

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**  
**18 March 2019**

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**VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2018/19**  
**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 **Grant funding be awarded for 2019/20 as set out in the table below with a reduction in grant to Shopmobility as shown.**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>2018/19 Awarded</b>	<b>2019/20 Award</b>
Citizens Advice	£167,250	£167,250
Involve	£106,900	£106,900
Shopmobility	£19,650	£9,800
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£293,800</b>	<b>£283,950</b>

- 2.2 **That the Head of Transformation and Engagement 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 The level of grant to Involve and Citizens Advice is maintained. The grant to Shopmobility is reduced to £9,800 (a reduction of £9,850). This reduction reflects the levels of demand plus the increased opportunity to generate revenue for Shopmobility since the opening of The Lexicon. The total core grants budget stands at £283,950 in 2019/20; Annex A provides a financial analysis.
- 3.3 The level of funding in 2019/20 has been approved by Council as part of the overall budget decision on 27 February 2019.

**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 Bracknell Forest residents have access to Adviceline telephone advice Monday – Friday.

### Involve Community Services

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 Involve provides vital support to the voluntary and community sector (VCS). 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 or developments in the future.

### Shopmobility

- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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. The Lexicon is on target to attract 15 million visitors in 2018/19 so there is huge potential to increase use of the service, and the aim is for Shopmobility to become self-sufficient. An Executive decision was made on 28 March 2017, that there would be a reduction to Shopmobility's grant in 2018/19 to £19,650, with a further reduced to £9,800 in 2019/20 and down to £0 in 2020/2021.

## **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, based on their latest audited accounts and other supporting information provided to officers. This indicates that Shopmobility and Involve seem to be more financially healthy than CAB, which appears to be operating close to or potentially below its minimum expected level of reserves. This merits further discussion with the organisation about its current and future financial plans.
- 6.3

### Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.4 A full EIA was completed in March 2017 using responses from the 2016 consultation on the Review of Core Revenue Grants to the Voluntary Sector. A further EIA is not necessary for this decision.

## 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 The only change proposed in this report is the reduction to Shopmobility's grant. This reduction was previously subject to consultation and agreed by Executive on 28 March 2017. Therefore, no further consultation has been done.

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 N/a

### Representations Received

- 7.3 N/a

### Background Papers

None

### Contact for further information

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