
SUBJECT: Grants to Voluntary Organisations 2013/14 to 2015/16
DATE: 18 February 2013
RECIPIENT: Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

1. Southampton City Council has a long history of supporting the contribution of the voluntary and community sector in the city with grants, contracts and other help in kind. In August 2012 a new outcomes-based Commissioned Grants Programme was agreed, including a Three Year Funding Scheme. A report will be presented to Cabinet on 19 February 2013 detailing officer recommendations for the first round of grants to be awarded from this scheme.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

2. The three year funding scheme from the outcomes-based Commissioned Grants Programme provides one, two or three years of funding, where appropriate and subject to budget setting and availability. It is aimed at voluntary organisations working in the city that meet at least one of the council's outcomes. The new scheme was agreed by Cabinet in August 2012 after several phases of consultation with the voluntary and community sector beginning in July 2011. Following consultation between November 2011 and February 2012, which included meetings and online feedback, several outcomes-based commissioned models were discussed and a scored model was developed. Voluntary organisations were given details of the proposed, scored model for the outcomes-based Commissioned Grants Programme in June 2012 and invited to give feedback before the Programme was finalised and approved by Cabinet on 21 August 2012.
3. On 03 September 2012 all currently funded organisations were given written notice that their current funding relationship will end on 31 March 2013 and any future grant applications will be considered on their own merits. Notwithstanding any requirement for transitional relief for certain previously funded groups, this meant that all applications could be considered as new applications without reference to previous funding. A summary of the consultation is attached at Appendix 2 and full details are contained in the report to Cabinet on the Process for Awarding Grants to Voluntary Organisations 2013/14 and Beyond, 21 August 2012.
4. The three year funding scheme was open for applications between 31 August 2012 and 26 October 2012. Throughout this period application support was available via phone, email and face to face meetings. In addition, a drop-in advice session was held on 01 October 2012 which was attended by 26 organisations. Sixty six applications were received, of which 35 were from currently funded organisations and 31 from organisations not currently funded by the council. The total amount requested was more than double the proposed budget for each year and this is in line with the trend in previous years.

5. The agreed appraisal process undertaken for each applicant was as follows:
 - Preliminary Assessment – ensuring all supporting documents had been submitted and applications had been fully completed.
 - Technical appraisal – by specialist appraisers covering all aspects of the application, including finance, governance, contribution to outcomes, suitability for funding, consideration of wider strategic impact (including consulting with Cabinet Members, other officers and senior managers).
 - Assessment Panel meetings – all applications discussed by panels of specialist officers.
 - Moderation and recommendations – to ensure scoring was consistent for all applications before the recommendations were agreed by Assessment Panel members.
6. In order to fully assess and discuss all 66 applications in detail it was necessary to split them across a number of panel meetings. It was not possible to base the Assessment Panels on the outcome themes as the majority of applications stated they contributed to outcomes across two or more themes. Therefore, the applications were allocated to panels according to the subject area of the application and the most appropriate specialist officer to act as lead appraiser. This approach also made the most efficient use of resources, with individual officers needing to attend just one or two meetings rather than all of them. The Grants Officer from the Communities and Improvement team attended every panel meeting to aid consistency. Depending on the number of applications for each work area, some panels covered just one work area while others covered several. There were also two meetings for all appraisers to agree all the recommendations. The final meeting, at which recommendations were agreed, comprised of officers from all panels to ensure consistency. Details of the panel meetings are available in Appendix 3.
7. Following appraisal 35 applications are recommended for funding. Of these, 25 are currently funded organisations and 10 are not currently funded. The full list of recommendations are detailed in Appendix 1.
8. In order to ensure that the total recommended amounts came within the proposed budget, the recommendations were grouped into bands according to score. The band determined the amount of grant funding recommended for 2013/14, with lower scores receiving less of their requested amount.
 - Band A (100-90) - 20% lower than requested amount
 - Band B (89-85) - 25% lower than requested amount
 - Band C (84-80) - 30% lower than requested amount
 - Band D (79-75) - 35% lower than requested amount
 - Band E (74-70) - 40% lower than requested amount
 - Band F (69 and lower) - no grant recommended

The amounts recommended for 2014/15 and 2015/16 are a further 7% less year on year in line with the proposed overall budget reduction of 7% each year.

9. Applicants were notified of their grant recommendation on 08 January 2013 - 6 weeks before the decision date. This is an improvement on previous years when recommendations were announced just 2-3 weeks before the decision date. Applicants were invited to provide information on the impact of the recommendation. Applicants were also provided with information on how to make representations to Cabinet.
10. The impact assessment process for funding recommendations (including both Equality and Safety Impact Assessments and general impact assessments) has been built into the new grant application process. The application form asked two questions about impact to ensure officers considered both equality and safety issues and also the general impact on an organisation and its members of not receiving the full amount they requested.
 - If Southampton City Council is unable to fund part or all of your requested grant, what would be the impact? Please tell us about the wider impact on your organisation, not just on this work. (question 2.8)
 - If the council is unable to fund part or all of your requested grant would there be a disproportionately negative affect to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010? (question 2.9)
11. As no organisation has been recommended the full amount they requested all applicants have been asked if they would like to update their answers to questions 2.8 and 2.9 of the application form. This updated information (which organisations have provided following consideration of the officer recommendations) has been used to update the Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIA) completed for each applicant as part of the appraisal process. Meetings to discuss the impact of the recommendations were also held with some organisations at their request. Individual impact assessments for each applicant are detailed in the document held in Member's Rooms. A Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) has also been completed and is attached at Appendix 4. This appendix also includes feedback from individual organisations which they specifically requested to be presented to Cabinet. Applicants are still considering the impact of the recommendations for their organisation and further updates may be submitted to Cabinet at the meeting on 19 February 2013.
12. On 21 August 2012 Cabinet agreed to set aside a small amount from the grants to voluntary organisations budget each year for a One-Off Grant scheme, subject to budget availability, using the outcomes-based model. A nominal amount of £28,000 is available in 2013/14 but the final position will be dependent on the final grant awards. It is proposed to develop the process for the One-Off Grant scheme under delegated authority later in the year when the budget position and priorities will be clearer.

