

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
18 March 2015

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2015/16
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. These grants subsidise 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 2015/16 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 2015/16 be awarded as follows:**

Organisation	2014/15 Award	2015/16 Award
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	£185,880	£185,880
Involve (previously 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 agreements in respect of the grant funding.**
- 2.3 **That payment of the above amounts be made in quarterly instalments during 2015/16, 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 2015/16 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, a drop in support in 2015/16 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

2015/16 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 2015/16 remains 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 2015/16 as in 2014/15.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

- 5.3 Bracknell and District CAB is an independent registered charity whose aim is to provide free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to residents. The service is available to all, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious belief, gender reassignment or disability. It has been established in Bracknell for over 50 years and in 2013 won the Pride of Bracknell Award for best Voluntary Group.
- 5.4 Core services are provided from the Bureau's town centre office, which is open for three and a half days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday a.m. and Thursday). In addition to general advice work, the Bureau provides specialist casework for welfare benefits, debt and employment issues and some outreach services at community centres throughout the borough. It also works in the borough to promote fair access to services, rights and information for all residents.
- 5.5 Client services are mostly delivered by a team of 45 trained volunteer advisers and supervisors, supported by volunteer receptionists and a small team of part-time paid specialists. In 2013/14, CAB advised 2,124 clients who presented 9,073 separate issues. However, demand significantly exceeds capacity to deliver high quality services to residents who seek help via the town centre office or by telephone.
- 5.6 The CAB recognises that it cannot continue as a completely stand-alone entity. As a result, it has entered into two collaborative partnerships.
- 5.7 Citizens Advice Berkshire is a consortium of all six Citizens Advice Bureaux in Berkshire, established to secure finance and contracts that would not be available to

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individual bureaux, to develop the Citizens Advice service throughout the county, and to ensure as many residents as possible, particularly those in greatest need, benefit.

5.8 The Advice Matters Project is funded by the Advice Services Transition Fund for two years to allow the three east Berkshire bureaux (Bracknell, Maidenhead and Slough) to share knowledge and resources as well as to exploit economies of scale.

5.9 **It is recommended that the grant amount for CAB be maintained at £185,880.**

Involve (previously BFVA)

5.10 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.

5.11 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.

5.12 In November 2013, Janet Dean was appointed as Chief Officer of Involve (then BFVA) on a twelve-month contract, to manage the transition into a different kind of organisation in the medium and long term. The Business Plan for 2014/15, aims to ensure that Involve can meet and survive sector challenges it will face beyond 2014/15 whilst continuing to work with, understand and meet member and partner priorities.

5.13 BFVA unveiled their new identity and name of 'Involve' at a launch event at Braybrooke Community Hall, Bracknell on Friday 1st August 2014. They also took this opportunity to launch their newly redeveloped website.

5.14 The office accommodation at Amber House has been scaled down. A section of the office has been partitioned off and the remaining space re-arranged to accommodate the current office.

5.15 General Manager, Philip Cook was appointed to lead the organisation in December 2014.

Looking ahead, key priorities for Involve are:

- To increase the number of local groups who are members of Involve (approximately 250 currently)
- To increase the contacts Involve has within the local voluntary community sector (approximately 250 currently)
- To represent the voluntary and community sector through effective communication
- Partnership working
- To engage more with corporate companies who are based in the borough

With all staff vacancies now filled, the organisation is in a good position to take these priorities forward.

5.16 **It is recommended that the grant amount for Involve be maintained at £141,010.**

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Victim Support

- 5.17 Since July 2008, Victim Support across England and Wales has been a single charity. It has two clear objectives: to reduce the distress, poverty and disadvantageous effects on victims and witnesses of crime; and to advance public education and awareness by research into and analysis of experience of issues relating to victims and witnesses of crime.
- 5.18 The regional office for Thames Valley is located in Bracknell town centre where Victim Support operates the local free and confidential service to victims of crime, offering 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.
- 5.19 **It is recommended that the grant amount for Victim Support be maintained at £17,000.**

Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)

- 5.20 Berkshire Community Foundation (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. In 2013/14 BCF made grants totalling £731,000, and in 2014/15 is on track to make grants totalling £900,000 to groups and individuals across Berkshire. This will be highest total sum the organisation has awarded to date.
- 5.21 In terms of grants awarded to groups in Bracknell Forest for 2014/15, the total awarded was £38,058 to a total of 17 groups. For the year 2013/14, it was £38,045 to 16 groups.
- 5.22 As the Council no longer makes small one-off grants to local community organisations, these organisations are instead advised to apply to BCF.
- 5.23 **It is recommended that the grant amount for Berkshire Community Foundation be maintained at £5,120.**

Shopmobility

- 5.24 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, and users do not have to be registered as disabled to use it.
- 5.25 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.
- 5.26 Shopmobility has been located in Princess Square since June 2013. The larger unit has enabled new fund raising activities to be held and the prominence of the new location has increased exposure and footfall.
- 5.27 However, the demolition of part of the town centre means there are currently a reduced number of retailers in the town centre. Membership figures are declining as members are not renewing their membership. Demand for the service is expected to

increase again once the new town centre is constructed and there are more shops in the town centre.

Shopmobility are working hard to increase their income through fundraising. Over the last year they have raised funds from donations from members of the public and members of Shopmobility, and holding a table top sale, fishing match and book sale.

5.28 **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.

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 2015/16. 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 the same 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 2015/16

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONS APPLYING FOR GRANTS

2013/14 – Audited Accounts

Organisation	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Cash £000	Restricted & Designated Reserves £000	Unrestricted Reserves £000	Reserves Policy
Citizens Advice Bureau	265	259	100	108	18	Not specified
Shopmobility	58	75	62	-	68	6 months spend
Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	318	300	123	19	108	3 months spend
Berkshire Community Foundation	1,248	1,151	1,119	8,496	1	6 months spend
Victim Support (Whole Charity)	50,200	49,966	836	4,715	17,709	1 months spend

2015/16 – Estimates

Organisation	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Cash £000	Restricted & Designated Reserves £000	Unrestricted Reserves £000	Reserves Policy
Citizens Advice Bureau	225	239	101	13	n/a	Not specified
Shopmobility	50	53	58	-	60	6 months spend
Involve	230	226	n/a	109		3 months spend
Berkshire Community Foundation*						6 months spend
Victim Support (Whole Charity)	50,200	49,966	836	4,715	17,709	1 months spend

*Unfortunately, the figures for 2015/16 estimates are not available as the budget has not been finalised by the BFC Board. BCF is, however, expecting to make over £900,000 in grants for this financial year across Berkshire.