
Grant Working Party



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Grant Working Party** held on
Friday 13 March 2015 at 10.00 am in **GFR12, 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

Substitutes attending:
David Nettleton

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

11. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Phillip French and Derek Redhead.

12. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor David Nettleton substituting for Councillor Derek Redhead.

13. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. **New Approach to Grant Funding Arrangements and Review of the Locality Budget Scheme**

The Working Party considered Report No: GWP/SE/15/002 (previously circulated), which sought endorsement of the proposals regarding proposed new grant funding arrangements and for the locality budget scheme to be continued with revisions following the review of its pilot in 2014/2015.

A new approach was proposed to support families and communities, as provided in textual and diagrammatic form in the report, which aimed to simplify the present arrangements and funding types, with differing degrees of devolution of control to local communities.

The following proposed three funding streams were:

- (a) Locality Budgets;
- (b) Community Chest; and
- (c) Portfolio Holder Budgets.

The paper provided further details on the remit of each of the above and examples of the types of grant that would typically derive from each stream.

The new approach aimed to promote each Ward Member's role as a community leader and for championing their own communities. Emphasis was placed upon achieving a successful balance between Council and community initiated funding.

Section 2 provided details of the Locality Budget Scheme review and proposed revisions to the scheme following its successful pilot in 2014/2015.

The following appendices were attached to the report.

Appendix A: Criteria for community grant funding;
Appendix B: revised councillor guidance for the Locality Budget Scheme; and
Appendix C: a revised application form for use with the Locality Budget Scheme.

The officers informed that a revision to Recommendation (2) provided in the report was required, as the proposed delegation should be to the Head of Service, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, and not to the Portfolio Holder him/herself.

New Approach Grant Funding Arrangements

The Working Party firstly considered the proposed changes to the grants process, which included the establishment of a Community Chest and introducing delegations within that funding stream to enable the Head of Families and Communities, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to award grants up to the value of £10,000.

£10,000 was considered to be significant amount of money to be allocated under the above delegation and the Working Party expressed an interest in remaining involved in discussions should the Head of Service and Portfolio Holder need to consider granting funding using these delegated powers. It was therefore suggested that the Working Party should be consulted by email on grants proposed to be awarded under this delegation in a similar way that was applied when determining applications made under the existing Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme (as outlined in Appendix A). This proposal was accepted by Members and together with the revisions to the delegations outlined above, this proposal was included as an additional recommendation as (2)(b) below.

During the discussion of this item, Members noted that the existing Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme would continue as a ring-fenced grant within the Community Chest until all of the remaining £67,444 had been allocated. A formal decision would need to be taken by Cabinet and Council as part of the budget setting process as to whether or not to replenish this fund and if so, by how much.

Other issues discussed under this item included:

- (a) the process for considering some of the larger core grants currently awarded under funding agreements, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux;
- (b) the possibility of holding a networking open day in summer 2015, which aimed to bring organisations across West Suffolk together and signpost them to other sources of match funding, and whether an outline of this event could be provided at the next Parish Conference on 26 March 2015;
- (c) reviewing organisations that had been awarded core funding on a historical basis; and
- (d) the purpose of the proposed separate £15,267 portfolio holder budget, details of which were set out in the report.

Locality Budgets

Discussion was then held on the Members' Locality Budget Scheme, which had been piloted in 2014/2015. The Working Party acknowledged the success of the pilot and supported its continuation into 2015/2016.

A typographical error was firstly identified in paragraph 1.2 of the proposed Guidance to Councillors on the Locality Budget Scheme, attached as Appendix B, where the reference to paragraph 4.4 should have been to paragraph 4.6.

Discussion continued on the following paragraph, as set out in the above document at Appendix B:

- 1.7 As community activity in many rural areas is often led or supported by the parish council funding may in exceptional cases be granted to support activities which are for the benefit of the community, but which are directly delivered by the rural parish councils. For the purposes of this scheme, a rural parish council is considered to be a parish with a population of 1,000 or fewer according to the latest mid-year estimate figures. Funding must not be used to supplement services or functions provided by the parish council which are or could normally be provided through its own resources. Members should be satisfied that the request for funding for the rural parish meets all the requirements (as summarised in 1.5 of this guidance).*

Members recognised that this paragraph had been introduced to provide flexibility and to enable projects to be supported in some of the smaller rural

parishes more easily. Any allocated funding was not meant for parish councils to support services normally provided by them and this was about enabling a means of banking the funding on behalf of those that did not have formally constituted bank accounts. However, concern was expressed that to define the eligibility of a parish by its population within this part of the scheme was an inappropriate method of determining whether funding should be granted to parish councils in such exceptional cases described above. It was considered that the Ward Member should be able to use their own discretion as to whether applications fell within these criteria. The Working Party therefore wished to recommend that the following sentence from paragraph 1.7 of Appendix B, as reproduced above, be deleted from the Locality Budget Scheme:

For the purposes of this scheme, a rural parish council is considered to be a parish with a population of 1,000 or fewer according to the latest mid-year estimate figures.

RECOMMENDED That:

- (1) the revised approach to grant funding from 2015/2016 including the establishment of a Community Chest, as set out in Section 1.3 of Report No: GWP/SE/15/002, be approved;**
- (2) (a) the Head of Families and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with the responsibility for Grants, be given delegated powers to make awards from the Community Chest funding to the value of £10,000, as set out in paragraph 1.4.4 of Report No: GWP/SE/15/002;**
 - (b) subject to (2)(a) above, the Grant Working Party firstly be consulted by email on grants proposed to be awarded under this delegation using a similar procedure to that applied under the existing Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme;**
- (3) the existing St Edmundsbury Grant Policy be revoked and from April 2015 be replaced with the new criteria, as outlined in Appendix A to Report No: GWP/SE/15/002;**
- (4) the success of the Locality Budget Scheme to date be noted and subject to the amendment below, revisions to the scheme to be implemented for 2015/2016, be approved:**

the sentence, 'For the purposes of this scheme, a rural parish council is considered to be a parish with a population of 1,000 or fewer according to the latest mid year estimate figures', be deleted from paragraph 1.7 of Appendix B to Report No: GWP/SE/15/002; and
- (5) any Locality Budget underspend for 2014/2015 with the exception of the £500 per Councillor carry-forward, be approved and retained within the Locality Budget fund for**

allocation in future years, as outlined in Section 3.2 of Report No: GWP/SE/15/002.

15. Dates of Future Meetings

It was noted that no dates for an ordinary meeting in the 2015/2016 civic year had been proposed at this stage. The Borough Council's Elections were scheduled for May 2015 and therefore membership of the Working Party may change by the time it met again in late 2015.

The next meeting would therefore be arranged nearer the time in consultation with the Working Party.

In the meantime, the officers would continue to consult current Working Party Members on grant applications submitted under the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme, and also consult on any new applications for core funding or those due to come under review, by email.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

Signed by:

Chairman
