



## **Grant Working Party 8 March 2011**

### **Grants Policy Relating to Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme Funding**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Decisions on funding for recreation, village halls and play area schemes are currently achieved through the presentation of reports to the Grant Working Party, with those recommendations then being forwarded to the Cabinet for approval. This is in contrast to the way in which the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund (RACIF) functions where the majority of applications are voted on electronically allowing for timely decisions and keeping the cost of administering the grants to a minimum.
- 1.2 The Grant Working Party is asked to consider whether, in principle, it is now an appropriate time to consider making the smaller allocations from the Recreation, Village Hall and Play Area Grant Scheme (RVHPAGS) via electronic voting. Whilst the Grants Policy is being reviewed in this regard, the officers could take the opportunity to make a number of incremental changes to the Policy to reflect best practice and manage the expectations of applicants at a time when funding is limited.

#### **2. Introduction of Electronic Voting for the Recreation, Village Hall and Play Area Scheme Fund**

- 2.1 As budget pressures have increased, the value of the grants being made from the RVHPAGS has reduced, with much more emphasis being placed on applicants using any award of funding from the Borough Council to attract in a range of other grants, rather than the Council being seen as the provider of a substantial part of funding for a scheme. At the same time the Council is looking at ways of improving its efficiency which makes it a logical time to consider extending the practice of electronic voting. This would remove the costs associated with circulating paper reports and allows decisions to be made as required rather than to a committee timetable.
- 2.3 It is suggested that for the RVHPAGS an upper limit of £7,500 is set, above which the application would still be considered at a meeting of the Grant Working Party. The £7,500 limit would have resulted in seven out of the eight applications for this funding considered by the Grant Working Party in 2010/2011 being dealt with via the electronic voting system.

### 3. Updates to the Grant Policy to Reflect Best Practice

- 3.1 Officers have carried out an initial review of the grant policies of other councils and funding providers and have identified a range of potential updates to the Borough Council's Grants Policy to reflect best practice and the localism agenda. The changes which officers have identified to date include:-
- (a) formally asking for evidence of the need for the project;
  - (b) establishing to what extent potential users of any facilities or services have been involved in the planning of them, with a presumption that they should be in some form;
  - (c) an expectation that the group applying for funding will have some form of Equal Access Statement for the service or facility being provided. Assistance in preparing a basic Statement can be provided and for many organisations the Statement could easily be contained on one side of A4 so this not an onerous requirement;
  - (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 exceptional project came forward;
  - (e) the level of match funding expected should also be formalised, based on research into the practices of other funders; and
  - (f) requiring that the bank account to which any grant funding is being paid should have two unrelated signatories.
- 3.2 Further updates may be identified once officers have conducted further research.

### 4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:-
- (1) a report be produced by officers for consideration at the next meeting of the Grant Working Party on 7 June 2011, outlining the changes necessary to the Grants Policy to enable the introduction of electronic voting on applications for funding from the Recreation, Village Hall and Play Area Grant Scheme up to the value of £7,500, as highlighted in Section 2 of Report B495; and
  - (2) officers also take the opportunity to update the Grants Policy to reflect good practice, as outlined in Section 3 of Report B495.

For further information, please contact:-

Cathy Manning, Head of Neighbourhood Management and Development  
Telephone: (01284) 757002, or email [cathy.manning@stedsbc.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.manning@stedsbc.gov.uk)