

Review of West Suffolk Council Grants to External Organisations

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| Report No: | CAB/WS/19/007 | |
| Report to and date: | Cabinet | 25 June 2019 |
| Cabinet Members: | Robert Everitt Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities Tel: 01284 769000 Email: robert.everitt@westsuffolk.gov.uk | |
| Lead officer: | Davina Howes Assistant Director (Families and Communities) Tel: 01284 757070 Email: davina.howes@westsuffolk.gov.uk | |
| Key Decision: (Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <u>do not</u> apply.) | <i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| <i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is not included on the Decisions Plan.</i> | | |

Wards impacted: **All Wards**

Recommendation: It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet:

- (1) **Agrees to the establishment of a Cabinet Taskforce to carry out a review of West Suffolk Council's Grants to External Organisations; and**
- (2) **Approves the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce (attached as Appendix A to Report No: CAB/WS/19/007).**




1. Background / Context

- 1.1 The establishment of the new West Suffolk Council provides an opportunity to review how we help local communities and organisations through locality budgets, grants and reliefs. Cabinet is asked to agree to the proposed establishment of a Taskforce to carry out a review of West Suffolk Council's Grants to External Organisations, which will feed into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The aim of the review is to ensure that locality budgets, grants and reliefs made from 1 April 2020 are aligned to our strategic objectives and offer value for money.
- 1.2 In the past, many of the core grant schemes worked in a similar way for both Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, but there were some differences in the approach used to award grants or discounts. The new Council provides an ideal opportunity to review the rationale and processes for awarding locality budgets, grants and reliefs, to ensure they are consistent and fair across West Suffolk. The proposed review will assess the:
- (1) effectiveness of the grant or discretionary relief application, allocation and monitoring processes;
 - (2) the outcomes achieved from the funding or discount;
 - (3) total value of the grant funds or reliefs in light of the MTFS; and
 - (4) role and purpose of grant funding and relief schemes in light of other external funding opportunities for organisations.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 West Suffolk Council provides locality budget funding, grants to external organisations or offers business rate reliefs across a range of service areas. However, a number of these are grants or reliefs are made by Government but administered by the council and have to operate in line with strict criteria that give the Council very little scope to change the way they are processed (for example, Disabled Facilities Grants or allocations from the Warm Homes Fund). It is therefore proposed to exclude such grants and reliefs from the review.
- 2.2 The proposed review will only cover grant and relief schemes:
- (a) which are entirely discretionary or funded by West Suffolk Council; and
 - (b) where the council is not under a duty to have a scheme or operate the scheme in a certain way.
- 2.3 The review will therefore cover the following existing schemes:

Families and Communities grants

- Councillor Locality Budgets
 - Community Chest
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Leisure and culture grants

- Miscellaneous grants made to specific organisations on a one-off or recurring basis

Economic development grants

- Small Business Start Up Scheme
- Shopfront Painting Scheme
- Service level agreement with MENTA (3 years)
- Business rate discretionary reliefs

Environment/sustainability grants (to be considered in the context of the wider Community Energy Plan)

- Greener Business Grant
- Solar for Business (Capital investment by the council, resulting in reduced energy bills for participating businesses)

- 2.4 The Leader of the Council has agreed that the review should be carried out by a Cabinet Taskforce. The terms of reference for the proposed West Suffolk Council Grants to External Organisations Taskforce are attached as Appendix A.
- 2.5 The outputs from the Review are expected to be recommendations for how West Suffolk Council should award grants and reliefs in the future, in the form of draft schemes or amendments to existing schemes. The Taskforce may also wish to consider the possibility of a West Suffolk Council Grants Policy.
- 2.6 In order for the Taskforce to shape the Council's approach to locality budgets, grants and reliefs, Cabinet members will be informed of initial findings and feedback in September 2019. Final recommendations will be made to Cabinet in November 2019 in order to ensure that stakeholder and Member feedback can be fully taken into account.
- 2.7 In advance of the review being concluded, provisional arrangements have been agreed by the Shadow Executive (before Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury became West Suffolk Council) for the allocation of Community Chest funding for 2020-21 to be carried out on the same basis as previous years. This means that the bidding round will continue during 2019-20.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative option is to not review how West Suffolk Council awards locality budgets, grants and reliefs. However, by not carrying out the review it would not be possible to ensure that the Council is being consistent across West Suffolk with how locality budgets, grants and reliefs are awarded, and that the schemes are in line with the Council's strategic priorities.

4. Consultation and engagement

- 4.1 Consideration will need to be given to the potential impact on the organisations and places in West Suffolk that making any changes would have. Input will be needed from the third sector and small businesses as the main beneficiaries of grant funding from the council. This could be done



through engagement and/or inviting them to meetings of the Taskforce to give evidence on how the various funding options would impact on them.

5. Risks

- 5.1 That local groups, organisations and places are adversely impacted by the decisions made as a result of this review.

6. Implications arising from the proposal

- 6.1 Any new schemes developed as a result of the review will be subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 **Appendix 1** – Terms of Reference for the West Suffolk Grants to External Organisations Taskforce.

8. Background documents

- 8.1 Not applicable.

