
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services	AGENDA ITEM:	8
DATE OF MEETING:	9 June 2005	CATEGORY:	
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	DELEGATED OPEN	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	M Roseburgh	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	Review of support to the Voluntary & Community Sector	REF: HCS 07	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All		

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That members agree to a review of Council grant aid and related support to the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 1.2 That Committee nominate members to be part of the review team.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To appraise members of the need for a review of Council support to the Voluntary and community sector, to set out the proposed scope of the review and seek approval to undertake the review as outlined.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 Leisure and Community Development currently offer grant aid and related support to the Voluntary and Community sector through three main services, revenue grants, capital grants and funding and project development advice as well as more limited support through small revenue grants to Luncheon clubs, free office accommodation and Gresley planning gain money. The Partnership Development Officer and Community Partnerships Officer manage this service.
- 3.2 The rationale for undertaking a review includes: the number of enquiries for revenue support received; the length of time and change in circumstances since the last review, the need for a fair, open and transparent service; to identify gaps and opportunities in service delivery; to match the service to Compact principles and to meet targets in the Community Strategy Action Plan.
- 3.3 The review should be complete by November and operate through a working group led by the Director of Community Services and utilising similar principles to Best Value.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 At present grant aid and related support to the Voluntary and Community sector is largely delivered through three services. First, revenue support to eight organisations totalling £128,800 and managed through Service Level Agreements. Second, capital grants to projects through the Community Partnerships Scheme with an annual budget of £150,000. Third funding and project development advice again through the Council's Community Partnerships Scheme.
- 4.2 In addition to these main services the authority also provides small revenue grants to luncheon clubs in a reciprocal arrangement with the County council totalling £2,582 per annum, provides free office accommodation for the Project Development Manager of the Old Post Regeneration Association and has been able to provide capital assistance to projects within the Gresley and Linton wards through a finite amount of planning gain money that is now virtually allocated.
- 4.3 These services are managed and administered alongside other responsibilities by the Partnership Development Officer with support from the Community Partnerships Officer (since December 2004).
- 4.4 There are a number of reasons why it is deemed appropriate to undertake a review. With regard to revenue support the authority has received regular formal and informal enquiries from organisations about whether any funding was available and if so how to receive an award. The last time any overall analysis of the level of revenue support was undertaken was amid the constraints of the financial crisis of 1999/2000 when funding to several organisations was cut leaving seven organisations in receipt of support. Since then one additional organisation (Sinfin and Stenson Fields Asian over 60s Social and Welfare Club) has been awarded revenue support through a member led service development proposal. In addition in setting the budget for 2005/06 it was agreed to provide revenue support of £10,000 per annum to Home Start although this has not yet been implemented. The only route open to new groups to be awarded a revenue grant is through the service development proposal route. Therefore in view of the length of time and changed circumstances since it was last reviewed and in order to ascertain that the Council's current revenue grant distribution is achieving corporate aims, is offering value for money and is fair, open and transparent it was considered good practice to undertake a review.
- 4.5 It is worth noting that on a couple of occasions officers have put forward service development proposals to introduce an additional grant scheme offering small revenue grants to voluntary and community sector organisations but the proposals have not scored high enough to be realised.
- 4.6 The Community Partnerships Scheme was reintroduced in September 2003 in a changed format following its demise during the financial crisis of 1999/2000. Initially set up with a budget of £50,000 for a part year this was increased to £150,000 for 2003/04. There has been some initial analysis of the scheme's effectiveness but it was thought prudent to include it in a review with a more complete analysis that would help identify potential gaps and opportunities in the overall picture of the Councils grant aid and related support to the Voluntary and Community sector.
- 4.7 Both the Council and the South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership (SDLSP) are committed to the principles of the Compact which is a central Government initiative

launched in 1998 and designed to promote good practice between statutory and voluntary agencies at both a national and local level. In addition to the Compact the Home Office have also issued five accompanying codes of good practice one of which relates to funding. To date the Council has signed up to the Countywide Compact but one of the actions contained within the SDLSP Community Strategy is to progress a local compact. It therefore makes sense to review the Council's grant aid and related support and ensure it is in line as far as possible with Compact and funding good practice principles.

- 4.8 Furthermore another action identified in the SDLSP Community Strategy is to "Develop a strategy for funding the voluntary and community sector groups and organisations in consultation with stakeholders" with a target of strategy approval by March 2006. This action comes under the Creating Opportunities for All theme of the strategy and the sub section action area of "Supporting Communities to help themselves". This action was identified independently from the initial internal decision to undertake a review which was initially included in the 0405 Community and Leisure Development Service Plan but delayed due to capacity issues. As with all the Community strategy actions their inclusion follows a lengthy period of consultation and debate with a plethora of stakeholders.
- 4.9 Bearing in mind the existing services and the context outlined above the scope of the review will therefore include revenue funding, capital funding, related support services and potential gaps or opportunities.
- 4.10 The review is targeted for completion by November 2004 to coincide with the budget process.
- 4.11 The proposed process to carry out the review is to establish a working group who will agree the scope of the review and use best value principles of compare, consult compete and challenge to shape an options analysis, action plan and recommendations.
- 4.12 Initially it was felt a working group should comprise the Director of Community Services, the Head of Leisure and Community Development, the Partnership Development Officer, a Finance officer, one representative from the Opportunities for All SDLSP theme group and three Members. It is acknowledged that when first convened the working group would consider its membership and make adjustments as deemed necessary.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The review itself will have no direct costs although financial considerations will underpin the review and feature in the options analysis.

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 The existing service and any future recommendations for change will make a significant contribution to a number of the Council's key aims including safeguarding and enhancing a sustainable environment, reducing crime and disorder, developing a vibrant economy, promoting the well being of all sections of the community and improving access to leisure and cultural activities.

7.0 Community Implications

7.1 The aim of the review is to maximise the efficiency of the Council's investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector. Consultation and engagement with the community will form an important part of the review process.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The grant aid and related support to the voluntary and community sector provides the District Council with an excellent means to support a variety of community partners in improving the quality of life for local residents. A review of the service offers an opportunity to maximise the efficiency of the Council's investment.

9.0 Background Papers

9.1 None