

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
24 March 2017

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2017/18
Assistant Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the distribution of the voluntary sector core grant budget in the proportions listed below.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That, subject to Conditions of Grant agreements being concluded between the council and each grantee, grant funding be awarded as set out in the table below.**

Organisation	2016/17 Award	2017/18 Award
Citizens Advice	£167,292	£167,250
Involve	£126,909	£106,900
Shopmobility	£29,520	£29,500
Victim Support	£15,300	Nil
Berkshire Community Foundation	£4,608	Nil
Totals	£343,629	£303,650

- 2.2 **That the Assistant Chief Executive be given delegated authority to enter into Conditions of Grant agreements in respect of the grant funding.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Bracknell Forest Council has historically provided revenue funding to its major local partners within the voluntary sector under the general power of competence created by the Localism Act 2011. These grants subsidise their core overheads to enable them to carry out functions which contribute to the council's objectives.
- 3.2 Following the review of core grant funding in 2016, the council proposed to discontinue funding for Berkshire Community Foundation and Victim Support through this grant.
- 3.3 Excluding a £20,000 reduction to take account of rent on the Magistrates Court building, the level of grant to Involve is maintained. The total core grants budget stands at £303,650 in 2017/18; see Annex A which provides a financial analysis.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The council is not under any statutory duty to continue to provide the same level of financial support to its local voluntary sector partners.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Citizens Advice

- 5.1 Bracknell and District Citizen's Advice is an independent registered charity whose aim is to provide free, impartial, independent and confidential advice and support on welfare, benefits, debt, housing, employment, legal issues, family and personal problems, consumer issues and tax etc. plus ad hoc specialist employment advice.
- 5.2 Core services are provided from the town centre office, which is open for three and a half days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday a.m. and Thursday). In addition there are some outreach services at community centres throughout the borough.
- 5.3 Citizen's Advice is conducting a service review which needs to link to the next stage of the Transformation Citizen & Customer Contact review. The review should identify any areas of overlap with the council and any opportunities to work together. Once the outcome of the review is known, a decision can be made about future funding.

Involve Community Services

- 5.4 Involve is the voluntary sector umbrella organisation in Bracknell Forest. The overall aim of the organisation is to promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community of Bracknell Forest. Involve supports new and existing voluntary sector organisations by keeping them informed, providing practical support and advice and training, developing the capacity of the sector and working as an advocate.
- 5.5 Involve works within the ethos of the community development approach to provide information, funding, legal and development advice, training representation and networking/partnership opportunities across sector boundaries. It also enables initial contact and partnership working across agencies and acts as a catalyst for attracting external funding for local groups.
- 5.6 Involve provides vital support to the voluntary sector. As the council will be increasingly reliant on the VCS to provide services that it can no longer provide itself, it is important to retain its support for Involve. Any cuts to funding may impact detrimentally on Involve being able to provide either the current service of developments in the future. Involve moved into the Magistrates Court (which belongs to the borough council) in autumn 2016. A £20,000 reduction to their grant has been made to reflect the reduced cost of rent.

Shopmobility

- 5.7 Bracknell Shopmobility scheme provides a service to local residents and visitors with restricted mobility. It lends wheelchairs and powered scooters to give people access to leisure and commercial facilities within Bracknell Town Centre. Shopmobility is available to anyone who needs it, whether their disability is temporary or permanent.
- 5.8 In addition to having clear benefits in terms of increasing wellbeing within the Borough, the scheme also has a positive commercial effect in encouraging people to do their shopping in Bracknell town centre. Demand for (and the users of-) the service are expected to increase once the regenerated town centre is open. Footfall is expected to increase very significantly, and consequently, the number of users of Shopmobility could reasonably be expected to grow. Nevertheless, during this transition year which will see construction be complete and the new town centre

emerge, no change is proposed to Shopmobility's grant which will be maintained at 2016/17 levels. However, the council will support the organisation to increase its commercial income through the opportunities that the new town centre presents.

Victim Support

- 5.9 Victim Support provides free confidential support services to victims of crime and their families in Bracknell Forest, in line with the National Standards laid down by Victim Support.
- 5.10 The PCC is the main funder and no other local authorities fund the core costs of Victim Support. The council's contribution has only ever been a very small percentage of total income for Victim Support nationally. There is no information about local budgets to indicate what the local impact would be of a cut in grant.

Berkshire Community Foundation

- 5.11 Berkshire Community Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for people in Berkshire through supporting voluntary and community groups in the county with grant funding.
- 5.12 Not all Berkshire authorities make a contribution to BCF but all benefit from organisations within their boundaries being awarded grant support. The grant from BFC is only a small percentage of overall income in the BCF Operating Fund.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 In reaching decisions on grant funding (as with all decisions) the council must comply with the Equality Duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which provides that in the exercise of its functions the council must have due regard to the need to:-
- eliminate discrimination and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "protected characteristic" (gender, race, age , sexual orientation, marital status, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity and gender reassignment) and those who do not
 - foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The duty requires in particular having due regard to removing or minimising disadvantages and taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic which are different from those that do not.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 A financial analysis of organisations receiving grant funding is attached as Annex A. The analysis is based on their audited accounts and supporting information. The organisations have been ranked according to their dependency on council funding.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed using responses from the consultation on the Review of Core Revenue Grants to the Voluntary Sector September 2016, see Annex B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are risks both to the reputation of the council and to the wellbeing of the borough in failing adequately to support the key voluntary sector organisations identified in this report. Therefore it is important that the council fully understands the impact of the proposed reduction in order to make an informed decision.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Involve, Shopmobility, BCF, Citizens Advice and Victim Support were consulted for 6 weeks from 18th November 2016 to 30th December 2016 on the conclusions of the voluntary sector grants review and the proposals for funding in 2017/18. CMT and the Executive Member have also been consulted.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Letters, online survey and meetings.

Representations Received

- 7.3 BCF submitted a written response to the consultation.

Background Papers

Partnership Compact
Review of Core Revenue Grants to the Voluntary Sector September 2016

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