

Voluntary Sector Grant Funding Working Group

Date: 14th March 2016, 11am

Present: Councillors T Hayward (Chairman), D Brown, Mrs L A Duffy

In Attendance: Sue Grace

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

Apologies: Councillor Mrs P A Jordan

Matters Arising

Councillor Mrs L A Duffy declared an interest as she had received a £5k grant from Cambridgeshire County Council for a Community Skills Club.

The Working Group discussed the membership of the group and decided that subjected to re-election of Councillor Mrs L A Duffy the membership of the group will remain unchanged after Annual Council on 18th May 2016.

Cambridgeshire County Council Funding Arrangements

Sue Grace addressed the Working Group to discuss Cambridgeshire County Council's Customer Service and Transformation Directorate funding arrangement for the Voluntary Sector. Members were informed that the funding managed by the Directorate supports the voluntary organisations specialising in the infrastructure for the voluntary sector.

The Working Group were acquainted with the background of the Directorate's funding arrangement with the Voluntary Sector. Funding included nine service level agreements, the agreements are historically based, they are based on the sector, the funding is awarded annually with no long term contracts and each organisation would have to bid for funding every year.

Following a review of funding arrangements the County Council has decided to move from an annual funding cycle to a three year funding cycle and award grants based on outcomes in relation to the County Council's priorities as opposed to a historical reason. The priorities the County Council will focus on are; Transforming Lives, Think Family and Community Resilience.

Members were informed that the County Council will also be judging bids using geographical criteria. A successful bid would be able to coordinate the delivery of services at a County level but will deliver the services at District level.

In response to a question regarding informing the Voluntary Sector organisations of changes to funding arrangements the Working Group were informed that the County Council notified the organisations of the changes in Autumn 2015. The funding for the existing organisations has been extended by six months and the new funding arrangement will commence on 1st September 2016.

The Working Group were informed that the County Council would be 'going live' with their new tender documentation on 5th April 2016. The County Council will then deliberate on the bids and award the grant at the end of July 2016.

Following a question regarding the County Council working collaboratively with District Councils, Members were advised that the County Council are not currently looking to collaborate with District Councils as that each Council are at different stages in reviewing their funding arrangements. The County Council would be open to link up with District Councils further along in the process if the opportunity presents itself.

Members were informed that the budget of the County Council's Customer Service and Transformation Directorate funding for the Voluntary Sector is £120k per year and that this is £10k less than the budget for 2015/16. The Directorate currently have nine agreements with the Voluntary Sector and are looking at reducing this to one agreement which is anticipated to be with a lead partner as part of a consortium. Once the bids have been judged against the outcomes, the County Council will work with the lead partner on the key performance indicators. The Working Group were reminded that it is not for the County Council to determine how the Voluntary Sector work together.

In response to a question regarding the management of the bid process, Members were informed that the process is Officer led but has input from a Member champion. If the grant is awarded to a consortium then the lead group would receive the full grant and then distribute it out as appropriate.

Following a question regarding the support and requirements the voluntary sector requires, Members were informed that the response from the voluntary sector is that organisations require help developing a volunteering network. However, the organisation awarded the grant would need to be aware of the Council's strategies and the agreed outcomes before spending the grant.

After some discussion Sue Grace explained the vision of funding Voluntary Sector infrastructure organisations. Other Directorates throughout the County Council invest in the Voluntary Sector organisations to deliver services. The infrastructure organisations would assist the other Voluntary Sector organisations to be in a better position to deliver County Council objectives and be tender ready.

Members asked if the County Council are reviewing organisations funding from other sources. In response the Working Group were informed that the County Council are reviewing alternative funding arrangements but are not strict on this criteria.

The Working Group asked Sue Grace if she could provide the terms of reference that the County Council are using for the bidding process and the questions for the survey the County Council sent to Voluntary Sector organisations.

Activity Data

In reviewing the call centre activity the Working Group identified that call centre operatives are handling a high volume of calls in relation to benefits. Members thought that the benefit enquiries could be handled by the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) as they often handle people's benefits queries. The Working Group were informed that by signposting calls, such as benefits enquiries, to external agencies it could save the Council resources in terms of backroom staff.

Members were reminded that the CAB would soon be locating to Pathfinder House, Huntingdon. After a discussion around how the CAB or another provider could provide an

advice service at the Council's other locations the suggestion was made that as part of a tendering process for Voluntary Sector funding the Council could stipulate that the successful bid would require the provision of advice services at the Council's other locations.

There was a short discussion on the merits of the Disability Huntingdonshire approach whereby the organisation engages with users in their own homes.

The Working Group were advised that current signposting of calls to external agencies is a redial function however Officers will investigate if this could instead be a transfer.

Members rejected the suggestion of asking the expert witness at the next meeting how the advice sector would respond to the activity data. Instead the Working Group will ask what issues are the advice sector facing on a day to day basis and will then correlate the answers with the activity data.

Any Other Business

Members agreed to the following meeting date changes:

- Monday 11th April moved to Tuesday 12th April at 10am
- Monday 25th April moved to Tuesday 26th April at 10am

The Working Group was reminded that the CAB would attend the meeting on Tuesday 12th April as an expert on the advice sector and Julie Farrow, Hunts Forum, would attend the meeting on Tuesday 26th April as an expert on the voluntary sector.

Members were advised Officers will be providing examples of Voluntary Sector funding of other authorities to a future meeting.