provision and the commissioning model.
 - The key drivers of the 2012-2015 Grant Aid Strategy were endorsed for the new grant programme for 2015 – 2018.
 - Grant Aid service priorities are aligned with the Council's Core Functions as detailed in Redefining Your Council.
 - Lead Officers are commissioned to write service priorities for consideration at the September 2014 Grant Aid sub-committee.
 - Where possible to agree that Grant Aid will be awarded over a three year period
 - That when a budget is approved that 5% per year is "set-aside" for "new" or "innovative" proposals. This will be advertised on an annual basis.
3. This report proposes to align the Grant Aid Programme with the values, drivers, priorities and core functions described in Redefining Your Council and agree the Grant Programme priorities for 2015 to 2018.

Background

4. The County Council has a long history of working with and supporting the VCS. The Council recognises that the VCS:
 - Harnesses the time, talents and ambitions of local residents who wish to volunteer
 - Reaches excluded or isolated people and communities that the statutory sector sometimes cannot
 - Attracts additional resources to Nottinghamshire through grant funding
 - Is a significant employer of people and as such is an important part of the mixed economy
 - Assists the Council to improve the quality and accessibility of services
 - Provides a local Community Voice – advocates for vulnerable people and provides valuable feedback on community consultation

Current Grant Aid Approach 2012-2015

5. In November 2011 the County Council adopted a Corporate Grant Aid Strategy to cover the period from 2011 to 2015.
6. The key drivers and features of the strategy are:
 - Member Led – ensuring that members take a strategic lead on decision making
 - Corporate approach – decisions are aligned to the council's priorities
 - Recognition of the VCS – valuing the enormous contribution made across the county
 - Centralised administration – a streamlined process for the administration of grant aid across the council
 - Proportionate at all stages – simple application, 1 or 2 payments each year, monitoring simplified
 - Making better use of IT – application & monitoring processes
 - Longer agreements – where possible awards will be for a three year period to enable the VCS to forward plan
 - Grants to make a contribution towards provision, not to directly purchase key services – making Grant Aid distinct from commissioning
7. These features have been welcomed by Members and VCS organisations and it has been agreed to retain this approach for the Grant Aid Programme from 2015 to 2018.

Proposed Grant Aid Approach 2015 - 2018

8. Whilst no allocation has been agreed beyond 2015 and any allocation is likely to be reduced given the financial challenges faced over the next few years, the Council remains committed to working with the VCS.
9. The Grant Aid Committee on 20 May 2014 agreed a timetable leading to the award of Grants in July 2015. Key milestones in the timetable included:
- 20 May 2014 – Agree timetable for refresh of Grant Aid Strategy & process leading to the awards for 2015-18
 - 21 July 2014 – Agree priorities and approach to Grant Aid
 - Sept 2014 – Members agree refreshed strategy, core functions, & application process
 - 13 Oct 2014 to 21 Nov 2014 – Application window
 - 22 Nov 2014 to 31 Dec 2014 – Application assessments
 - 27 Jan 2015 – Members decisions on awards 2015-18
 - 1 July 2015 – New 3 year agreements commence
10. This paper proposes that the 10 award categories used in the 2012-15 Grant Aid process are replaced by grant priorities based on “The Council’s Core Functions”. The core functions have been defined taking into account the Council’s strategic priorities, statutory and mandatory obligations as well as those functions against which it is regulated and inspected.
- 11. Appendix 1** shows the proposed grant priorities aligned to Core Functions within Redefining Your Council. Members are being asked to approve the outline priorities in readiness for opening the grant aid application process in October 2014. **(recommendation 1)**
- 12.** It is proposed that 3 “Launch Events” are held to give the Community & Voluntary Sector the opportunity to understand the priorities and ask questions. **(recommendation 2)**
13. The three year agreement approach has been welcomed by the Voluntary and Community Sector. However, three years between application opportunities has made it difficult for new groups and innovative ideas to be considered by the Grant Aid sub-committee. It is therefore proposed that 5% of the annual budget is set aside each year for an application round.
(recommendation 3)
- 14.** 150+ VCS organisations were awarded Grant Aid over the period 2012-15. Some of those awards were made as consortium or group awards. This achieved savings with reduced administration and transactions. It is proposed

that where possible groups applying who offer similar/same services apply together and are assessed as a consortium/group (**recommendation 4**).

15. When assessing applications consideration will be given to projects that:

- Help people to help themselves
- Provide volunteering opportunities
- Seek to address inequality in areas of deprivation
- Identifies ways for the applicant to generate their own income and be less reliant on Grant Aid.

Financial Implications

16. Currently no allocation for grant aid beyond 2014/15 has been agreed by the Council. These proposals are subject to a budget being confirmed.

Other Options Considered

17. To cease the grant aid programme, this would have a significant impact on the sector and those who benefit from the programme. There would be loss of valuable support to some of the most vulnerable people in the County. This is not thought to be a viable option, despite the serious financial pressures faced by the County Council – the value of the contributions made by the VCS are recognized.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. To meet the ongoing commitment to working with the VCS in Nottinghamshire the Council is providing a set of priorities for applicants.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. It is recommended that Members approve:-

1. The Grant Priorities detailed in Appendix 1 and approve them.
2. To hold three launch events across the County to promote the programme and give the Community & Voluntary Sector the opportunity to ask questions
3. To “ring fence” 5% of the agreed budget for an innovation fund application round in each of the three years from 2015 to 2018.
4. To encourage group/consortium applications to improve efficiency on administration and transactions.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 18/08/2014)

The grant Aid Sub-Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendation in the report'

Financial Comments (SEM 27.8.14)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Redefining Your Council

Working with the Voluntary & Community Sector - Corporate Grant Aid Strategy 2011- 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

ALL