

REVIEW OF WEST SUFFOLK COUNCIL GRANTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Proposed title of group: West Suffolk Council Grants to External Organisations Taskforce.

Purpose of group: To make recommendations to Cabinet on how best to ensure that all locality budgets, grants and reliefs made from 1 April 2020 are aligned to our strategic objectives and offer maximum value for money.

Background: 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 grants and reliefs, to ensure they are consistent and fair across West Suffolk, and that the funding awarded supports the achievement of the Council's strategic priorities.

Terms of reference:

1. To **review** the rationale and processes for awarding locality budget allocations, grants and reliefs, to ensure they are consistent and fair across West Suffolk and supporting achievement of strategic priorities. This will be achieved by assessing the:
 - a. effectiveness of the grant or discretionary relief application, allocation and monitoring processes;
 - b. the outcomes achieved from the funding or discount;
 - c. total value of the grant funding and reliefs in light of the Medium-term Financial Strategy; and
 - d. role and purpose of grant funding and relief schemes in light of other external funding opportunities for organisations.
2. The **scope** of the 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 to operate the scheme in a certain way (for example, it has established it voluntarily).
3. By carrying out this review the **aim** is to ensure that:
 - a. the grants and reliefs we provide are aligned to our strategic objectives; and
 - b. the grants and relief schemes offer maximum value for money.
4. To **develop options** for:
 - a. how West Suffolk Council's locality budget and grant funding arrangements and discretionary rate reliefs will work after 1 April 2020; and
 - b. a West Suffolk Council Grants and Reliefs Policy to set out the council's approach.
5. To **make recommendations** to Cabinet for how to take forward the preferred options from 4 above.

Timescale: In order for the Taskforce to shape the Council's approach to locality budgets, grants and reliefs, initial findings and feedback will be presented to Cabinet 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.

Governance: It is proposed that the Taskforce will be formed of 7 Members, to consist of:

- a) a minimum of 4 members from the Conservative Group; and
- b) 3 members of minority groups.

Members of Cabinet shall have observer status, in that they are entitled to see all papers for the group and shall be entitled to attend meetings. Portfolio Holders are expected to support the Chair in developing recommendations and raise concerns where they consider that it would not be feasible to adopt proposals put forward, and where recommendations under development may conflict with other adopted policies or ongoing work such as proposals under development by the rural taskforce. The Chair may use his/her discretion in allowing a member of Cabinet to speak at meetings.

Chair and Vice-Chair: The Taskforce shall elect a Chair and Vice-chair from amongst its membership at the first meeting of the Taskforce by a majority vote of the Taskforce Members.

The Leader of the Council shall be entitled to appoint additional individuals to act as observers of the Taskforce who may, or may not be members of the Council. Any additional observers will be expected to comply with the Member Code of Conduct. The Taskforce is entitled to call witnesses from the voluntary/community sector.

Taskforce meetings shall be scheduled to take place at College Heath Road in Mildenhall or West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds.

Quorum: The quorum level for the Taskforce shall be 4.

Access to Information: As a non-decision making body, the normal Access to Information Rules do not apply to the working group.

Officers should endeavour to make clear to members of the Taskforce where matters under discussion are confidential, and should be treated by Members privy to the information as such.

Frequency: Meetings will be scheduled according to the demands of the work programme and decision making framework. It should be expected that this will require meetings on at least a monthly basis.

Limitations: As a Taskforce, the group does not have any delegated decision making authority and any recommendations would be considered by Cabinet for adoption.

Officer support: The Corporate Policy Team will provide research and policy development support to the Taskforce. The team will draw on evidence and advice provided by a range of other teams to support the Taskforce's work, for example, Families and Communities, Leisure, Economic Development, Environment and Finance.

Consultation and engagement: The Taskforce will take evidence from Member and external stakeholders, including town and parish councils, partners, stakeholders, community groups, residents and businesses as it considers appropriate.