

GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

4 FEBRUARY 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Nana Asante

Councillors: * Manji Kara * Joyce Nickolay
* Kairul Kareema Marikar (1) * Varsha Parmar
* Chris Mote * Bill Phillips
* John Nickolay (2) * Sasi Suresh

Adviser: * Deven Pillay, Representative of the Voluntary and Community Sector., Voluntary and Community Sector

In attendance: David Perry Minutes 123 and 124
(Councillors)

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

117. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor William Stoodley
Councillor Mrs Vina Mithani

Reserve Member

Councillor Kareema Marikar
Councillor John Nickolay

118. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 – Grant Recommendations for Outcomes Based Grants 2013-16 and Small Grants Funding 2013-14

Councillor Nana Asante declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her involvement with the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum meant she had contact with all the member organisations, and in particular Age UK Harrow, Harrow Law Centre, Harrow Women's Centre and Harrow Mencap. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Manji Kara declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his involvement with Age UK and Bentley Priory Nature Reserve. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor John Nickolay declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his involvement with Harrow Borough Football Club. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Joyce Nickolay declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve Committee. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Bill Phillips declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his involvement with Harrow Association of Disabled People, Crossroads, Harrow Bereavement Care and Harrow Mencap. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Sasi Suresh declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of her involvement with Harrow Tamil Association and Harrow Tamil School Association. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Deven Pillay, Panel Adviser, declared an interest as an employee of Harrow Mencap. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

119. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 30 July 2012 and 11 September 2012, be taken as read and signed as correct records.

120. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that the following public questions had been received:

1.

Questioner: Ms Fiona Lapraik on behalf of Harrow Women's Centre

Asked of: Councillor Nana Asante, Chairman of the Grants Advisory Panel

Question: We understand that grant decisions have not yet been finalised, however if Harrow Women's Centre does not receive funding from our local authority, and if we had to close after 20 years of providing a comprehensive service for women in Harrow, what other provisions are you making, to support vulnerable women - including an increasing number from ethnic minorities - whose lives are affected by issues like worklessness, isolation and poverty?

Answer: This is a very difficult decision – there is £600k available, and it is not enough to meet all grant requests. We have moved to a competitive application process, which was requested by the sector, and will look at all possible permutations and aim to fund the largest number of groups possible.

Supplemental Question: In the 6 month period covered by the recent mid-year Monitoring, Harrow Women's Centre provided 927 hours of counselling to 72 women; supported 336 women through the advice and information service; and provided 355 individual visits to the support groups. Every woman supported by the Centre has a positive 'knock-on effect' in that their families also benefit. Does the Panel recognise the impact the absence of these services will have on local women and their families?

Supplemental Answer: The work of the Women's Centre is appreciated across the Council. However, there is a limited sum available, and the competitive process allows us to be fairer. The Panel will look at what options there are, and it is possible that the Centre may be able to secure funding elsewhere.

2.

Questioner: Ms Pamela Fitzpatrick on behalf of Harrow Law Centre

Asked of: Councillor Nana Asante, Chairman of the Grants Advisory Panel

Question: Harrow Law Centre provides a service which is not replicated in the borough. The law centre receives only £26,000 in funding from the LA but has brought into Harrow several thousands of pounds in external funding and created 7 jobs in the midst of a recession.

With the coming welfare reforms, there has never been a greater need for specialist legal advice to be available free of charge to local people. The LA has asked the Law Centre to assist with the consequences of welfare reform. Could you therefore explain why the LA is not prepared to make a financial contribution to an organisation which not

only so closely meets its own priorities but one which clearly is an exemplar for generating external funding?

Answer: Thank you for your question. We do value Harrow Law Centre, and therefore we are working with you to deliver services. The competitive process has thrown up some issues, but it was requested by the sector and we must abide by it. I would remind you that applications requested a total sum of £2m, and we have £600k available, but we will look at whether we can vary the allocation.

Supplemental Question: These are harsh decisions for voluntary sector organisations is the Panel aware of the impact this will have on future funding options?

Supplemental Answer: We understand that grant funds can help an organisation to lever in other funding. We do appreciate that we need to support the sector to support residents.

3.

Questioner: Avani Modasia on behalf of Age UK Harrow

Asked of: Councillor Nana Asante, Chairman of the Grants Advisory Panel

Question: Can you assure the Voluntary / Community Sector that this has been an open and transparent process?

Answer: I can assure you we strive to have a transparent and open process, but if you know of ways we can improve then we want to hear from you. We have tried to ensure that application forms were available and accessible. Workshops on the process were open to all. We have tried to guarantee consistency in decision making by having the same Panel chair throughout. We will look at the outcomes and see how we can learn and improve.

There was consultation prior to the changes in process, and we listened to the views of the sector. This meeting is well attended tonight, but the meeting at which the changes were agreed was poorly attended. You can view reports and minutes of meetings online.

Supplemental Question: There were some suggestions that the process was not robust – were you aware that some applicants were informed of outcomes prior to the meeting?

Supplemental Answer: I have heard the rumours, and I would have serious concerns if they are true. However, we need more details in order to investigate and prevent this happening again, if

the rumours are indeed true.

4.

Questioner: Steve Porter on behalf of Capable Communities

Asked of: Councillor Nana Asante, Chairman of the Grants Advisory Panel

Question: Has there been any consideration given to the process of allocation of grants to minimize the devastating impact on the sector and the residents of Harrow?

Answer: We postponed the original meeting because there was not enough time to properly consider the information. We will do our best to minimise the impact, but as we have said, there are requests for £2m of funding, with £600k available. We have devised a transparent process to assess the best applications, and we need to support unsuccessful applicants in securing other funds.

Supplemental Question: Given the impact on organisations, will you review the basis for grants with the voluntary sector?

Supplemental Answer: We meet with sector representatives regularly. We want to hear what you have to say, and modify the process going forward, but we cannot modify the process mid-way through. We can learn lessons and deliver better services and relationships with the sector.

121. Petitions

Petition regarding grant funding for Harrow Shopmobility

The Panel received a petition, signed by 494 people. The terms of the petition were as follows:

“We the undersigned urge Harrow Council to reconsider its decision not to grant funding to Harrow Shopmobility in this coming year”.

The petition was accompanied by a letter from a resident and service user setting out the issues she faced and the support she received from Harrow Shopmobility.

RESOLVED: That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing for consideration.

Petition regarding grant funding for Harrow Women’s Centre

The Panel received a petition, signed by 575 people. The terms of the petition were as follows:

“If the Harrow Women’s Centre was not to receive the Local Authority Grant for 2013-2014 and is forced to shut down, it would be a threat to women’s rights to support against extreme poverty, depression, isolation and domestic violence; women who are the backbone of every family and community, their breakdown will cause a collapse of the whole social system.”

RESOLVED: That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing for consideration.

122. Rights of Members to Speak

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 25.1, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services, who was not a Member of the Committee, be allowed to speak at the meeting.

123. Deputations

The Panel, in accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 34.1.1., (Part 4D of the Constitution), agreed to suspend the executive procedure rules by motion in order to receive a deputation by Harrow Association of Disabled People, which had been received late and had not met the full requirements for a deputation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 34.1.1., (Part 4D of the Constitution), a deputation led by Harrow Association of Disabled People be received.
- (2) in accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution), the following deputations be received:

1. Harrow Shopmobility

The depute acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Panel in recommending its allocation of grants. Harrow Shopmobility understood the link between grants and the delivery of outcomes, and had made an application under the target of helping Harrow residents to lead independent and fulfilling lives. She asked if the sum of £75,000, ring-fenced for the infrastructure organization, represented value for money.

She stated that this would be the third year in which Harrow Shopmobility would have to appeal the decision, and that uncertainty about the receipt and level of grant made it impossible to plan their service, which they were anxious to expand.

The Chair responded that the three year funding programme had been introduced as a measure to give stability, and allow organisations to plan and lever in additional funding.

The depute thanked the Panel for listening, and expressed her hope that they would make good decisions.

2. Deputation Led by Harrow Association of Disabled People

Four deputees, all members of voluntary sector organisations, spoke in support of the deputation.

The first depute stated that there had been a 25% cut in funding without any prior consultation with the voluntary sector, and that while they welcomed the extra £100,000, it was not enough to breach the gap, and some organisations might have to close as a result of the loss of funding.

She continued that research suggested that for every £1 of investment in the voluntary sector resulted in £3 worth of service to the community, which was extremely good value. Voluntary sector organisations were able to operate within tight budgets and at low costs. It was unlikely that local authorities would be able to provide similar services at a comparable cost. She added that as a group, they had many good and innovative ideas about service delivery, and she asked that Portfolio Holders and Corporate Directors should meet with them and take their proposals seriously.

The second depute commented that the voluntary sector had been encouraged to increase activity to compensate for the reduction or withdrawal of services, and that this cut, which had been an arbitrary reduction, was a breach of faith with the sector, as they would not be in a position to deliver their services.

The third depute said that the Council needed to consult with the sector prior to making decisions, and should look for solutions together.

The fourth depute concurred with all the previous points and urged Council officers and Members to meet with voluntary sector representatives.

The Chair thanked all the deputees for their contribution.

Following the deputations a Member expressed her disappointment that funding for the voluntary sector was not organised on a commissioning basis. The Chair responded that this would not increase the amount of funding available. Another Member questioned whether the Grants process was the best way to fund organisations. The first depute suggested that the Council should meet with the voluntary sector and give serious consideration to their proposals for how money might be saved, or better spent, through using organisations which provided value for money and engaged with those

residents most vulnerable and in need. The Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing commented that there were few legal barriers to outsourcing statutory functions, but it was more a question of whether it was appropriate to manage certain services at arm's length.

The Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services commented that the Council had an excellent relationship with the voluntary sector in the borough, which he endorsed, and would be happy to build on. The Compact was an excellent document, which set out the framework for working together, but the issue was about the level of funding, and difficult decisions had to be made. The Council had protected the discretionary funds despite budgetary pressures.

The Chair concurred with the view that there had been a breach of faith, she acknowledged that the lack of consultation had not been in the spirit of the Compact and she apologised for this. She reminded the meeting that there were enormous budgetary pressures, and that an extra £100,000 had been identified for allocation. She assured the voluntary sector representatives that they were taken seriously, and asked them to inform the Council when mistakes were made. She thanked all those present for taking the time to attend and contribute.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

124. Grant Recommendations for Outcomes Based Grants 2013-16 and Small Grants Funding 2013-14

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this report was submitted following agenda publication as it had not been available at the time the main agenda was printed and circulated.

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing, which set out information regarding applications that had been made for Council funding under the Outcomes Based Grants programme for 2013-16 and the Small Grants programme for 2013-14. Members noted that there was also a confidential part to the report which was appended elsewhere on the agenda.

An officer outlined the changes to the process, in particular the move to a three year funding programme, and advised the Panel on the numbers of applications received, the process by which applications had been assessed, including measures for quality assurance, and the support provided to organisations in submitting their applications.

Members considered the recommendation to ring-fence £75,000 for an infrastructure support service. The Chair sought views as to whether it would be preferable to reduce the amount to £50,000, and release more funds for grants. The Panel Adviser expressed his personal view that an independent, overarching organisation, accountable to member groups, should be properly funded as it would provide a much needed focus and voice for the voluntary

sector, although he added this might not be a universal opinion among voluntary sector organisations. He also stated that it should be funded separately from the Grants budget. Members discussed the purpose and viability of such an organisation, and a majority felt that it could provide vital co-ordination, support and information for local voluntary sector organisations, particularly in signposting them to other funding streams.

The Panel Adviser commented that any cut in funding would have an impact, and while some organisations might be able to adjust, others would not. A Member added that organisations making grant applications for specific projects would be very concerned if their bid did not secure all the funds required to deliver the project. The Panel Adviser suggested that if the Council could agree strategic priorities, then they could allocate funds accordingly. Another Member commented that if groups received only a proportion of their bid, they could still use it well, and it would be her preference to see more groups supported even if the amounts were lower.

A Member commented that the choice appeared to be to fund specific, deliverable projects to the level required, or to fund as many organisations as possible. He said that 'match funding' could have been an option, but it was too late to consider this option at this stage in the process.

An officer then outlined the choices before Members in determining their preference for the allocation of funds. A range of values was set out in an appendix, and Members considered how the different permutations would impact on successful and unsuccessful applicants, and to what extent their ability to deliver projects would be affected. Members sought clarification as to how applicants would renegotiate their bid for funds if the allocation was significantly less than expected.

The Chair reminded the Panel that there had been an agreed principle to 'reward excellence', and gave her view that a top tier of applicants should receive a higher proportion of funding, with a secondary tier receiving a smaller proportion, which would allow them to continue to operate with the possibility of securing other funding. Members discussed whether lower level funding would be of value, as it would reduce an organisation's ability to deliver quality projects, or whether it was better to fund fewer organisations and enhance their ability to deliver quality services. The Chair reminded the Panel that voluntary sector organisations had made the significant point that funding from the Local Authority was a positive endorsement which helped them to lever money into the borough. A group in receipt of £26,000 grant funds last year had secured a further £500,000.

A Member queried whether it were possible that applicants might overstate their requirement, and could manage with a lesser amount. Another Member observed that quality projects needed to be funded appropriately and that too great a reduction in grants would be counter productive.

Members considered a balance of allocation that would reward excellence and provide funds for a broad spectrum of organisations, and voted on their preferred option. An officer reminded the Panel that it would be necessary to confirm that the figures quoted fell within the budget available.

The Panel, having agreed to some variation to the recommendations to Cabinet

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet) That

- (1) £75,000 be ring-fenced from the Grants budget to fund the commissioning of an infrastructure support service for the Third Sector during 2013-14;
- (2) grant applicants be awarded funding at the following levels, subject to officer confirmation that that these funding scenarios could be managed within the budget available:

a) Outcome Based Grants

- (i) Applicants scoring 88% and above will receive 70% of the grant requested;
- (ii) Applicants scoring 80% to 87% will receive 44% of the grant requested.

b) Small Grants

- (i) Applicants scoring 80% and above will receive 75% of the grant requested;
- (ii) Applicants scoring 55% to 79% will receive 52% of the grant requested.

subject to:

- (i) receipt of satisfactory references and supporting documents by 11 March 2013;
 - (ii) confirmation from applicants that the proposed project or activity could be delivered at the same or different level as described in the application with the amount of grant recommended by 11 March 2013;
 - (iii) satisfactory responses to any queries raised by the grant assessment panels by 11 March 2013;
 - (iv) completion of the appeals procedure and any changes to the amounts awarded necessitated by decisions on appeals.
- (3) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Community Health and Well-Being in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services to withdraw funding offers where organisations did not comply with the conditions as detailed in Recommendation 2 above;

- (4) authority be delegated to a Panel of councillors (membership in proportion) who had not taken part in the decision of 4 February 2013, with an independent observer from the voluntary sector, to consider and determine appeals, and to vary both the percentage grant awarded and the threshold above which grant awards are made in light of decisions taken on appeals.

Reason for Recommendation: To award Council funding under the Outcomes Based and Small Grants programmes to Third Sector organisations to support them in delivering their services to Harrow residents.

RESOLVED ITEMS

125. Information Report - Mid Year Grant Monitoring 2012-13

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing, which set out information on the monitoring of grants awarded under the Main Grants Programme 2012-13 and included information provided by organisations on their projects or services as part of the mid-year monitoring process.

A Member commented that this was an excellent report, which provided detailed information on the performance of organisations in receipt of grant funding, and he expressed his thanks for the work done by officers in compiling the report. The Chair concurred, and added that this represented the result of a desire for continuous improvement on the part of officers and the Panel. Another Member praised the interactive questionnaire which was available electronically.

An officer informed the Panel that although the process had been delayed as a result of two assessment processes running simultaneously, all responses had now been received. She reported that at the mid-year point, 15,000 residents had received support via grant funded organisations, with a full year target of 63,000. There had been more partnership working than ever before, numbers of volunteers had increased, and many organisations had managed to secure additional funding from other sources. Services generally had been adversely affected by an increase in demand, and poor weather during the summer, but despite this the main concern for voluntary sector organisations remained the uncertainty of future funding.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) officers be commended for a quality report and thanked for their hard work in producing it.

126. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, 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>
8.	Grant Recommendations for Outcomes Based Grants 2013-16 and Small Grants Funding 2013-14 – Appendices 5a, 5b, 6a and 6c.	Information under paragraph 1 (contains information relating to any individual).

127. Grant Recommendations for Outcomes Based Grants 2013-16 and Small Grants Funding 2013-14

Members received a confidential report of the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing which related to a public report appearing elsewhere on the agenda. Members sought clarification on details and information provided in the confidential papers.

128. Termination of the Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 33.2 (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At

- (1) 9.55 pm to continue until 10.10 pm; and
- (2) at 10.05 pm to continue until 10.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 10.30 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR NANA ASANTE
Chairman