

**21 July 2014  
Agenda Item:5**

## **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

### **ALIGNMENT OF CORPORATE GRANT AID WITH REDEFINING YOUR COUNCIL**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek agreement to align the Corporate Grant Aid programme for 2015 to 2018 with the core functions defined in “Redefining Your Council”

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The County Council has just completed a significant piece of public consultation “Redefining Your Council” which sets out the challenges it faces to balance its budget up to the end of the 2017/18.
3. Redefining Your Council recognises that government funding will continue to decline whilst demand for a range of key services continues to grow. This presents a significant challenge and inevitably means that the shape of the Council, the way it relates to local people, the nature of partnerships and delivery models will all need to change and adapt.
4. This report proposes to align the Grant Aid Programme with the values, drivers, priorities and core functions described in Redefining Your Council.

#### **Background**

5. The Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) makes a significant positive impact on the health and general well-being of local people, and is likely to play an increasing role as delivery agents in partnership with the Council.
6. From a financial perspective the Council currently works with the VCS on two levels:-
  - As a delivery partner for commissioned services.
  - A donor of Grant Aid, where the Council makes a contribution towards the provision of services.

It is proposed that this mixed model is maintained and this report specifically relates to the Grant Aid element of the Council's relationship with the VCS (**recommendation 1**).

7. 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**

8. In November 2011 the County Council adopted a Corporate Grant Aid Strategy to cover the period from 2011 to 2015.

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

These features have been welcomed by Members and VCS organisations and it is proposed that they are retained for the 2015-2018 period (**recommendation 2**).

9. Over 150 organisations were awarded grants for the period 2012-15; the awards were either made as individual awards or as part of a “consortium” e.g. the Citizens Advice Network in Nottinghamshire. The awards were made across 10 categories and “service specifications” were drawn up by “Lead Officers” for each category and an online application process was implemented.

## Proposed Grant Aid Approach 2015 - 2018

10. Whilst no allocation has been agreed beyond 2015 and is likely to be reduced given the financial challenges faced over the next few years, the Council remains committed to working with the VCS.

11. 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, indicative budget & application process
- 1 Oct 2014 to 21 Nov 2014 – Application window
- 22 Nov 2014 to 20 Dec 2014 – Application assessments
- 27 Jan 2015 – Members decisions on awards 2015-18
- 1 July 2015 – New 3 year agreements commence

12. This paper proposes that the 10 award categories used in the 2012-15 Grant Aid process are replaced by specifications based on “The Council’s Core Functions” (**recommendation 3**). 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.

13. **Appendix 1** is a graphic illustration of The Council’s Core Functions and illustrates how the categories that formed part of the 2012-15 Grant Aid programme could be applied to the Core Functions model. However, the synergy that is suggested in the graphic would depend on the service specifications that are developed and approved.

14. Lead Officers supported by the Community & Voluntary Sector Team will be responsible for developing service specifications for the core functions, these will be considered by the Grant Aid Sub-committee in September 2014 (**recommendation 4**).

15. 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 that will meet the Core Function specifications but be open to new groups and new ideas (**recommendations 5 & 6**).

**16.**As previously mentioned over 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 7**).

## **Financial Implications**

**17.**Currently no allocation for grant aid beyond 2014/15 has been agreed by the Council

## **Other Options Considered**

**18.**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**

**19.**To meet the ongoing commitment to working with the VCS in Nottinghamshire the Council is putting in place a clear process for refreshing the Grant Aid Strategy.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

**20.**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**

It is recommended that

- 1) The two financial levels of working with the Voluntary & Community Sector are maintained :- a Grant Aid programme that contributes to service provision, alongside the commissioning model.
- 2) The key drivers of the 2012-2015 Grant Aid Strategy detailed at paragraph 8 are endorsed for the new grant programme for 2015 – 2018.

- 3) Grant Aid service specifications are aligned with the Council's Core Functions as detailed in Redefining Your Council and shown on the graphic at appendix 1.
- 4) Lead Officers are commissioned to write service specifications for consideration at the September 2014 Grant Aid sub-committee.
- 5) Where possible to agree that Grant Aid will be awarded over a three year period – subject to annual review.
- 6) To agree that when a budget is approved that 5% per year is “set-aside” for “new” or “innovative” proposals. This could be advertised on an annual basis, this would be available for groups who did not apply as part of the three year programme.
- 7) It is proposed that where possible groups applying who offer similar/same services apply and are assessed as a consortium/group.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

**Cathy Harvey**

**Team Manager, Community and Voluntary Sector Team**

**0115 97 73415**

#### **Constitutional Comments (SG 2/7/2014)**

The Grant Aid Sub-Committee has responsibility for grant aid as set out in the Council's Grant Aid Strategy. The proposals in this report fall within the remit of this Sub-Committee.

#### **Financial Comments (SEM 26/06/14)**

The financial implications are set out in the 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

