

GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL

8 SEPTEMBER 2009

Chairman: * Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillors: * Don Billson * Mrs Myra Michael
 * G Chowdhury * Joyce Nickolay
 David Gawn (2) * Mrs Rekha Shah
 Nizam Ismail (1) * Mrs Sasi Suresh
 * Ashok Kulkarni

Adviser: * Mike Coker, Representative, Voluntary and Community Sector Representative

* Denotes Member present
 (1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Member

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Key Decision - Proposed Assessment Process**

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director Community & Environment which set out a proposed assessment process and a revised summary grants report template to be used during the 2010/11 grant round. It was noted that the proposed assessment tool was linked to the revised application form which was agreed by the Panel and approved by Cabinet in July 2009.

The Panel discussed the proposed application assessment tool, set out in appendix 1 of the report. A Member referred to the question in the first stage assessment 'Does the activity promote a particular faith or religion' seeking clarification on the intent and that it would not disadvantage 'umbrella' faith groups. The officer stated that the question related to the project for which funding was sought and not the organisation. Whilst the Articles of the organisation could have religious objectives it was not an issue for the process, provided that the activity was not for the promotion of faith or religion. It was agreed that the word 'activity' be emboldened in the document.

In response to a question by a Member, it was stated that it was a requirement for organisations to have a bank account in order that grants could be paid in. Guidance was available to assist organisations in opening a bank account.

With regard to Appendix 2 of the report, the proposed summary report template, it was agreed that the following be inserted:

After the Project summary heading '(information provided by applicant)'
 After the Assessment summary heading '(information provided by the officers)'

Minor amendments to the Equality Impact Assessment, which was included as Appendix 3 to the report, were discussed and agreed.

In response to a Member's question regarding the possibility that the funding priorities might exclude some groups the officers reported that all currently funded projects had been matched against the National Indicator set which demonstrated that all would fit within this framework, for example the current MIND project could be matched to NI 140 regarding fair treatment by local services.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To Cabinet)

That the proposed grant assessment tool and revised summary grants report template be approved with the two amendments detailed above and contained in the report of the officers to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION 2 - Scrutiny Challenge Panel Comments on Grants Programme 2010/11

The Adviser to the Panel introduced the report of the Divisional Director of Partnership, Development and Performance which set out the observations and recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on the grants programme 2010/11. The discussion of the report had been deferred from the last meeting.

It was noted that ten recommendations had been made by the Scrutiny Challenge Panel. The Adviser outlined the recommendations and drew attention to the following specific points:

- the statement that grant aid was available to support voluntary and community organisations to deliver services and activities solely for the benefit of people living in Harrow was deemed restrictive and the word 'solely' should be removed;
- the service provider could be based and/or provide services outside of Harrow but funding must be used to benefit people living, working or schooling in the borough;
- whilst the grant process must demonstrate open criterion the Council should be supportive towards local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations;
- there was general agreement that funding sought should be categorised according to grant size;
- all grant applications should be based on merit and it should be clear that grants could not be guaranteed on a year-on-year basis. An innovation fund would enable new ideas to be piloted;
- the grants budget should be ringfenced over a three year period to enable organisations to plan ahead, particularly with regard to staffing;
- the innovations pot would enable the piloting of new ideas funded with small sums of money to assist in the learning process.

A Member expressed the view that the proposed working party would enable consideration of applications from new organisations and comparison with those currently funded.

In response to a question regarding associations which joined an umbrella organisation, the Adviser stated that the Challenge Panel acknowledged the benefit of getting organisations to work together but that the process recognised them as independent units.

A Member suggested that the Corporate Director of Finance be requested to comment on the recommendation to ringfence the grants budget over a three year period. As Service Level Agreements (SLAs) could not be offered for three years there could instead be an indication that funding, if available, would be continued. The Corporate Director of Community and Environment stated that, although the need for certainty was important, the public sector worked on a three year budget cycle with the Council setting an annual budget. He undertook to consider the matter.

It was suggested that due to the relatively small number of applications from small organisations, the proposal for an innovation pot of not less than 1% and a small grants pot of not less than 5% of the overall grants budget be an objective rather than prescriptive. It was agreed that that the award allocations should work towards this.

With regard to recommendation 10 it was agreed that, due to the problem of not being able to carry forward funds to the next financial year, any unallocated grant money should be reallocated to the innovations and top up pot within the grants budget which would be accessible throughout the year.

It was proposed that the 'grant applied for' section of the grants application form be amended to enable organisations to also indicate a lesser amount should insufficient funding be available for the full amount sought. If a balance subsequently become available the officers could go back to the organisation. The Panel emphasised the importance of reassuring applicants that the second figure would not take precedence. The innovations and top up pot would enable flexibility for a top up allocation being made where funding was available to support projects. The Corporate Director of Community and Environment indicated that if an innovation and top up fund was implemented there needed to be an assessment criteria for this.

Concern was expressed by the Adviser that applications for more than one amount could result in a 'grey area' as those applying needed to submit evidence of need. Applications for second projects should require completion of a different form.

Following discussion, the Corporate Director of Community and Environment stated that he would investigate the possibilities of the proposal and meet with voluntary organisations.

The Chairman stated that she had been invited to the October meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a response on the Panel's discussion of the recommendations.

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

That the Portfolio Holder be requested to consider the Scrutiny Challenge Panel recommendations and comments of this Panel, in determining her response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposals

RECOMMENDATION 3 - Arrangements for Allocating Unspent Funds for 2009/10

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment proposing arrangements for the allocation of unspent funds for 2009/10.

It was noted that in accordance with the Council's financial regulations, the underspend of £3,110 in the current financial year would not be available for rolling forward into the new financial year. It was therefore recommended that this sum be used to 'top-up' the grants of four organisations, detailed in Appendix 1, which had received less than the amount recommended by officers in the grants round in March 2009 but had demonstrated an increased demand for their services.

A Member expressed disagreement to 'top up' funding for those who were already in receipt of grant funding and proposed that Harrow Kuwaiti Association, Harrow Tamil School, National Council of Vanik Associations and Girl Guiding Middlesex North West receive a portion of the £3,110 underspend.

It was noted that the Panel did not have the appropriate information to enable a decision to be made on funding these organisations. Furthermore, the rationale submitted to Cabinet by the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services did not include funding for these organisations.

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

That the unspent funds for 2009/10 be allocated as follows:

ADHD Support Group	£1,000
Harrow Anti-Racist Alliance (HARA)	£1170
Harrow Bereavement Care	£220
Russian Immigrants Association	£720

PART II - MINUTES

182. **Appointment of Advisory Panel Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Councillor Jean Lammiman as Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

183. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Nana Asante
Councillor Asad Omar

Reserve Member

Councillor Nizam Ismail
Councillor David Gawn

184. **Declarations of Interest:**

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

- (1) Councillor Jean Lammiman declared a personal interest in that she was a trustee of Relate London North West and Joint Chairman, with Julia Smith CEO of HAVS of the Hear/Say Scrutiny Review. She remained in the room for the discussion of all items.
- (2) Councillor Rekha Shah declared a personal interest as a member of the National Council of Vanik Associations and a member of the Harrow Anti-Racist Alliance. She remained in the room for the discussion of all items.
- (3) Mike Coker, Adviser to the Panel, declared a personal interest in that he was a member of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel. He remained in the room for the discussion of all items.

185. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Recommendation 1 – Key Decision – Review of Grants Criteria and Results of Grants Consultation

The insertion of 'the priorities being used (National Indicators from the Local Area Agreement) after 'outside' in the fifth paragraph. The insertion of 'to enable members' after 'available' in the last sentence of paragraph 5.

Recommendation 2 – Key Decision – Funding Arrangements for 2009/10 and 2010/11

That: the fifth paragraph commence with the wording 'Members raised concerns about the failed Service Level Agreement (SLA)'; the deletion of 'However, it was considered' and the insertion of 'Another Member suggested' at the beginning of the third sentence; and the insertion of 'other organisations would not continue to receive funding if they had failed to deliver their SLA.' at the end of the third sentence.

Recommendation 4 – Proposed Changes to the Way the Panel Receives Monitoring Information

Members noted with regard to the content of the minute that the monitoring reports were those as received from the voluntary organisations without an attached summary. The monitoring reports would be discussed at November meetings of the Panel which would be used as a working party for an exchange of views by officers and members.

Minute 175, amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2009. Minute 163- Minute 152 – Grant Applications 2009-10

- Deletion of 'forth' in the first sentence and insertion of 'fourth';
- Deletion of '50%' in the last line of the third bullet point and insertion of '100%'. It was noted that a Member subsequently suggested that 100% would be more appropriate.

186. **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 Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively (Part 4E of the Constitution).

187. **Proposed Assessment Process:**

(See Recommendation 1).

The following comments and discussion took place on the Equality Impact Assessment which was included as appendix 3 to the report:

Point 4, first bullet point: The deletion of the words 'contentious and' in the second line.

Point 4, second bullet point: The deletion of the word 'Strategy' in the title and the insertion of 'strategic'. The deletion of the word 'board' in the third line and the insertion of 'broad'.

Point 4, third bullet point: The deletion of the words 'and the appeals process is abolished'

Point 4, fourth bullet point: The insertion of an additional sentence at the end to read 'It is recognised that this will be a gradual process as many of the larger grants are providing essential services in the Borough on behalf of the Council'.

Point 5: The emboldening of the word 'associated' in the heading

Point 8: Under the heading Factors that could detract from the outcomes, deletion of 'continue to mistrust the process' and insertion of 'do not have confidence in the process'.

188. **Scrutiny Challenge Panel comments on Grants Programme 2010/11:**
(See Recommendation 2).

189. **Grants Advisory Meeting 4 March 2009:**
The Panel received a report which set out the comments of the Director of Legal and Governance Services in response to resolution 172(i) of the minutes of the Grants Advisory Panel dated 8 June 2009.

Members were informed that the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services had reviewed the recommendations of the Panel for grant funding 2009/10 against the funding criteria and compiled a rationale that was submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009. Cabinet, having considered both the recommendation from the Grants Advisory Panel and the recommendations and rationale from the Portfolio Holder, decided to approve the recommendations proposed by the Portfolio Holder.

A Member referred to the application from Age Concern and suggested that the section of the Council that had previously funded the body be asked why it could not continue to fund.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

190. **Feedback from the Portfolio Holder Decision meeting of 30 July 2009:**
Following the Grant Advisory Panel meeting on 2 July 2009, a Portfolio Holder Decision meeting took place on 30 July 2009 at which the Leader of the Council took a decision, on behalf of Cabinet, on the Panel's recommendations, in time for the grants round 2010/11. A report including the minutes of that meeting was received by the Panel. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder Decision meeting had resolved that the threshold for large grants should remain at £100,000.

A Member referred to the timetable for the grants round 2010/11 and asked officers whether the informal working party meeting early in January 2010 to consider initial grant application submissions was the most appropriate time for Members to receive the raw monitoring reports. An officer stated that the working party meeting in January concerned the grants applications and not the monitoring process. Monitoring reports would be received in November and the November meeting was still in the timetable so it could be decided whether to continue with that meeting. The monitoring forms would be sent in batches. The papers submitted in January would not include recommended amounts from officers.

In response to a suggestion from a Member that the November meeting be used for comments and questions on the monitoring reports, it was agreed to retain the November meeting regarding monitoring process.

In response to a question it was noted that the informal meeting would be minuted in order to validate comments. Officer recommendations as to funding to be awarded would be made verbally and officers would take back the comments from the informal working party. The recommendations to be made as to funding would be those of the officers. Indications as to the award of funding in previous years would continue to be made available. This would not be included on the summary form and would be in accordance with the suggestion to secure funding for three years. Any decision not to continue to fund an organisation may need consideration of transitional funding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

191. **Arrangements for Allocating Unspent Funds for 2009/10:**
(See Recommendation 3).

192. **Exclusion of the Press and Public:**

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item for the reasons set out below:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reason</u>
12.	Appendix to Arrangements for Allocating Unspent Funds for 2009/10	Information under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, relating to any individual.

193. **Arrangements for Allocating Unspent Funds for 2009/10:**

An appendix provided further financial information on the four organisations who had received less than the amount recommended by officers in the grants round in March 2009 but had demonstrated an increased demand for their services.

RESOLVED: That the appendix be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.30 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JEAN LAMMIMAN
Chairman