

Grant Working Party



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Grant Working Party** held on
Monday 12 January 2015 at **5.00 pm** in **GFR14, West Suffolk House,**
Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Angela Rushen
Vice Chairman Jim Thorndyke

Sarah Broughton Ian Houlder
Robert Clifton-Brown

By Invitation:
Sara Mildmay-White Christopher Spicer
(Portfolio Holder for
Health and
Communities)

1. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

2. **Election of Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs A Rushen be elected Chairman for the Grant Working Party.

3. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

That Councillor J Thorndyke be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Grant Working Party.

4. **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Redhead.

5. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **Update on: Core Grants; the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme; Member Locality Budgets; and Streamlining the Grant Funding Process**

The Working Party received and noted Report No: GWP/SE/15/001 (previously circulated), which provided an updated on Core Grants; the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme; Member Locality Budgets; and Streamlining the Grant Funding Process.

The Working Party noted that the core grants outlined in Section 1.3 of the report had already been approved for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 as funding agreements were in place. Members noted however, that an application had been received from Suffolk Young People's Health Project for funding in 2015/2016 and some areas needed to be clarified at the time of the publication of the report. The following update was provided at the meeting:

The applicant was an organisation based in Ipswich, which dealt with mental health issues which included a counselling service for young people. Some clarification on matters was still required, including whether there was an identified need for this service; how they worked with young people; and whether external match funding could be sought.

A discussion was also held on the £10,000 grant awarded to Suffolk Community Foundation Sports Fund in 2015/2016 and how the total funding received from Suffolk County Council and the other Suffolk districts would be allocated throughout Suffolk in the long term. Members also noted how this endowment fund would integrate with the work of Suffolk Sport and Abbeycroft Leisure.

The Working Party then noted updates on the current status of the Substance Misuse Core Grants for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016; Grants awarded that amounted to £250 or less; and the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme (RIGS).

Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme

Members were informed that since the publication of the report, Pakenham Parish Council had received an allocation of £500 from the RIGS fund. This meant the balance for this 'pot' had reduced to just under £63,000. In addition, Members noted that Stanningfield Village Hall had received £4,000 of RIGS funding and not Bradfield Combust Village Hall, as stated in Section 4.1 of the report.

Discussion was also held on the current status of the Rural Coffee Caravan application which had applied for monies previously allocated via the former Rural Action Plan; the role of Community Action Suffolk (former Suffolk

ACRE); publicising of grants made under the RIGS scheme; and why the allocation of £6,303 RIGS funding to Honington and Sapiston Village Hall had been reduced from its initial application of £10,000. The officers would follow this up and respond with an answer to the Grant Working Party by email.

The Chairman then reminded Members that they needed to respond promptly to emails on RIGS applications so that the grant could be swiftly awarded (or not as the case may be).

Information was then provided on the 2014/2015 piloted Member Locality Budget Scheme; and proposals to streamline the grant funding process. Whilst these matters were both considered under this item, further detail on these issues are provided under the separate agenda headings (see minutes 7 and 8 accordingly)

7. Streamlining the Grant Funding Process - Community Chest (working title)

The Working Party was invited to partake in a workshop-style discussion to consider proposals put forward by officers for potential development to enable the streamlining the grant funding process. This included the consideration of principles for a Community Chest (working title).

A series of questions were asked, which sought the Working Party's views on proposals for streamlining the grant funding process.

What is the Council's role in grant funding?

- (a) The Rural Initiative Grant Scheme was established to support rural areas as parishes provided services through their own precepts that were already provided by the Borough Council in the towns (namely parks, cemeteries, play areas etc). Members considered this scheme should remain separate to the proposed Community Chest (working title) and the Locality Budget Scheme (LBS). The remaining approximate value of £63,000 in the RIGS 'pot' should remain ringfenced for rural areas but not incorporated into the LBS as some RIGS allocations exceeded that currently allowed under the LBS. Members would need to consider what would happen to any remaining monies in this 'pot' when the Scheme ceased to operate in two years' time.
- (b) With the exception of RIGS, the principle of a single fund (Community Chest) to amalgamate the existing grant pots as outlined in Report No: GWP/SE/15/001 was supported.

What lessons can we learn from the current process?

- (a) The criteria for core grant funding needed attention to make it more comprehensible, open and transparent, to enable those involved in the decision making process (i.e the Grant Working Party, Cabinet and ultimately full Council as part of the budget setting process) to make more informed decisions on the recommended grant and the validity of any reductions proposed.

- (b) Greater analysis of the organisations that received funding was required, which was largely historic.

What worked well with core grant process?

That some flexibility remained in the process, for example, the Grant Working Party recommended a grant of £1,500 to SARS in 2014/2015 (subsequently approved by Cabinet), which was contrary to the officers' recommendation.

What should grant criteria include?

Criteria would potentially need to include:

- (a) justified reasons for the required funding;
- (b) a demonstration of more joined up partnership working between organisations as there appeared to be a significant amount of duplication;
- (c) greater emphasis being placed on match funding being obtained from other external organisations and less reliance on local authority funding;
- (d) provision for applications to be judged on their own merits;
- (e) feedback required from the organisations receiving funding, e.g. where the money was spent and the outcomes;
- (f) the organisations needed to help people in West Suffolk/St Edmundsbury and meet the Families and Communities (F&C) Principles;
- (g) F&C Officers to provide support to the organisations on where they could obtain funding from non-local authority bodies;
- (h) Funding Agreements be established and sufficient notice be given to the organisation if future funding was reduced/discontinued; and
- (i) funding should not be allocated to remain unspent in the organisation's reserves.

How should the allocation of funds be governed and monitored?

On being asked whether a Grant Working Party was required, Members agreed that it was however, it was agreed that meetings need only be bi-annual or annual as several items of business could be dealt with via email, such as RIGS applications.

It was suggested that one meeting could be used for considering potential policy changes and operational matters, while the other be convened to consider the core funding application round and Community Chest applications.

Any other comments or concerns?

Discussion was held on a maximum term for a Funding Agreement. Two year agreements were agreed but work a year ahead (or more for material core grants) to provide the organisation with security regarding its future; however, agreements should be flexible depending on the need.

Other issues/conclusions were expressed at this point on what the organisation receiving funding needed to consider, which included:

- (a) being able to demonstrate their strengths and what they did for the community;
- (b) who were they aiming to reach, was there an identified need, and what were the outcomes and impact of their service;
- (c) being able to demonstrate how their funding was matched; and
- (d) was there a wider impact on the Borough Council's services if funding was reduced.

8. Member Locality Budget Review

The Working Party received and noted an update on the review of the Member Locality Budget Scheme.

The above grant scheme was piloted in St Edmundsbury in 2014/2015 as a result of it being successfully introduced in Forest Heath. Section 5 of Report No: GWP/SE/15/001 considered earlier on the agenda provided a summary of the success of the scheme.

The Portfolio Holder with the responsibility for grants stated that she would email a reminder to all Members explaining that their remaining funds in their locality budgets could be awarded up until the beginning of the purdah period in March 2015.

Feedback from the Working Party on the success of the pilot included:

- (a) it would be helpful if Members knew when the cheque to the organisation had been sent out;
- (b) some Members had difficulties allocating funding to potential recipients;
- (c) as it was the first year, it was acknowledged that it would take some time to get the scheme 'off the ground', however it was disappointing if no funding had been allocated; and
- (d) it was recognised that Ward Members were the main drivers of this scheme, however, Families and Communities Officers played a significant role in supporting Members on ways in which the monies could be spent,

In response to questions, the Working Party was informed that a checklist would be introduced to provide consistency on how monies awarded from the Locality Budget Scheme were handled; and all councillors would be contacted to obtain their views on the success of the scheme as part of the overall review of the pilot.

9. **Arts and Sports Revenue Grants**

The Working Party received and noted a verbal update on the current status of the Arts and Sports Revenue Support Grants currently allocated by the Borough Council. The organisations that received such funding were Victory Sports Ground, Smith's Row Art Gallery, and the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds.

Members were informed that as part of the recent budget consultation, focus groups had been asked their views on the Theatre Royal and Smith's Row and the outcome of this helped to inform proposed future funding for these two organisations.

Smith's Row Art Gallery

A meeting had been held with Suffolk County Council (SCC), as another principal grant funder of this organisation to discuss future funding. Consequently and having taken into account a number of factors, it was proposed that Smith's Row should receive a 25% reduction in its current Borough Council funding of £34,485 in 2015/2016 with a view to withdrawing funding completely from 2016. The remaining funds in this grant pot would be allocated to other visual art projects in Borough.

The Working Party agreed with this proposal and supported the Portfolio Holder's view that whilst the Borough Council received rent for the premises in which the Gallery was located, the organisation had not demonstrated to the Council commercial behaviours or adapted to a changing landscape of community need in this field.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the length of time in which the Gallery had received a grant from the Borough Council would be provided to the Working Party in due course as this information was not to hand at the meeting.

Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds

The Theatre Royal had been informed that it was to receive a cut in Arts Council England funding with effect from April 2015. The Theatre had responded positively to this with better, more commercial programming that attracted larger audiences, and efforts made to reach out into the community.

Work was being undertaken to ascertain whether the Theatre and The Apex could benefit from greater partnership working. In the meantime, it was proposed that the Theatre's grant should be reduced by £5,000 to £66,250 in 2015/2016 with the aim of working more closely with them in future years to look at reducing this grant further.

Victory Sports Ground, Bury St Edmunds

It was proposed that as the opening of the community sports facility at the Victory Sports Ground was a relatively new venture, further support was required to help them behave more commercially to make the facility more independently financially viable. Abbeycroft Leisure would provide this support to help them be more proactive and robust with their methods for attracting additional community use. It was therefore proposed that in 2015/2016, the Victory Sports Ground would receive a reduction in grant of £2,500 to £45,250 with a view of introducing a further, more pronounced reduction from 2016/2017 onwards.

RESOLVED:

That, the following proposed Arts and Sports Revenue Support Grants be endorsed, prior to their consideration by Cabinet and being subject to the budget setting process for 2015/2016:

- (1) a 25% reduction in its current Borough Council funding of £34,485 in 2015/2016 with a view to withdrawing funding completely from 2016 be granted to Smith's Row Art Gallery;
- (2) a reduction of £5,000 be granted to the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds to £66,250 in 2015/2016 with the aim of working more closely with them in future years to look at reducing this grant further; and
- (3) a reduction of £2,500 be granted to the Victory Sports Ground, Bury St Edmunds to £45,250 in 2015/2016 with a view of introducing a further, more pronounced reduction from 2016/2017 onwards.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party determined that it would not need to meet before budget setting on 24 February 2015; however, it would like to meet before the Grants Review and Member Locality Budget Review paper was considered by Cabinet on 24 March 2015.

A meeting would be convened in early to mid March 2015. Potential dates would be sought and agreement obtained from the Chairman. Members would be informed of the new date by email.

The meeting concluded at 6.53 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
