

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GRANT WORKING PARTY

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 6 December 2011 at 5.00 pm
in Room GFR14, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

- PRESENT: Councillor Mrs S O Broughton (Chairman)
Councillors Clifton-Brown, Hale, Nettleton, Mrs Rushen and
Thorndyke
- BY INVITATION: Councillors Everitt (Portfolio Holder for Tourism and Community
Services), Spicer and Stevens

11. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

12. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor French.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Declarations of Interests

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

**15. Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme (RIGS): Applications for Project
Funding: 2011/2012**

The Working Party considered Report C251 (previously circulated) which sought approval for awarding grants to Wickhambrook Parish Council, to refurbish their play area, and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to assist in the purchase of Knettishall Heath.

Wickhambrook Parish Council had applied for a grant to completely refurbish the play area. The play area needed to be refurbished since the current play equipment had been in use for over 20 years and did not meet Health and Safety Guidelines, as confirmed by the Borough Council's Play Inspector's report. The application had been supported by Councillor Redhead, the Local Ward Member. The cost of the project was £90,000 excluding VAT. The Parish Council had allocated £18,000 from its own funds and had secured confirmed match funding of £3,300 from local donations, £5,000 from Havebury Housing Partnership and £3,000 from Suffolk County Council's Locality Budget. An application for £5,000 had been made to Suffolk Housing Society Village Gold Fund but this had not been confirmed. The Parish Council's match funding currently totalled £34,300 and the applicant was looking to apply to other funders to meet the shortfall of £55,700. However, it was noted that once they had achieved 50% of the total project cost they could apply to larger funders, such as Biffa and the Queen Elizabeth II Fields in Trust Fund. Wickhambrook Parish Council had applied for £10,000 from the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme and the Grant Scoring Matrix for this application was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Working Party recognised that the full amount requested was being recommended due to the size of the village, the number of potential beneficiaries and the amount of match funding that the project would require. However, some concern was expressed that the Parish Council still had a significant amount of match funding to secure but it was recognised that the Borough Council's allocation would not be made until the project had been fully funded.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust was a registered charity and had applied for a grant to help purchase Knettishall Heath as a freehold from the Riddlesworth Estate. The opportunity to purchase the Heath had arisen since the Riddlesworth Estate would like to sell it due to a change in personal circumstances and concurrently Suffolk County Council, who managed the land, wanted to end its lease with the Estate as part of its divestment programme. The Working Party was aware that most of Breckland was owned by large estates and opportunities to buy land for nature conservation were very rare. The project offered a unique opportunity to acquire such a substantial site in an area of national and international importance for its biodiversity. The project was fully supported by local parish councils and community groups, who had provided Suffolk Wildlife Trust with letters of support. In addition, Councillor Ray, the Local Ward Member, strongly supported this application which would facilitate an important development for the local environment.

The cost of the project was £1.171m including VAT. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust had secured £415,000 from its own funds, confirmed match funding of £140,000 from Suffolk County Council and applied for, but had not confirmed, funding of £516,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Therefore, a further £100,000 of match funding was required by the end of January 2012. Suffolk Wildlife Trust had applied to the Borough Council for £10,000 from the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme and the Grant Scoring Matrix was attached as Appendix B to the report.

The Working Party noted that the Scheme was on a different scale to the type of locally generated schemes for which this funding was primarily devised. However, it was recognised that although Knettishall Heath was on the north-east boundary of the Borough it was accessed by many residents and it was important for external funders to see that the scheme attracted some funding from the Council.



RECOMMENDED:- That

(a) Wickhambrook Parish Council

A grant of £10,000 be awarded to Wickhambrook Parish Council towards the refurbishment of their play area.

(b) Suffolk Wildlife Trust

A grant of £7,500 be awarded to Suffolk Wildlife Trust towards the purchase of Knettishall Heath.

(Councillor Stevens arrived during the consideration of this item.)

16. 2012/2013 Core Funding Applications from Voluntary Organisations

(Councillor Everitt declared a personal interest as the Borough Council representative on the Bury St Edmunds and Waveney YMCA and remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party considered Report C252 (previously circulated) which sought consideration of 21 recommendations in respect of 2012/2013 core funding applications from voluntary organisations.

In line with the Grants Policy, each year the Council awarded core funding grants to a variety of voluntary and community organisations. This report brought the Working Party all the applications received for funding for 2012/2013 but did not cover membership subscriptions to organisations that the Council supported, or the specific commissioning on services, which were not covered by the Grants Policy.

A number of new applications for core funding had been received, and a number of existing organisations had submitted applications for increased funding, and therefore the Working Party was required to make recommendations to Cabinet about the distribution of the available funding. To assist this process, applications had been grouped under some broad headings to help identify the contribution to the Borough Council's objectives.

As part of the budget consultation carried out in the summer, residents were asked questions about funding for voluntary and arts organisations. 54% of respondents disagreed with the scenario which would see 20% cuts to grants over a four year period, with 9% having no opinion. As a result, the report considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2011 did not suggest across the board reductions in the grant funding but, instead, set out a proposal to freeze the 'grant pot' with any reductions in individual grants being available for other organisations. The 'grant pot' available for distribution for 2012/2013 was £353,750. Applications had increased to £404,450.

Given both the economic downturn and the current national emphasis on local voluntary and community groups increasingly taking over provision of services, which were once seen as the preserve of councils, it therefore seemed sensible to find an objective way to allow new applications to be considered in future years without jeopardising the funding of other bodies which made a direct contribution to Council services. The suggested eligibility criteria for four year funding agreements sought to achieve this. However, this would require a change in the Grant Policy which currently provided for funding agreements of up to three years.

The Working Party noted that the allocation of the 'grant pot' and the recommendations within the report were included in an Equality Impact Assessment of the Council's Grant Policy being prepared as part of the work of the overall Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) savings programme. That assessment indicated that the consultation and mitigation measures in this report to assist those organisations which were not eligible for four year agreements and would receive funding reductions were appropriate.

The Working Party then considered each recommendation contained within the report and the Working Party made comments and sought clarification on a considerable number of issues. However, these minutes only record those discussions which led to amendments to the recommendations contained within the report.

Recommendation 9: West Suffolk SOS Bus

(Councillor Everitt declared a personal interest as Chairman of a crime prevention panel that allocated funding to this project and remained within the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

Concerns were expressed that the recommendation contained within the report was for a grant for a four year funding agreement. During the discussion, it was agreed that an evaluation of the community safety benefits of the scheme should take place after two years and the initial grant should therefore be for a corresponding period. The Working Party considered that other funders for this project should be sought and in addition wished to know who already supported this project. It was considered that any grant should continue to specifically relate to the SOS Bus visiting Bury St Edmunds on a Friday or Saturday (currently a Friday) and not be awarded for an undefined 'weekly presence'.

Recommendation 10: Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality

The Working Party considered it appropriate that the Borough Council should provide a grant of £2,000 per annum which was broadly in line with that provided by other rural district Councils within Suffolk. However, as this was a new grant like the SOS Bus, it was also considered appropriate that a review of the benefits to the residents of St Edmundsbury had gained from this service should be undertaken after two years and amended the recommendation accordingly.

Recommendation 11: Volunteering and Infrastructure Support

Recommendation 13: HAVO

With the three year funding agreements ending in 2012/2013 for the volunteer centres in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill it was being recommended that the Council establish a four year ring-fenced funding allocation of £26,000 for volunteering and infrastructure support within St Edmundsbury. This recommendation was made because these volunteer associations were parties to a county level bid for national funding to help local infrastructure organisations make themselves fit for purpose in the current climate. This could take the form of mergers between similar organisations to share costs, or restructuring of existing organisations. However, the Working Party had reservations concerning the significant difference in allocations between Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre of £7,000 and Haverhill and District Volunteer Centre receiving £14,000. Therefore, while they were content to renew the grants to the two volunteer centres at their historical levels for a further year, in order to allow the county-wide review to take place, Members felt that any decisions on the overall level of funding for volunteering and infrastructure support should be deferred until the 2013/2014 budget setting process so that the findings of that review could be taken into account. The Working Party did not, however, wish to see the continuation of the grant in respect of rents and rates for the office accommodation for HAVO. It considered that the county-wide review was the appropriate vehicle to examine the level and value for money of infrastructure support and pending that review did not wish to renew funding.

Recommendation 16: Haverhill and District Local History Group

Concern was expressed by some Members at the Borough Council funding this type of organisation. However, the Working Party was advised of the extensive work done by the Local History Group which could not be undertaken directly by the Borough Council's own heritage service within its current resources. The Working Party concluded that the Local History Group should be awarded a grant of £1,750 for one year to help it seek alternative sources of funding.

(Councillor Hale left the meeting at the conclusion of the discussion on this item.)

Recommendation 17: Clare in Bloom

The Working Party endorsed previous decisions that Clare in Bloom should receive reduced levels of funding but wished to be more specific. The Working Party concluded that £1,500 should be allocated in 2012/2013, £1,000 in 2013/2014 and £500 in 2014/2015.

Recommendation 21: St Nicholas Hospice

Although it recognised that the service provided by the St Nicholas Hospice did not directly contribute to the Borough Council's own service delivery responsibilities, the Working Party considered it appropriate that the Council support the Hospice as a large number of its patients and their families lived in St Edmundsbury. The Working Party concluded that a grant of £2,500 be made.



RECOMMENDED:- That

(1) Grant Policy

Section 3.1 (1) of the Grant Policy be amended to extend the period for which organisations can apply for funding from three to up to four years, where that organisation makes a direct contribution to the service delivery of the Council.

(2) Suffolk West Citizens' Advice Bureau

Suffolk West Citizens' Advice Bureau be given a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £181,800 per annum for the provision of services within St Edmundsbury.

(3) Three Counties Transport

Three Counties Transport be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £2,500 per annum.

(4) Gatehouse Furniture Recycling

Gatehouse Furniture Recycling be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £4,000 per annum.

(5) REACH

REACH be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £3,750 per annum.

(6) St Edmund and Waveney YMCA

St Edmund and Waveney YMCA be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £5,000 per annum.

(7) Relate Norfolk and Suffolk

Relate Norfolk and Suffolk be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £5,000 per annum.

(8) Optua

Optua be awarded a four year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £1,000 per annum.

(9) West Suffolk SOS Bus

The Newmarket Community Partnership be awarded a two year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £2,500 per annum to support the operation of the West Suffolk SOS on the basis that the bus has a regular Friday or Saturday night presence in Bury St Edmunds.

(10) Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality

Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality be awarded a two year core funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £2,000 per annum.

(11) Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisations

Pending the conclusion of the county-wide review of such organisations, a four year ring-fenced funding allocation for volunteering and infrastructure support within St Edmundsbury not be established.

(12) Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Volunteer Centres

For 2012/2013, the final year of the current three year grant agreements for the Bury St Edmunds and the Haverhill and District Volunteer Centres be honoured at £7,000 and £14,000 per annum respectively.

(13) HAVO

The current agreement to meet the rent and rates costs associated with HAVO's accommodation in the Lower Downs Slade Offices not be extended for a further year to 31 March 2013.

(14) Smiths Row Art Gallery

Smiths Row Art Gallery be awarded a two-year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £36,300 per annum.

(15) Theatre Royal

The Theatre Royal be awarded a two-year funding agreement from 2012/2013 at £75,000 per annum.

(16) Haverhill & District Local History Group

The Haverhill and District Local History Group be awarded a grant of £1,750 for 2012/2013.

(17) Clare in Bloom

Clare in Bloom be awarded:-

***£1,500 for 2012/2013;
£1,000 for 2013/2014; and
£500 for 2014/2015.***

(18) Victim Support

The Council provide Victim Support with £900 of funding in 2012/2013, the final year of the current three year funding agreement, and gives notice that it will not provide on-going funding in subsequent years.

(19) West Suffolk Cruse Bereavement

The Council award Cruse Bereavement £900 of core funding for 2012/2013 and gives notice that it will not provide on-going funding in subsequent years.

(20) Catch 22 Community Mediation Service

No award of core funding be made to Catch 22 Community Mediation Service for 2012/2013.

(21) St Nicholas Hospice

An award of £2,500 be made to St Nicholas Hospice for 2012/2013.

(Councillor Spicer arrived during the consideration of this item.)

17. Grants or Management Fees to Former Council Leisure Services

(Councillor Mrs Broughton declared a personal interest as her son played cricket on the Victory Sports Ground and remained within the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party considered Report C253 (previously circulated) which sought approval for grants or management fees to be made to three organisations which now managed former Borough Council Leisure Services on behalf of the community.

The Report covered grants or management fees to three organisations, Abbeycroft Leisure, Victory Sports Ground (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd and Haverhill Town Council which now managed former Borough Council Leisure Services on behalf of the community. In each case there had been an understanding between the Borough Council and provider that, over time, the Borough Council would reduce its level of financial support as part of a defined exit strategy, which aimed to put the local community in greater control of assets. While the general aims and principles of the grant policy were applicable, including taking into account the organisations own funds, or access to funds, these payments were all assessed individually. They were not part of the wider process to consider revenue support grants to voluntary, community and cultural organisations. In particular, any savings made in relation to these grants contributed directly to cutting the Borough Council's overall budget through its substantial efficiency programme and were not available to re-invest in other areas.

The Working Party considered each agreement in turn.

Abbeycroft Leisure (Abbeycroft) was the charitable trust set up in 2005 to manage the Borough Council's two leisure centres, certain other leisure facilities and sports development in the Borough. Since the transfer, the management fee paid to Abbeycroft had reduced by £312,800 and in 2011/2012 the management fee was £340,000. As part of the negotiations for the 2012/2013 management fee it had been proposed to Abbeycroft that a further reduction of £100,000 be made to the management fee over the next four years divided between £40,000 in 2012/2013 and then £20,000 for each of the following three years until 2015/2016. This represented a reduction of 29.4%, which was broadly equivalent to the Borough Council's own reduction in Government grant. The Working Party noted that this proposed reduction would shortly be considered by the Abbeycroft Board, and this reduction would be linked to an ambitious programme of income growth at the Leisure Centres and at other locations within St Edmundsbury and would require support from the Borough Council.

In 2003 the Borough Council transferred the management and operation of the Victory Sports Ground in Bury St Edmunds to Victory Sports Ground (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd. The Council annually grant aided the facility and this amount was £45,250 in 2011/2012, which represented a considerable saving to the tax payer compared to the previous cost of direct management. On 23 November 2011 the Cabinet approved a community transfer of the Victory Sports Ground to a consortium, as the consortium planned to redevelop the current pavilion to include a new sports hall, which would be a shared-used facility between the South Lee School and the public. The transfer agreement ensured that the Victory Ground remained a public sports facility in perpetuity. The Working Party concluded that there was no reason to change the current level of grant pending the development of the new facility, but noted that the Cabinet had indicated it wished to see the grant reduce over time following its completion.

Following discussions between the Borough Council and Haverhill Town Council, the Town Council had taken the view that in the interests of local residents, it should take steps to become financially independent from the Borough Council in relation to the Haverhill Arts Centre, removing any uncertainty over future funding. Accordingly, from April 2011, it increased its precept to allow it to meet the full costs of the Arts Centre. Under the Borough Council's grants policy, it would not actually now be possible to recommend a grant towards the running costs of the Arts Centre from 2012/2013 onwards. However, during the budget setting process the Cabinet had considered carefully the implications of a complete and unexpected withdrawal of arts funding by the Borough Council in Haverhill, and had concluded that this would be undesirable. Cabinet also considered that it was important for the Borough Council to retain a stake in the arts in Haverhill, albeit as a commissioner and not a direct provider. It had, therefore, suggested as part of its budget proposals that £50,000 of the potential savings from the grant be ring-fenced for a new community grants fund for Haverhill. This fitted with the suggestion of the Town Council itself, which would be invited to bid to the fund as the Town's major arts provider. The proposal was that this revenue fund should be administered by the local community in Haverhill to spend on its own priorities.

The Working Party endorsed the proposal that the One Haverhill Board would be the logical body to determine how the funding should be allocated. To allow the Board the maximum flexibility, it was proposed that this fund be put in place for four years from 2012/2013.



RECOMMENDED:- That

(1) Abbeycroft Leisure

A new agreement be negotiated with Abbeycroft Leisure to reduce the Borough Council's management fee by £100,000 over the next four years, subject to the Borough Council supporting Abbeycroft's income generation plans wherever appropriate;

(2) Victory Sports Grounds (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd

The grant payable to the Victory Sports Ground (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd be fixed at its current level for 2012/2013, namely £45,250;

(3) Haverhill Town Hall Arts Centre

No grant be paid to Haverhill Town Council from 1 April 2012 for the management of the Town Hall Arts Centre in recognition of the steps taken by the Town Council to take on all of the costs of the Arts Centre through its own parish precept; and

(4) Haverhill

A new grant fund for Haverhill of £50,000 per annum be established from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2016, to be administered by the ONE Haverhill Board.

18. Brecks Partnership and Dedham Vale Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project

(Councillors Spicer and Stevens declared prejudicial interests as the Borough Council's representatives on the Brecks Management Group and Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Committee respectively and left the meeting for the consideration of this and the remaining items. Councillor Mrs Broughton declared a personal interest as the Borough Council's substitute representative in the Brecks Management Group and had attended one meeting in 4 years and remained within the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party considered a narrative item which sought approval for the Borough Council's reduced contributions to the Brecks Partnership and Dedham Vale Area of Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project.

The Brecks Partnership and Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Project were separate partnerships established to protect and promote the environments and economies of these two nationally important areas of natural beauty. They assisted the Borough Council in its planning, environmental, economic and heritage functions and the Borough Council was represented on both bodies. The Working Party was advised that the current memorandum of agreement for the two partnerships were currently being re-negotiated, and in respect of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley project a new agreement up until 2014/2015 was being prepared.

It was agreed in 2010/2011 that the Borough Council would maintain support for both partnerships given the good value for money they represented in terms of fulfilling

the Borough Council's aspirations and duties for the two years. Both partnerships had recognised that, to keep in line with their local authority funders, they needed to continue to reduce their costs if they were to survive. Consequently, the partnerships had agreed to reduce their overheads, and had already taken steps to do so, allowing the Borough Council to agree to reduce its level of funding by 10% in 2011/2012. The levels of reduction in funding from partners since 2010/2011 varied from authority to authority and between the two partnerships. It was proposed that, in line with its own DR-IVE savings programme, the Borough Council make a further 10% cut in 2012/2013, and enter into new memoranda of agreement on that basis. The Working Party agreed that this level of reduction appeared appropriate.

Some concerns were raised by the Working Party about the partnerships, including the financial contributions made by other local authorities and the benefits to the community generally. It was therefore agreed that more detailed information should be provided when the funding agreements were next reviewed, and that steps should be taken to inform all councillors more about the work of the partnerships.



RECOMMENDED:-

That the Borough Council reduces its contributions to the Brecks Partnership and the Dedham Vale Area of Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project by 10% from 2012/2013 to £10,489 and £11,997 respectively.

19. Tackling Drug and Alcohol Problems

The Working Party considered Report C254 (previously circulated) which sought approval that a new grant fund of £5,000 per annum be established to tackle drug and alcohol problems in the Borough.

The Borough Council had a budget of £11,000 to tackle drug and alcohol problems in the Borough as part of its community safety and public health roles. Until 2010 this budget was used to fund one third of the cost of a member of staff who worked on projects for the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership. Unfortunately, the other partners were unable to continue funding the post and the post holder was made redundant. As reported to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet was proposing to re-allocate the £11,000 as follows:-

- (a) £3,000 to be used as savings in the Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) Initiative;
- (b) £3,000 to be retained as a community safety budget to commission one-off interventions as required; and
- (c) £5,000 to be used to set up a new grant fund for organisations tackling drug and alcohol problems in St Edmundsbury.

Assuming that the full Council adopted this proposal as part of its budget setting in February 2012 the new grant fund would be available from 1 April 2012.

The Working Party considered the criteria and process to be applied to the allocation of funds from this grant fund and endorsed the recommendations contained within the report.

In response to a question, the Working Party was informed that it was the intention that the grant fund should be established initially for a four year period, although this would be kept under review.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (a) subject to the normal budget setting process, a new grant fund of £5,000 per annum to tackle drug and alcohol problems in the Borough be established from 1 April 2012 on the basis outlined in section 3 of Report C254; and**
- (b) the Council's Grants Policy and other documentation be updated to include details of the scheme.**

20. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party confirmed the following dates for future meetings in 2012:-

6 March;
12 June;
4 September; and
11 December 2012.

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

The meeting concluded at 7.11 pm.

CHAIRMAN