

GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL

2 JULY 2009

- Chairman: * Councillor Chris Mote
- Councillors: * Ms Nana Asante * Joyce Nickolay
* Don Billson * Asad Omar
* G Chowdhury * Mrs Rekha Shah
* Ashok Kulkarni * Mrs Sasi Suresh
* Mrs Myra Michael
- Adviser: * Mike Coker, Representative, Voluntary and Community Sector Representative

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Key Decision - Review of Grants Criteria and Results of Grants Consultation**

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which set out the findings from the grants consultation with the voluntary and community sector. The report also provided feedback from the Grants Advisory Panel meeting held on 8 June 2009 and made recommendations based on this feedback.

A Member referred to the recommendations concerning criteria as contained within the Scrutiny Challenge Panel report on the Grants Programme 2010/11, which was the subject of a separate report on the agenda and whether this should be utilised as the criteria. The Panel agreed that the recommendations contained within the Scrutiny Challenge Panel report be addressed as part of the consideration of that item.

In considering the availability of the different types of grants, a Member suggested that a cover sheet be included with application forms sent to organisations which provided a breakdown of the previous year's grants allocation. The cover sheet should also allude to a principle of moving towards the allocation of more small and medium sized grants. A Member commented that minor changes should not be promoted if potentially these could be viewed as imperceptible to the voluntary and community sector.

A discussion followed on the specific amounts proposed for the small, medium and large sized grants. A Member suggested that the large sized grant ought to have its upper threshold raised from £100,000 to £110,000 in an effort to cover costs of some organisations. The Adviser to the Panel commented that raising the upper threshold would give the impression that no change was taking place to grant allocations, and would appear to suggest that the Grants Advisory Panel favoured accommodating historical grants over new applications.

Members considered the creation of an 'innovation fund' within the budget for those organisations offering a service which fell outside of the traditional functions offered by the voluntary and community sector. A Member added that at present there were no provisions available to consider innovative projects and it was proposed that further legal advice be sought with regards to this suggestion.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Leader of the Council)

That (1) the following statement be adopted as the eligibility criteria for grant aid:

"Grant aid will be available to support voluntary and community organisations to deliver services, where this resource is used for the benefit of people living, working or schooling in Harrow.";

(2) the availability of different types of grants as outlined in the report be approved, with the principle of moving towards a small grants level of 5% being agreed;

(3) the upper threshold of large grants be increased to £110,000;

(4) that the grants budget be divided and a percentage be allocated to different sized grants;

(5) that a flexible approach be taken and to move towards more medium and small sized grants;

(6) any supporting documents could be submitted after a grant had been agreed.

[Reasons for Recommendations: To (1) clarify the eligibility criteria;

(2) to provide clarity of information to applicants on how much funding was available].

RECOMMENDATION 2 - Key Decision - Funding Arrangements for 2009/10 and 2010/11

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment which set out the proposed funding arrangements for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

With regard to the recommendation regarding the arrangements for allocating unspent funds for 2009/2010, the creation of an 'innovation fund' was discussed. A Member added that by establishing an 'innovation fund' the Panel would be taking on board a recommendation made by scrutiny in 2006 and she believed this could potentially open up eligibility to many previously ineligible organisations. She felt this would demonstrate the Panel was mindful of potentially progressive suggestions from other committees or sectors. A Member replied that the establishment of an 'innovation fund' could be risky in terms of the identification of pertinent and measurable criteria and preferred a move towards the allocation of small grants. The Adviser to the Panel commented that one of the main functions of the voluntary and community sector was to take risks, and it was a function that the sector carried out efficiently and with positive results.

A Member queried who would administer and control the 'Innovation Fund'. A Member replied that the Panel could set parameters to be followed by a community trust with the function of allocation funding falling under the remit of the Panel. The Chairman replied that the Panel had enough difficulty in trying to find equitable solutions for the main grant allocation function without the inclusion of another, potentially complicated, function.

In considering the recommendation relating to the Funding Priorities for 2010/11, Members discussed the problems associated with following narrow national indicators. A Member expressed her view that some groups would not be able to meet the strict appliance of criteria and queried whether these would still be considered for funding. Officers responded that they would consider all applications carefully.

With regards to the proposed arrangements for supporting sport activities through the grants programme, Members agreed that the Harrow Sports Council had been extremely proficient in allocating small amounts of funding but that overall the Service Level Agreements had not operated as well as initially envisaged. A Member suggested that large applications for sports could be handled by the Grants Advisory Panel and that small applications could continue to be handled by the Harrow Sports Council. However, it was considered that if the Harrow Sports Council were not meeting their Service Level Agreements then other organisations within the voluntary and community sector should be given the opportunity to apply to carry out the distribution of sports related grants. The Adviser to the Panel commented that such action could be viewed as commissioning.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Leader of the Council)

That (1) arrangements for allocating unspent funds for 2009/10 be adopted;

(2) funding priorities for 2010/11 be adopted;

(3) arrangements for supporting sports activities through the grants programme be approved.

[Reasons for Recommendations: To (1) establish a process to allocate any unspent funds within the financial year to reduce the risk of losing funds;

(2) clarify what activities would be funded through the grants programme;

(3) clarify how the grants programme would support sports activities from 2010 onwards].

[Note: Councillors Ms Nana Asante, Mrs Rekha Shah, Mrs Sasi Suresh and Asad Omar wished to record as having voted against recommendations (1) and (2) above].

RECOMMENDATION 3 - Key Decision - Review of the Grants Application Process

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which set out the proposed changes to the current grants application and assessment process for 2010/11.

In consideration of the recommendation regarding the revision of the application process, Members suggested further clarification of some of the ethnic categories listed on the application form which officers agreed to incorporate.

A Member questioned why an advice that references should not be sought from a Councillor or Member of Parliament. On being put to the vote it was agreed that this point be removed from the application form. It was also agreed that references should not be sought from Members of the Grants Advisory Panel.

In consideration of the proposal regarding the shortening of the application timescale, Members raised concerns about the proposal to cancel of the November meetings and the likely impact this would have on the deputation process.

A Member suggested that, if the application timescale was to be shortened, organisations' monitoring forms should be provided by post. She referred Members to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel regarding a more transparent application process; therefore the information provided to Members would give them an insight into how officers arrived at funding decisions. She further suggested that a summary report of the applications could be provided at November meetings. Officers replied that it would be difficult to produce summary reports in time for November meetings and would be a duplication of work as summary reports were historically included in the final report. The Chairman added that in his view the Panel should be presented with the completed reports at the relevant time.

A Member referred to the resolution passed at the 8 June 2009 Grants Advisory Panel meeting that no organisation should be written to in advance of the relevant Panel meeting, noting that this decision should be adhered to and that this emphasised the importance of the November summary reports process to inform decision making.

In consideration of the recommendation regarding the appeals process being abolished Members expressed their concerns that the appeals process was an integral part of providing natural justice and that such provision had been requested for by the voluntary and community sector. It was agreed by the Panel that the recommendation would be deferred to a future meeting of the Panel.

It was also agreed that three application forms be developed for the different sized grants in order to avoid confusion.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Leader of the Council)

That (1) the application process be revised in line with the recommendations in the report, subject to the incorporation of amendments agreed by the Panel;

(2) subject to budget decisions for 2010/11, grant applications be presented to the Panel in January 2010 and recommendations made to Cabinet in February 2010;

(3) the application timescales be shortened;

(4) the November meeting of the Panel be retained.

[Reasons for Recommendations: To (1) address concerns raised by the voluntary and community sector through the Overview and Scrutiny Review about the current grants application process;

(2) clarify and improve the application and assessment process;

(3) give applicants an indication before the end of the financial year and within a shorter timescale what the funding arrangements for the following year might be subject to budget decisions].

RECOMMENDATION 4 - Proposed Changes to the way the Panel receive Monitoring Information

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which set out the proposed changes to the way the Grants Advisory Panel received information relating to the monitoring of voluntary organisations in receipt of grant funding in the previous years.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services)

That (1) monitoring reports be sent to Members in easily digestible batches;

(2) monitoring reports be presented at November meetings of the Grants Advisory Panel;

(3) summary reports of applications be presented to the Panel at November meetings of the Grants Advisory Panel.

[Reason for Recommendations: To enable Panel Members to receive detailed monitoring information of grant funded voluntary organisations in order to make decisions on grant allocations based on all available information].

PART II - MINUTES

173. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

174. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following declarations of interest were declared:

- (i) Councillor Nana Asante declared a personal interest in that she was a member of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel. Accordingly, she remained in the room for the discussion of all items;
- (ii) Mike Coker, Adviser to the Panel, declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel. Accordingly, he remained in the room for the discussion of all items;
- (iii) Councillor Myra Michael declared a personal interest in that she was a member of Harrow in Europe. Accordingly, she remained in the room for the discussion of all items;
- (iv) Councillor Chris Mote declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Harrow Sports Council. Accordingly, he remained in the room for the discussion of all items;
- (v) Councillor Joyce Nickolay declared a personal interest in that she was a member of the Bentley Priory Nature Reserve Committee. Accordingly, she remained in the room for the discussion of all items;
- (vi) Councillor Jean Lamiman declared a personal interest in that her husband was a member of Harrow in Europe. Accordingly, she remained in the room for the discussion of all items.

175. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Recommendation 2 – Community Premises, 27 Northolt Road – Accommodation Usage Categories

That the repetition of the words ‘next meeting’ be deleted from Recommendation (2)

Any Other Urgent Business – (i) Grants Advisory Panel Meeting – 4 March 2009

That the word ‘rational’ be changed to ‘rationale’ in the Resolution.

Minutes 163 – Minute 152 – Grant Applications 2009-10

That the amendment be removed and replaced with:

In the forth line of the second paragraph, the sentence beginning 'A discussion took place.' Should be replaced to read: A discussion took place on the allocation of grants to groups, such as Girl Guiding Middlesex North West, Headway and St. Luke's Hospice. There were similarities, for instance The Willow Tree Centre was based in Hillingdon (outside the borough) and St. Luke's Hospice was based in Brent (outside the borough) but had eight of its eleven shops in the borough. The Willow Tree Centre served guides in Hillingdon and Harrow and St. Luke's supplied services for clients in Harrow and Brent.

The Adviser to the Panel was of the view that these applications were not similar because the applications from these groups were received from the following addresses and for work in the following locations:

- application received from Headway, Bentley Day Centre, Harrow, for work at Wealdstone Baptist Church, Harrow for 100% of the users for the project/service for which the funding was requested who are residents of, or work in the London Borough of Harrow;
- application received from St. Luke's Hospice, Kenton Road, Harrow for people's homes in Harrow for 100% of the users for the project/service for which the funding was requested who are residents of, or work in the London Borough of Harrow;
- application received from Girl Guiding Middlesex North West, The Willow Tree Centre, Breakspear Road, Harefield, Middlesex for work at The Willow Tree Centre, Hillingdon for 50% of users for the project/service for which the funding was requested who are 100% residents of, or work in the London Borough of Harrow.

176. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16, 14 and 15 respectively (Part 4E of the Constitution).

177. **Comments from Scrutiny Challenge Panel on Grants Programme 2010/11 Proposals:**

RESOLVED: That the report be deferred to the Grants Advisory Panel meeting scheduled for 8 September 2009.

178. **Review of Grant Criteria and Results of the Grants Consultation:**
(See Recommendation 1).

179. **Funding Arrangements for 2009/10 and 2010/11:**

(See Recommendation 2).

180. **Review of the Grants Application Process:**
(See Recommendation 3).

181. **Proposed Changes to the Way the Panel Receive Monitoring Information:**
(See Recommendation 4).

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.34 pm, closed at 10.17 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRIS MOTE
Chairman