

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

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE REVENUE GRANTS 2016/17
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.
- 1.2 The total core revenue grant budget for 2015/16 was £381,810, unchanged since 2009. Following the finance settlement announced in December 2015 the Council is currently consulting on proposals to reduce the core grant budget by 10%. This report seeks approval of quarter 1 and quarter 2 payments for 2016/17 to remain unchanged from 2015/16, pending the outcome of the consultation. All organisations have been notified of the consultation and advised that if the proposals are agreed the 10% reduction will be split between the quarter 3 and quarter 4 payments.
- 1.3 It is anticipated that the core revenue grant budget will need to be considered again in future budget savings proposals for 2017/18 and beyond. Therefore, it is timely to undertake a full review of the core grants to consider future options. This report also seeks approval for this review to take place starting in May 2016, following the conclusion of the current consultation.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That, subject to Conditions of Grant agreements being concluded between the Council and each grantee, grant funding for quarters 1 and 2 of 2016/17 be awarded as set out in the table below. Quarters 3 and 4 payments will be determined following the outcome of the current consultation;**

Organisation	2015/16 Award	Quarter 1 2016/17 Award	Quarter 2 2016/17 Award
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	£185,880	£46,470	£46,470
Involve (previously BFVA)	£141,010	£35,260	£35,260
Victim Support	£17,000	£4,250	£4,250
Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)	£5,120	£2,560	N/a
Shopmobility	£32,800	£8,200	£8,200
Totals	£381,810	N/a	N/a

- 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 a review of the core grants awarded be carried out by the Performance and Partnerships team and overseen by the Assistant Chief Executive in order to identify proposals for future budget savings.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The total budget for 2015/16 was £381,810; proposals to reduce this by 10% are currently being consulted on. Pending the outcome of the consultation it is proposed to award quarter 1 and quarter 2 payments based on 2015/16 figures (details set out in the table above).

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. The proposal to reduce the current core grant budget by 10% is being consulted on in order for the Council to fully understand the impact this reduction would have on the services being provided.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.

Involve (previously BFVA)

- 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.
- 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.

Victim Support

- 5.6 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.

- 5.7 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.

Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)

- 5.8 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 2014/15 BCF awarded grants totalling £901,854 to groups and individuals across Berkshire.
- 5.9 As the Council no longer makes small one-off grants to local community organisations, these organisations are instead advised to apply to BCF.

Shopmobility

- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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 the service is expected to increase once the new town centre is constructed and there are more shops in the town centre.

Review of core grants

- 5.12 With financial pressures as they are the Council has to identify areas where future savings could be made. Core revenue grant funding has remained unchanged since 2009; therefore it is timely to carry out a review of the grants to identify proposals for future savings. It is recommended that a review be carried out by the Performance and Partnerships team starting in June 2016 and concluding by September 2016 so that the resulting proposal can be considered and consulted on for the 2017/18 budget.
- 5.13 The purpose of the review would be to evaluate the core grants to;
- assess how the relevant voluntary sector organisations contribute to delivering the Council Plan and the new overarching narrative and strategic themes.
 - consider whether the amounts awarded are still achievable in the face of budget savings needed.
 - consider whether the total grants budget could be distributed differently.

- 5.14 The review would commence in May 2016 once the current consultation has concluded. This means the review would take into account the responses received to the consultation.
- 5.15 The review would include two main elements;
1. Desk-top research/analysis, including:
 - a) Comparison to other Berkshire authorities and CIPFA nearest neighbours
 - b) Analysis of business plan and accounts – including what % of total income is BFC grant, what the level of reserves are and whether they receive any other grants from BFC
 - c) Volume and quality of service – numbers, unit cost/value, awards, client/service user feedback etc
 - d) Consultation with other council departments to determine whether they fund or award contracts to the organisations

Much of this data is already available from quarterly monitoring reports.
 2. Interviews with/questionnaires to organisations, including:
 - a) Assessment against strategic themes in the Council Plan
 - b) Local circumstances e.g. local demographics, accommodations costs, impact of town centre regeneration or other local factors
 - c) Analysis of trends over the past few years – have things changed?
 - d) Exploration of other funding opportunities – where does other funding come from, are new opportunities being explored
- 5.16 The outcome of the review with a recommended proposal would be presented in a report to CMT in the first instance. If agreed, this would then be consulted on to match the same timetable as the 2017/18 budget consultation, with proposals for implementation from 1 April 2017.

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 set a budget in February for 2016/17 which included a standstill budget of £0.382m for voluntary sector revenue grants. However, because the budget relied on an unsustainable use of balances, this was on the proviso that additional in-year savings would be identified. A range of additional savings proposals are currently

being consulted upon which include a proposal to reduce the voluntary sector revenue grants budget by 10% (currently phased over two years).

This report recommends that the first two quarters grant are paid based on the current budget of £0.382m, pending the outcome of the consultation which will be considered by the Executive in June. If this savings proposal is approved by Council in July, future payments will be adjusted accordingly to ensure that the reduced budget is not exceeded.

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, from the most dependent (Citizens Advice Bureau) to the least dependent (Victim Support).

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Initial Equality Impact Assessments have been completed regarding the proposal to reduce all the core grants by 10%. A targeted consultation is now running in order to understand the full impact of the proposal on each organisation and their service users. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed using the responses from the consultation.

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.

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

Contact for further information

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