

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE GRANTS 2012/13

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REASON FOR ITEM

At its meeting on 15th December the Cabinet considered the 2012/13 programme for voluntary sector core grants.

The report agreed an overall increase in grants for the 2012/13 financial year to local voluntary sector groups from £1,415,058 in 2011/12 to £1,815,058. This would result in increased provision of £400,000.

The Cabinet agreed that :

- 1. Subject to confirmation of the Council's 2012/13 budget, agrees the allocation of an additional £400,000 to support voluntary sector activity, with the focus on developing frontline services to residents.**
- 2. Agrees the overall allocation of grants to Voluntary Sector of up to £1,815,058 for the 2012/13 financial year and specific awards as set out in the schedule - Appendix A (totalling £1,449,058)**
- 3. That officers, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Improvement, Partnerships and Community Safety, develop proposals and report back to January 2012 Cabinet on the following issues:**
 - a. The creation of a new small grants development programme of £50k**
 - b. Proposals to improve services for victims of domestic violence.**
 - c. Develop a new approach to ensuring value for money and strengthening the outcomes for residents through an improved monitoring process.**
 - d. The level of funding to be offered to Hillingdon Association of Voluntary Services for the 2012/13 financial year**
 - e. Increased support for Age UK Hillingdon to meet the Councils priorities for older people.**
 - f. A bid from the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) for funding towards a Dementia support initiative.**

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is requested to consider the 2012/13 programme for voluntary sector core grants, and comment as appropriate.

Background

1. The Council continues to be a long term financial supporter of the borough's voluntary sector and acknowledges the important role of the voluntary sector particularly in providing services that residents value. As such, the Council has committed significant levels of funding to a range of voluntary sector organisations based in the borough.

2. In the current economic climate it remains vital that the Council seeks to maximise the benefits to residents from investment in Hillingdon's voluntary sector and to ensure value for money. The proposals strengthen Hillingdon's commitment to the voluntary sector in key areas and provide significant additional investment.

Use of Core Funding

3. In return for a contribution towards core costs, the Council expects organisations to secure funding from other sources. Some of the organisations that receive core funding also secure contracts and grants from Council service departments. The availability of core funding means that a larger proportion of any additional funding secured can be committed to delivering services, rather than being diverted to support organisational costs.
4. The amount organisations secure as a result of receiving core funding support varies between organisations and sometimes from year to year, depending on circumstances. In general, funding secured by groups is normally at least double that committed by the Council in core grants but some organisations secure considerably more.

2011/12 Financial Year

5. For the 2011/12 financial year, the Council acknowledged that a reduction in the level of funding it could commit to the borough's voluntary sector was necessary and savings from the Core grants budget were subsequently agreed. The Council has however, remained the cornerstone of support to many local organisations and for the 2011/12 financial year despite having to reduce support committed £1,415,058 to a total of 33 organisations.
6. The grants awarded by the Council continued to reflect the diversity and make up of community activity in the borough. The level of grants the Council administers also reflects the range of voluntary sector activity; with grants ranging from £750 to Hillingdon beekeepers to £280,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau service.

2012/13 Financial Year

7. Hillingdon Council appreciates the value of the services the borough's voluntary sector brings to local communities and directly to residents. For 2012/13, as a result of a strong approach to financial management and drive for greater efficiency savings within Council operations, it is proposed to invest growth money in the voluntary sector core grants budget. Whilst some authorities are reducing or ceasing their core funding of grants to the voluntary sector, the London Borough of Hillingdon is proposing to make available an additional £400,000, to further support and develop services to residents. The effect of this increase is to take the budget available to support the work of the borough's voluntary sector to over £1.8million.

Additional funding

8. The Council is looking to maximise value for money through the strategic allocation of the new funds that its strong financial management approach has delivered. It will not therefore be allocating additional funding on an 'across the board' basis but will instead seek to focus and target resources to organisations and service areas where it believes additional investment is required.
9. Where the Council has chosen to invest additional funding in organisations it has taken into account a number of issues. In particular it has sought to target support organisations that deliver the following;
 - Direct services that residents value.
 - Services that directly or indirectly saves the Council from committing expenditure.
10. In recommending the level of funding for each organisation for 2012/13, the Council will be responding with some immediate increases in funding. As a result of the Council's transformation work in the areas of family intervention and priority to provide independence and support for older people, increases are recommended for Homestart, Age UK Hillingdon, Northwood live at home scheme and Shopmobility.

Additional new proposals – further report January 2012

11. Building on the principles of supporting the delivery of direct services, particularly those that directly or indirectly save the Council funding, recommendations will be presented to the Cabinet's January 2012 meeting, on the following:

Small grants development scheme

12. The Council recognises the difficulty for some groups to access relatively small amounts of funding to pump prime, develop or implement new initiatives. The Council is therefore looking to develop a small grants budget (of £50,000 per annum) to facilitate such initiatives.

Improving services for victims of domestic violence

13. The Council is keen to develop services to victims of domestic violence. It has received a range of requests from organisations looking to develop services to support residents who find themselves victims of domestic violence. Officers will work with the Council's Domestic Violence Strategic Coordinator to identify what the current gaps in provision are and how best to use some of the additional funding available to improve services to meet the need identified
14. Those organisations providing support to victims of domestic violence and who applied for funding under the 2012/13 grant round will be considered in this process. Recommendations on the provision of additional support for victims of domestic violence will be presented at the January 2012 Cabinet.

Hillingdon Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS)

15. The Council has recently commenced consultation with HAVS over the level of funding to be offered for the 2012/13 financial year. A more detail report and recommendations will be presented to January 2012 Cabinet.

Age UK Hillingdon

16. In line with the Council's priority to provide independence and support for older people an increase to Age UK Hillingdon is recommended. The increase formalises the funding within the core grant for the support the organisation provide to older residents experiencing financial difficulties due to the current economic climate. In addition to this support officers will discuss with Age UK other challenges currently facing older residents and ascertain whether there are initiatives that Age UK wish to propose to address these. The results of these discussions will form the basis of a report back to January Cabinet.

WRVS

17. A report on a bid from the WRVS to fund a Dementia support initiative will also be considered in January.

Improved monitoring and impact assessment

18. The Council is justifiably proud of its approach to financial management and securing value for money for residents. However, the Council still needs to make efficiency savings on a year by year basis and there is, therefore, no room for complacency. The challenge to make ongoing efficiency savings, to maximise the use of Council funding and to achieve value for money for our residents continues. The Council will be reviewing its monitoring arrangements and will look to introduce improved monitoring for the 2012/13 financial year so that value for money through grant-funded services, can be evidenced.
19. It is proposed to put in place strengthened accountability arrangements that enable the Council to better evaluate how effectively the funding it commits to the voluntary sector is being used and will, for example, include a requirement to provide the Council with monitoring information on a more regular basis.
20. Within the terms and conditions of grant funding, the Council will also be include provision which provide the right to undertake an audit of the funds it commits to voluntary groups.
21. These measures will serve to ensure that the Council continues to achieve maximum value from the funding it invests in the voluntary sector in a period where financial resources are scarce.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet report of 15 December 2011 on Financial Support to Voluntary Organisations