

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GRANT WORKING PARTY

(Formerly the Grant Panel)

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 8 March 2011 at 5.00 pm
in Room GFR14, West Suffolk House,
Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs S O Broughton (Chairman)
Councillors Aitkens, Clifton-Brown, Nettleton, Spicer (substituting
for Hale) and Thorndyke

BY INVITATION: Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White

30. Substitutes

The following substitution was declared:-

Councillor Spicer for Councillor Hale.

31. Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hale.

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. Declarations of Interests

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

34. Grants Policy Relating to Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme Funding

The Working Party considered Report B495 (previously circulated), which sought approval for changes to the Grants Policy in connection with the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme (RVHPAGS).

Decisions on funding for applications to the RVHPAGS were currently achieved through the presentation of reports to the Grant Working Party, with those recommendations being forwarded to the Cabinet for approval. This was in contrast to the way in which the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund (RACIF) functioned where the majority of applications were voted upon by Members electronically, which enabled decisions to be made relatively quickly with the cost of administering the grants kept to a minimum. The Grant Working Party was asked to consider whether in principle, it was now an appropriate time to make smaller allocations from the RVHPAGS via electronic voting. It was also proposed that the RVHPAGS be operated with a maximum limit of £7,500 if determined under an electronic voting scheme and any other applications exceeding this limit would be considered at a meeting of the Grant Working Party. Should these changes be made to the Grants Policy, the officers considered it

appropriate to take the opportunity to make a number of other incremental changes to the Policy to reflect best practice.

Section 3 of the report detailed the proposed changes to the Grants Policy which, together with the suggestion for introducing electronic voting on applications up to £7,500, the Working Party considered in detail. Some concern was expressed that items (a), (b) and (c) detailed in Section 3.1 were already covered by the existing Grants Policy. The suggestion provided in (d), *'to help manage limited resources, it is also suggested that a guide threshold of £10,000 maximum per application be established, however the capacity should be retained to consider higher amounts if an exceptionally project came forward'*, was largely supported; however, Members considered the extract *'... however the capacity should be retained to consider higher amounts if an exception project came forward'* should be deleted from this paragraph.

The discussion continued and Members considered that an additional caveat should be attached to the proposed maximum threshold of £10,000 per application, whereby the maximum grant awarded should not exceed 40% of the total project cost, whichever was the lesser.

Having considered the report at length, there was a general consensus that the RVHPAGS process was operating satisfactorily in its present form and the proposal to introduce electronic voting was unnecessary at the current time. Other than the proposed change outlined above, no other amendments to the Grants Policy in respect of the RVHPAGS were presently required.

RESOLVED:- That, subject to further consideration by the Grant Working Party, as outlined in Minute 35 below,

- (1) electronic voting on applications for funding from the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme (RVHPAGS) up to the value of £7,500 be not introduced at the current time; and
- (2) a guide threshold of £10,000 or 40% of the total project cost, whichever was the lesser, be approved as the maximum grant available from the RVHPAGS.

(Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White arrived during the consideration of this item.)

35. Review of the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund's Terms and Conditions

The Working Party considered Report B496 (previously circulated), which sought approval for changes to the terms and conditions connected with the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund (RACIF).

On 20 October 2010, the Cabinet adopted both the proposals for allocating the remaining Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) funding and the recommendations emanating from the Rural Area Funding Review (Minutes 69 and 71 referred). Consequently, from April 2011 to March 2014 the RACIF would be incorporated into the Rural Action Plan and would have a total budget of £60,000, plus any remaining balance carried over from 2010/2011, which as at 1 February 2011 amounted to £18,473. The financial situation in connection with the RACIF was expressed in further detail in Appendix A attached to the report.

This budget provided approximately £20,000 a year for the next three years. To manage the new budget, it was considered that the terms and conditions of the RACIF should be revised. The existing terms stated that under this scheme, the maximum grant available was £5,000 and the Working Party noted that the average grant awarded since

commencing the scheme had been approximately £2,800. Consideration was given to reducing the maximum grant from £5,000 to £2,500 and also to limiting the amount of times that Parish Councils could apply to the scheme to once every two years, in line with how often applications could be received from other community groups. Currently, there was no limit on the amount of times Parish Councils could apply to the scheme.

The Working Party broadly supported the proposals as detailed in Section 3.3 of the report; however, it considered that the maximum and minimum thresholds for the scheme needed to be set in conjunction with the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme, to ensure that the two schemes complemented each other.

The Working Party considered the most appropriate course of action was to arrange another date for a meeting of the Working Party to consider the content of both reports in a single composite report, and for this meeting to be held prior to the Cabinet meeting arranged for 27 April 2011.

RESOLVED:-

That an additional meeting of the Working Party be arranged prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on 27 April 2011 to reconsider the contents of Reports B495, '*Grants Policy Relating to Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme Funding*' and B496, '*Review of the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund's Terms and Conditions*' in a single composite report to ensure consistency of approach between the two schemes.

36. Rougham Sports Association Management Committee: Approval of an Application submitted under the Criteria for the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund

(With the agreement of the Chairman, the following item was considered as a matter of urgency in order that the application submitted by Rougham Sports Hall Management Committee could be determined within the relevant timescale.)

The Economic Development Officer reported that Rougham Sports Association Management Committee had applied for a grant of £1,172 towards the purchase of a sports safety net to be installed around the play area adjacent to Rougham Sports Hall. This application had been circulated by email for determination using the electronic voting system, as permitted under the criteria for the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund. Three votes approving the application had been received and one further vote for approval would enable a majority vote to be recorded.

Councillor Clifton-Brown supported the application at the meeting and voted in favour of the application.

RESOLVED:-

That, a grant of £1,172, which would usually have been determined using the electronic voting system, be awarded to Rougham Sports Association Management Committee towards the purchase of a sports safety net to be installed around the play area adjacent to Rougham Sports Hall.

37. Application for Funding in 2011/2012: Clare in Bloom

The Working Party considered Report B497 (previously circulated), which sought approval for a grant to be awarded to Clare in Bloom in 2011/2012.

On 7 December 2010, the Working Party had recommended approval of the total grant allocation for 'In Bloom' organisations of £2,925. This amount had subsequently been approved by the Cabinet (Minute 102 (b)(2) referred: 19 January 2011) and full Council as part of the budget setting process.

At the Working Party meeting on 7 December 2010, Clare in Bloom was the only organisation to apply for funding and the officers had recommended that an 'In Bloom' grant of £2,925 be awarded to Clare (Report B363 referred). However, Members had expressed concern that funding awarded in the previous year had not been fully utilised and that there was a sizeable balance carried forward to 2011/2012, which led to the Working Party deferring consideration of the application having questioned whether a grant was in fact required for the 2011 Anglia in Bloom competition.

Section 2 of Report B497 provided further background information on the application, including how funding allocated in previous years to Clare in Bloom had been spent and the reasons for the request of an application in 2011/2012. Attached as Appendix A to the report were details of the application including a grant scoring matrix.

The Community Funding Officer tabled Clare in Bloom Committee's statements of accounts relating to the previous four financial years, which provided further background information for the Working Party.

Councillor Nettleton considered that although the budget of £2,925 had already been approved, it was not necessary for the total amount to be allocated to Clare in Bloom. He was opposed to granting any funding to the applicant in 2011/2012 and considered Clare Parish Council or alternative sources should provide the funding. Other Members noted that a grant from the Borough Council had been consistently awarded for a number of years and agreed with Councillor Nettleton that match funding should be sought from other funding sources such as Havebury Housing Partnership or Suffolk County Council Locality Budget. Subsequently, the Working Party considered the grant to Clare in Bloom should be reduced to £2,000 in 2011/2012 and that discussions should be held with the Clare in Bloom Committee to advise that its ongoing grant from the Borough Council was likely to reduce further in future years.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) a grant of £2,000 be awarded to Clare in Bloom in 2011/2012 from the approved 'In Bloom' budget of £2,925; and***
- (2) discussions be held with the Clare in Bloom Committee to advise that the grant to Clare in Bloom is likely to be reduced by a greater amount in future years.***

(Councillor Nettleton wished it to be recorded that he voted against the recommendations.)

38. Chedburgh Parish Council

The Working Party considered Report B498 (previously circulated), which sought confirmation of a grant previously awarded to Chedburgh Parish Council towards the modernisation of its play area.

In June 2010, Chedburgh Parish Council applied to the Borough Council for a grant from the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme fund to fully refurbish and modernise the village play area at a cost of £46,176 plus VAT. A grant of £7,500 was subsequently allocated to the Parish Council by the Cabinet on 23 June 2010 (Minute 22 (b) referred).

Whilst it had successfully obtained the majority of match funding sought for the project, the Parish Council had been unable to secure Big Lottery funding. Applications to a number of other funding sources had also been unsuccessful. The Parish Council had therefore, decided to reduce the size of the whole project, which was now estimated to cost £30,000 plus VAT.

Details of the original application were attached as Appendix A to the report, which was reconsidered by the Working Party. Taking into consideration the change in circumstances, the Working Party confirmed that £7,500 should still be awarded to Chedburgh Parish Council towards the modernisation of its play area.



RECOMMENDED:-

That, although the total cost of the project to modernise the village play area has been reduced, as outlined in Section 2 of Report B498, the grant of £7,500 previously awarded to Chedburgh Parish Council from the Recreation, Village Hall and Play Area Grant Scheme fund, be confirmed.

39. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party confirmed that future meetings in 2011 would be held on:-

7 June;
6 September;
15 November; and
6 December.

All meetings would be held on Tuesdays commencing at 5.00 pm.

Members also noted an additional meeting would be arranged prior to the Cabinet meeting on 27 April 2011 and this would be communicated to the Working Party by email.

The meeting concluded at 6.04 pm.

**MRS S O BROUGHTON
CHAIRMAN**