

Voluntary Sector Grant Funding Working Group

Date: 25th February 2016, 2pm

Present: Councillors D Brown, Mrs L A Duffy, T Hayward and Mrs P A Jordan

In Attendance: Councillor R Harrison (Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal)

Officers: A Green (Note Taker), N McCurdy, D Smith and C Stopford

Apologies: Councillor S Criswell

Election Of Chairman

The Working Group elected Councillor T Hayward as Chairman of the Working Group.

Members' Interests

Councillor T Hayward declared that he was formerly the Chairman of the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Scoping Discussion

Councillor Harrison began discussions by confirming that he does not want to be formally a member of the Working Group however if Members would like his input then he is willing to give it. Councillor Harrison concluded by stating that he would welcome any proposals the Working Group advance.

As a starting point the Chairman of the Working Group advanced his own questions, which were:

- What do the voluntary sector organisations do that is specific to them and what are the benefits of them?
- Is there an opportunity for the organisations to collaborate and share work?
- How much benefit do the organisations bring to the local economy?
- How much does Huntingdonshire District Council save as a result of the work of the voluntary sector?
- How does the voluntary sector organisations raise funds from other sources and how much?
- What grants do the organisations receive?
- Could the organisations make savings by cutting or reorganising back office staff both paid and volunteers?
- How many volunteers do the organisations have and how many volunteer hours does that equate to?
- How are the services they provide assessed?
- If there are redundancies what are the redundancy costs?

Following a short discussion on the Chairman's questions the Working Group suggested that the focus should be on what services the Council want and then ask voluntary sector organisations to submit bids for funding.

Members were advised that the process in 2011/12 involved inviting voluntary sector organisations to submit bids and those bids that best matched the corporate objectives were successful. Favourable consideration was given to the following:

- provision of independent advice services;
- increasing capacity of voluntary sector organisations in Huntingdonshire to deliver services and activities;
- increasing the number of Huntingdonshire residents involved in volunteering; and
- supporting individuals with mobility challenges to be active citizens.

The Working Group discussed the process followed in 2011/12 and concluded that the four themes could be condensed into the following two:

- provision from HDC for independent advice; and
- building and encouraging the voluntary sector within Huntingdonshire.

The Working Group considered scrutinising the Community Chest as part of the remit of the Group however despite recognising the requirement for scrutiny Members had decided that it would be best if the Community Chest was scrutinised under its own Working Group.

(At 2.49pm, Councillor R Harrison left the meeting.)

The Working Group formulated a work plan and scheduled meetings to carry out the work. Members thought it would be useful if there was a meeting for each of the themes and that leaders within the voluntary sector are invited to give an overview of the current practice and issues affecting the sector. Members agreed that there will be a further meeting in addition to summarise what they had gained from the previous two meetings.

Members were advised that it would be useful to receive information from the County Council on their thoughts on how to allocate their voluntary sector funding. In addition the Working Group had asked for information on what advice the Council provides which could otherwise be provided by the voluntary sector. Furthermore the Working Group recognised a need for a fifth meeting to sign off the final report.

Summary

The Working Group agreed to focus on two themes, which are:

- provision for independent advice; and
- building the voluntary sector within Huntingdonshire.

The Working Group agreed to attend five meetings in the following order:

- Meeting 1, 14th March 11am to 1pm
Discussion of the advice the Council provides and County Council input.
- Meeting 2, 11th April 10am to 12pm
Focus on the theme of provision for independent advice.
- Meeting 3, 25th April 10am to 12pm
Focus on the theme of building the voluntary sector within Huntingdonshire.
- Meeting 4, 17th May 2pm to 4pm
Findings from the themed meetings (2 and 3)
- Meeting 5, 14th June 2pm to 4pm
Final Sign Off

The Working Group agreed that there needs to be clear communications with the voluntary sector organisations to explain that the objectives will be changing and there will be no guarantee of funding.

Background Reading

Change For Good, Independent Commission On The Future Of Local Infrastructure