

GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

2 MARCH 2011

- Chairman:** * Councillor Nana Asante
- Councillors:** * Sue Anderson * Mrs Vina Mithani
* Ramji Chauhan (1) * Chris Mote
* Ann Gate (4) * Joyce Nickolay
* David Gawn (3) * Sasi Suresh
- Adviser:** * Deven Pillay, Representative, Voluntary and Community Sector

* Denotes Member present
(1), (3) and (4) Denote category of Reserve Members

29. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Nizam Ismail
Councillor Krishna James
Councillor Manji Kara

Reserve Member

Councillor Ann Gate
Councillor David Gawn
Councillor Ramji Chauhan

30. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 7 – Applications to the Edward Harvist Trust

Councillor Ann Gate declared a personal interest in that her husband was a trustee for the Citizens Advice Bureau. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Chris Mote declared a personal interest in that his sister was a trustee for St. Luke's Hospice. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Susan Anderson declared a personal interest in that she carried out freelance work for the Voluntary and Community Sector. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Nana Asante declared a personal interest in that she was a trustee for Age Concern and a member of the Harrow Association of Voluntary Services. She also worked closely with a number of other Voluntary and Community organisations. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Deven Pillay declared a personal interest in that he was the Chief Executive of Harrow Mencap. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

31. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2010 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

32. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that the following public question was received:

Questioner: Lena Hanen (on behalf of Avani Modasia, Chief Executive of Age Concern Harrow)

**Question:
(to the Chairman)** Does the Grants Advisory Panel consider the process used for the appeals on the decisions of 3rd March 2010 to be equitable and transparent?

Answer: The short answer is no. The Panel acknowledges that the appeals process for 2010/11 has been a protracted exercise and quite unsatisfactory. The Panel met and discussed the appeals and sent recommendations to Cabinet. Two independent assessors were subsequently appointed, one by Cabinet, the other by Overview and Scrutiny and this resulted in two different reports, the conclusions of which did not tally. However, there was agreement on two appeals and these have been upheld and money will be released to the organisations.

Supplemental Question: How do you expect the Voluntary and Community Sector to have confidence in the grant giving and commissioning process if mistakes have been made?

Supplemental Answer: You have my assurance that Members on all sides are committed to a fair, transparent and equitable process. Lessons have been learnt from the issues encountered during the 2010/11 allocation of grants. Members will continue to monitor the situation and will raise matters with officers if they are unhappy with any aspect of the grant giving process.

33. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

34. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

35. Applications to the Edward Harvist Trust

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment which detailed the applications for funding that had been made to the Edward Harvist Trust for monies available as at 9 December 2010. The report requested that the Panel consider the applications received and make recommendations for grant allocations to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services.

An officer informed Members that the total sum available for distribution was £17,377.47. The total sum requested by voluntary organisations was £35,333.69 and there were therefore insufficient funds to grant all the applications received.

Taking into account the original guidance and governance rules issued to voluntary organisations when applying for Edward Harvist Trust funding, the Panel agreed to use the following assessment criteria for all applications:

- applications would only be considered if the requested grant was to be used for one-off capital expenditure. Consideration would not be given to applications that requested funds for the purpose of revenue expenditure, such as running costs;
- applications would only be considered if they had been received on time and all requested information provided;
- applications would only be considered if organisations had clearly indicated the sum being applied for;
- in situations where the Council partially granted a request for funding, the organisation would be contacted to see whether it still wished to proceed with the application. If not, the money would not be released.

The Panel requested that officers remind unsuccessful applicants that they would remain eligible to apply for the next round of Edward Harvist Trust funding and should not feel discouraged from doing so.

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

That grants from the Edward Harvist Trust, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the minutes, be agreed.

RESOLVED ITEMS

36. INFORMATION REPORT - London Boroughs Grants Scheme

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which outlined the role and function of the London Boroughs Grants Scheme. The report also considered the potential impact of a recent Judicial Review against London Council's decision to alter the way in which the scheme was delivered.

An officer informed the Panel that the London Boroughs Grants Scheme supported projects and services across London with each London borough required to make an annual contribution based upon its population figures. The Panel was informed that in 2010 Harrow's contribution to the Scheme had been £747,000. However, following public consultation, the London Councils Leaders' Committee had decided to alter the way in which the Scheme operated, with London boroughs required to contribute significantly less money.

In January 2011, Cabinet had agreed to contribute £390,000 to the Scheme, £357,000 less than in the previous year. However, in February 2011 the Council was notified of the outcome of a Judicial Review against London Councils by clients of the Roma Support Group. An officer explained that London Councils was now required to reconsider certain elements of the revised Scheme, as detailed in the report.

The officer stated that the Judicial Review might have been successful because the decision to alter funding was made mid-stream. The adviser to the Panel stated that grant giving bodies needed to remain aware of the Voluntary and Community Sector's expectations when reviewing funding.

The officer stated that a further report on the potential impact of the Judicial Review for Harrow would be provided to the Panel once further information was available.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

37. INFORMATION REPORT - Preliminary Results of Consultation into Review of Council Support to the Voluntary and Community Sector through Grants, Community Lettings and Community Premises

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which set out the top level results of the consultation into Council support to the Voluntary and Community Sector through grants, community lettings and community premises. The purpose of the consultation had been to establish whether existing models of support were still fit for purpose and whether a change was required in order to meet the needs of the Voluntary and Community Sector.

An officer outlined the key findings of the consultation, as set out below:

- there had been support for the proposal to set aside a portion of the grants budget for small grants of up to £10,000 per year. There had also been wide agreement on the eligibility criteria for small grants;
- most respondents felt that there was continued need for a grant appeal procedure, although there was divided opinion. However, if the appeal procedure was to be retained, 74% of respondents believed that appeals should be considered before final grant recommendations were made to Cabinet;
- in relation to Community Lettings, most respondents stated that they would prefer to book directly with schools, rather than with the Council operating as an intermediary.

The officer stated that full details of the preliminary results were contained in the report and that the Council would be using this data to inform the review process. The Council would also be providing feedback to the Voluntary and Community Sector in due course.

Having considered the report, Members made the following comments:

- it was beneficial to consider grant appeals before making final recommendations to ensure that organisations that successfully appealed were not disadvantaged due to a subsequent lack of funds;
- with a number of local schools looking to gain academy status, this would have a significant impact on Community Lettings and the Council would need to consider the implications on the Voluntary and Community Sector;
- the Council would need to think carefully about future commissioning models and would have to support the Voluntary and Community Sector through a difficult financial climate;
- many organisations had selected “don’t know” or failed to answer certain questions when completing the consultation survey. Officers

might want to consider the phrasing of certain questions to ensure that any proposals were clear.

The Chairman commended officers on the progress that had been made in relation to the grants process, Community Lettings and Community Premises. She stated that there had been a noticeable shift in public opinion and that the Council's relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector had improved significantly.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

38. INFORMATION REPORT - Update on Grant Applications Received for 2011/12

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which set out the current situation in relation to funding applications received for the main grants programme for 2011/12. An officer informed Members that a total of 131 applications had been received by the deadline date, with the sum requested totalling just under £2.3 million. The total budget within which grant recommendations for 2011/12 would be made was £598,613.

Following questions from Members, an officer clarified the following points:

- organisations had to meet basic eligibility criteria for their application to be considered. If the conditions outlined in section 2.5 of the report were not met, the application would not be considered for funding;
- grant applications had been assessed by a panel of officers between 14 February and 4 March 2011. Each panel had comprised of two officers from the Community Development team and one officer from a relevant service area;
- applications were scored firstly by each panel member before the panel came together and agreed a collective score for each application. The process had been transparent and a full audit trail was available if required;
- a summary report would be prepared for each application. Unlike in previous years, the information provided by applicants on the application form would be transferred directly into the report to ensure Members had access to the original information.

The Panel's adviser stated that it would have been useful to have had a representative of the Voluntary and Community Sector on the assessment panels. A Councillor also suggested that it might be beneficial to undertake random checks on a set number of grant applications, to protect against errors. An officer stated that they would look at the possibility of introducing such a system.

The Chairman stated that it was essential that the Grants Advisory Panel was given the opportunity to consider grant applications for 2011/12 before any recommendations were made to Cabinet. The Panel's adviser stated that bypassing the Panel would constitute a major change in the grant giving process and could potentially harm the trust that had been established with the Voluntary and Community Sector. A Councillor stated that Members add value to the process and should not be excluded. For example, if Members' views had been sought about the changes to the Grants process, Members might have suggested including Voluntary and Community Sector representatives on the Assessment Panels in order to enhance the process.

A number of Members queried whether it would be possible to introduce a 'blind' grants process where the name of the applicant was not made known to the individuals assessing the application. An officer stated that it would be very difficult to make the process completely anonymous due to the information that organisations had to provide. Members stated that agreeing the process before looking at individual applications was a helpful way forward and if an aspect of a 'blind' process could be introduced, it would be helpful.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) that a special meeting of the Grants Advisory Panel be organised to consider grant applications for 2011/12.

39. INFORMATION REPORT - Update on Actions From Grants Advisory Panel Meeting Held on 2 December 2010

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, which provided Members with a range of information requested at the meeting of the Grants Advisory Panel on 2 December 2010. The information contained within the report included budget information relating to Community Premises, budget information relating to Community Lettings and details of the Independent Adviser's report on 2010/11 grant appeals. The report was admitted late to the agenda to allow Members to consider information that had not previously been available.

The Chairman queried why support service charges were significantly lower for Community Lettings compared with Community Premises. An officer stated that she would look into the matter and provide Members with an explanation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

40. Any Other Urgent Business

Grant Appeal Process

Members discussed the way in which the appeals process could be improved. The following comments were made:

- the process for informing organisations of failed appeals needed to be improved. There needed to be clearer communication between the voluntary and community sector and the Council in relation to the grant giving process;
- the application process for 2011/12 was much clearer than the process used in the previous year and this should help avoid a similar situation occurring again;
- officers would no longer provide the Panel with edited summaries of applications and would ensure Members had access to the original information submitted by organisations;
- in light of the closure of the Harrow Association of Voluntary Services, the Council would need to carefully consider the support needs of the Voluntary and Community Sector.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.50 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR NANA ASANTE
Chairman

APPENDIX 1

Organisation	Sum requested	Sum granted	Comments
Afghan Association of London (Harrow)	£1,939.95	£1,939.95	Grant agreed
Ancient Tamil Arts Link	Not stated	Nil	Did not specify grant required / application did not include all requested information
ARC (Association for Real Change)	Not stated	Nil	Application for revenue funding
Association of Senior Muslim Citizens	£400.00	Nil	Application did not include all requested information
BME Home Care Centre	£2002.00	Nil	Application did not include all requested information
Community Link Up	£764.15	£764.15	Grant agreed
Edgware Central African Youth Associations UK	£2,000.00	Nil	Application for revenue funding
Flash Musicals	£2,001.60	£2,001.60	Grant agreed
Harrow Anti-Racist Alliance	£2,000.00	Nil	Did not specify grant required. Organisation later submitted figure after the application deadline.
Harrow Bengalee Association	£2,000.00	Nil	Application for revenue funding
Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau	£1,118.59	£610.00	Partially granted: Only the cost of new PC hardware to be covered. Training and software costs are considered revenue expenditure.
Harrow Iranian Community Association (HICA)	£2,000.00	Nil	Application for revenue funding

Organisation	Sum requested	Sum granted	Comments
Harrow St. Mary's Cricket Club	£2,000.00	Nil	Did not specify grant required. Organisation later submitted figure after the application deadline.
Harrow Tamil Association	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	Grant agreed
Harrow Women's Centre	£2,000.00	£2,000.00	Grant agreed
Indian Association of Harrow	£1,559.97	£1,559.97	Grant agreed
London Kalibari	£2,000.00	Nil	Application for revenue funding
NW London Lesbian & Gay Group	£768.96	£768.96	Funding agreed but will not be released until organisation has provided evidence of planning permission
Russian Immigrants Association	£1,140.85	Nil	Duplicates previous application
Special Connection	£4,000.00	Nil	Application for revenue funding
Srishti Yuva Culture	Not stated	Nil	Did not specify grant required / application for revenue funding
St. Luke's Hospice	£2,000.00	Nil	Did not specify grant required. Organisation later submitted figure after the application deadline.
Tanglewood	£849.99	£849.99	Grant agreed
The Hillplayers	£487.63	£487.63	Grant agreed
The Larches Trust	£1,300.00	£1,300.00	Grant agreed
Wealdstone Social Club	Not stated	Nil	Did not specify grant required / does not meet eligibility criteria

Total funds available: £17,377.47
Total funding requested: £35,333.69
Total recommended funding: £13,282.25