

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
31 March 2014

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2014/15
Assistant Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 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, subsidising their core overheads to enable them to carry out functions which contribute to the Council's objectives and which the Council might otherwise have to carry out itself, probably at far greater cost.
- 1.2 The total core revenue grant budget for 2014/15 is unchanged from last year at £381,810.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That, subject to Conditions of Grant agreements being concluded between the Council and each grantee, grant funding in 2014/15 be awarded as follows:**

Organisation	2013/14 Award	2014/15 Award
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	£185,880	£185,880
Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action (BFVA)	£141,010	£141,010
Victim Support	£17,000	£17,000
Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)	£5,120	£5,120
Shopmobility	£32,800	£32,800
Totals	£381,810	£381,810

- 2.2 **That the Assistant Chief Executive be given delegated authority to enter into Conditions of Grant agreement in respect of the grant funding.**
- 2.3 **That payment of the above amounts be made in quarterly instalments over 2014/15, with continued payment being subject to the Council's receipt of timely, accurate and satisfactory monitoring information.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The total budget for 2014/15 is £381,810, which is unchanged from last year. Each organisation has been found to meet the criteria for continued financial support.

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, but given the proportion of these organisations' core overheads which have historically been funded and the decrease of available funding sources, any drop in support in 2014/15 may have a detrimental impact on the service levels provided to local residents. Were the capacity of these voluntary organisations to be significantly reduced, it is possible that some of the services they currently offer might need to be provided by the council.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2014/15 Budget and Summary of Recommended Awards

- 5.1 In recent years the budget has remained unchanged. The total budget available for revenue grant funding in 2014/15 is therefore unchanged at £381,810.
- 5.2 It is recommended that each applicant be awarded the same proportion of the total budget (i.e. the same amount) in 2014/15 as in 2013/14.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

- 5.3 The CAB offer free generalist and specialist advice on debt, housing, employment, tax, health, immigration and other matters. It also works in the borough to promote fair access to services, rights and information for all residents. There is a high demand for the service, which has increased as a result of the current financial climate. **It is recommended that the grant amount for CAB be maintained at £185,880.**

Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action (BFVA)

- 5.4 BFVA is an umbrella organisation with the main objective of enabling and supporting the voluntary and community sector in Bracknell Forest. BFVA 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 BFVA has gone through substantial change over the last year as part of the ongoing transformation work. The Council provided £60K of additional funding support for BFVA to support this work as well as funding for management consultancy and help with branding and communications. Following the independent survey commissioned jointly by BFVA and Bracknell Forest Council, the organisation has appointed two councillors onto the BFVA Trustee Board, making up a total of seven Trustees. On 18th November 2013, Janet Dean was appointed as Chief Officer of BFVA on a twelve-month contract. BFVA have agreed a new business plan which places the

organisation in a much more positive financial position. **It is recommended that the grant amount for BFVA be maintained at £141,010.**

Victim Support

- 5.6 Victim Support operates a free and confidential service to victims of crime, offering them both emotional support and practical help and information. Clients are generally referred to the service by the police, and the service is extended to friends and family of crime victims as well as to the direct victims themselves. **It is recommended that the grant amount for Victim Support be maintained at £17,000.**

Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)

- 5.7 BCF is a Berkshire-wide grant-making organisation which summarises its purpose as "local giving for local need". It raises new funds from a wide range of donors in order to build a Community Capital Fund to support small voluntary groups. As the council no longer makes small one-off grants to local community organisations, these organisations are instead advised to apply to the BCF. **It is recommended that the grant amount for Berkshire Community Foundation be maintained at £5,120.**

Shopmobility

- 5.8 The 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, and users do not have to be registered as disabled to use it. 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.
- 5.9 The Council has funded Bracknell Shopmobility since 2008/09 in order to secure the ongoing operation of the scheme. The funding was capped at a maximum of £32,800 per annum. **It is recommended that Shopmobility be awarded £32,800.**

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 In reaching decisions on applications for 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.

Unrestricted

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 The Council has agreed a standstill budget for voluntary sector core revenue grants for 2014/15. The grant funding recommended by this report will mean that the budget is fully spent.

A financial analysis of organisations receiving grant funding is attached as an annex to this report. The analysis is based on their audited accounts and supporting information. The organisations have been ranked according to their dependency on Council funding, from the most dependent (Citizens Advice Bureau) to the least dependent (Victim Support).

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 None

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are significant 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, particularly in the current economic circumstances. This report therefore recommends maintaining support to these organisations at a similar level to last year.

Other Officers

- 6.5 None

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 None

Method of Consultation

7.2 N/A

Representations Received

7.3 N/A

Background Papers

Partnership Compact

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VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2014/15

ANNEX A

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONS APPLYING FOR GRANTS

2012/13 – Audited Accounts

Organisation	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Cash £000	Restricted & Designated Reserves £000	Unrestricted Reserves £000	Reserves Policy
Citizens Advice Bureau	302	296	84	104	16	Not specified
Shopmobility	57	57	56	-	85	6 months spend
Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	396	460	98	35	73	5 months spend
Berkshire Community Foundation	1,204	973	1,206	8,457	10	6 months spend
Victim Support (Whole Charity)	48,071	47,211	2,959	5,400	16,900	Not specified

2014/15 – Estimates

Organisation	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Cash £000	Restricted & Designated Reserves £000	Unrestricted Reserves £000	Reserves Policy
Citizens Advice Bureau	236	240	84	17	n/a	Not specified
Shopmobility	52	51	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 months spend
Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	174	179	n/a	100		5 months spend
Berkshire Community Foundation						6 months spend
Victim Support (Whole Charity)	48,071	47,211	2,959	5,400	16,900	Not specified