

Harrow Council

Third Sector Investment Plan

2012 - 2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This plan sets out a strategic approach to delivering Council support to the Third Sector. Using the definition adopted by the Third Sector Strategy¹ this sector is defined as:

Not for profit, independent, voluntary and community groups or organisations formed by local people, or those with a local interest, to improve the quality of lives for themselves and/or fellow citizens in Harrow. These include registered charities; voluntary organisations; community groups; faith groups involved in social action; community interest companies and social enterprises.

- 1.2 The aim of this plan is to ensure that the Council makes the best use of its resources by aligning these with the delivery of its corporate priorities and statutory duties. The Council wishes to support the development of an independent and sustainable Third Sector that delivers outcomes for local residents alongside statutory agencies. This plan therefore sets out a delivery framework for;

- I. Commissioning and Small Projects funding through the Main Grants programme.
- II. The development of Third Sector accommodation hubs.
- III. Aligning the provision of discretionary rate relief to commissioning.

- 1.3 The proposals contained within this plan are based on the results of consultation undertaken with the Third Sector, Council departments and Members during 2009, 2010 and 2011. The proposals are also based on an analysis of current Council support of the Third Sector and consideration of relevant Council plans and strategies.

2. Background

2.1 Third Sector Strategy

The Third Sector Strategy seeks to strengthen the relationship between the Third Sector and the Council. It has three objectives;

- (i) To deepen partnership working by strengthening the role of the Third Sector as a strategic partner;
- (ii) To build the capacity of the Third Sector to help it change itself to address the future;
- (iii) To enable participation by increasing opportunities for Third Sector involvement in the design and delivery of public services through a more

¹ Third Sector Strategy, April 2010

transparent commissioning process and improving the management and administration of grant funding.

2.2 Voluntary Sector Compact

The Harrow Compact sets out agreed shared principles and commitments between the statutory and Third Sectors. The aims of the Compact are to build on existing partnerships and develop the relationship between the sectors through mutual respect and trust so that they can together provide more effective services to local people and communities within the borough. The shared principles set out in the Compact include working in partnership to enhance the ability of public sector bodies and Third Sector organisations to fulfil their own purposes whilst also imposing responsibility for each sector to contribute towards mutual aims and objectives.

2.3 Overview and Scrutiny review: Delivering a strengthened voluntary and community sector

The Overview and Scrutiny report 'Delivering a strengthened voluntary and community sector' made a number of recommendations to support the strengthening of the relationship between the Council, partners and the Third Sector. It also recognised the pressure on the Council and partners to deliver services that are responsive to local needs.

3. Key Principles

3.1 The Third Sector Investment plan proposes a set of key principles to under-pin decisions around resource allocation to the Third Sector. These principles have been derived from the results of consultation which indicate strong support for ensuring that Council resources are allocated for the benefit of people living, working or schooling in Harrow. The consultation results also showed strong support for a focus on using resources to support preventative services and for ensuring that services provide value for money in the delivery of outcomes. The key principles for this plan are;

- Resources will be allocated to organisations that operate on a not-for-profit basis only.
- Resources will be allocated where they are used for the benefit of people living, working or schooling in Harrow.
- Resources will be allocated where they help the Council deliver its priorities.

- The allocation of resources will be matched to the delivery of specified outcomes.
- Resources will be allocated where they achieve good value for money and deliver measurable added value.
- Resources will be allocated where they provide benefit to the protected equality groups under the Equalities Act 2010 and further the Council's public sector duty on equalities.

These key principles will underpin the future delivery of Council support to the Third Sector through commissioning, grant funding and premises support.

4. Commissioning

- 4.1 The Council commissions a range of services from the Third Sector where the Council recognises that these organisations are better placed to deliver these than statutory agencies. Both the Adults and Housing and Children's Services directorates have been commissioning services for a number of years and both are currently updating their commissioning strategies (current commissioning priorities are attached at Appendix 2).
- 4.2 Current commissioning priorities in Adults and Housing and Children's Services are informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and are aligned to the delivery of the Council's statutory duties. The Council is developing an overall commissioning model for services and Third Sector investment will be part of this development.
- 4.3 In January 2011 the Council consulted with the Third Sector on the future provision of support through the Council's Main Grants programme, community lettings and Community Premises. The results of this consultation indicated that 86% of respondents felt that commissioning was an effective way of securing some services.
- 4.4 The Main Grants Programme is currently structured as an annual, competitive grant funding scheme. This means that some services that could be commissioned are competing for funding alongside a range of smaller or one-off projects. In recent years the demand on this programme has been very high and this is expected to continue. Through commissioning these services could be removed from the annual process and instead be resourced more appropriately to deliver agreed outcomes. The commissioning of services will be undertaken through a formal tendering process and services will be commissioned against detailed service specifications funded on a three-year basis.

5. **Commissioning priorities for the Main Grants Programme**

5.1 The commissioning priorities for the Main Grants Programme have been developed in consultation with the Third Sector and Council Directorates. The priorities aim to fill the gaps in services not currently commissioned by other Directorates. The priorities are;

- Services that support the delivery of the Council's statutory functions
- Services that tackle disadvantage based on evidence of need
- Prevention services that promote health and well-being
- Advocacy, information / advice and sign-posting services
- Culturally specific services that address the needs of communities
- Infrastructure support services for the Third Sector

5.3 Training support to assist Third Sector organisations participate in commissioning

A survey of Third Sector training needs has been undertaken to identify the support needed. This survey indicated a high demand for training support, particularly in the area of preparing and submitting a tender. In response to this the Council is developing a package of training support that will include on-line information, training workshops and telephone support.

6. **Small Projects grant funding**

6.1 In addition to the commissioning of services a proportion of the grants budget will be set aside to support a Small Projects grant funding programme. This will be delivered as an annual, competitive application process and will offer small grants of up to £5,000 per annum. The scheme will be aimed at supporting smaller Third Sector organisations with an annual income of up to £50,000.

6.2 Application process

Following feedback from Third Sector representatives and others the application form, guidance notes and assessment scoring process have been improved. Information sessions on the new application process will be provided including guidance on use of the electronic application form.

6.3 Assessment process

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Evidence of need for the proposed project.
- Plans for addressing this need.
- How the project tackles disadvantage, fosters good relations and promotes equality of opportunity.
- How projects will deliver proposed outcomes
- How people can get involved and access the project.
- How the project will give added value such as through using volunteers and working collaboratively with others.
- Clear and realistic costs for the project.
- Exit strategy beyond the life of the funding.

6.4 A scoring sheet will be used as in previous years. The assessment process will be undertaken by a panel of assessors that will include two Council officers and one Third Sector representative elected via the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum.

6.5 A meeting of panel Chairs will take place both at the beginning and at intervals during the assessment process. A mediation meeting and random sample testing will take place at the end of the process. Quality assurance checks will be carried out throughout the process.

6.6 Appeals process

The results of the consultation indicated mixed views on retaining the appeals process. Most other funding bodies do not have an appeals process. It is the view of the Grants Advisory Panel however, that an appeals process should be retained for the short term until the new process has been established.

The grounds for appeal will continue to be; *information presented to the Grants Advisory Panel was incorrect or information was omitted and that this had a material effect on the decision*

As agreed in 2011 appeals will be considered before final grant awards are confirmed to successful applicants. Appeals will be considered by an independent panel consisting of the Divisional Director Community and Culture, Portfolio Holder Community and Culture and an Independent Adviser.

7. **Accommodation support**

7.1 The future provision of accommodation support to the Third Sector will be developed in line with the key principles of this Plan.

7.2 The current process for the allocation of support across the Council is ad hoc with some organisations benefiting as a result of historical patronage. The allocation process should be based on a strategic view of resources and aligned to the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities and statutory duties.

7.3 Allocation policies should be considered alongside the provision of grants and other funding. The cost of providing premises support is significant and those receiving it should therefore be subject to the same level of expectation to deliver against agreed outcomes as those receiving direct financial support.

7.4 The results of the consultation indicated strong support across the Third Sector that organisations should:

- Contribute to the cost of provision
- That 'larger' organisations should support smaller ones with access to premises
- That there should be alternative provision possibly run by organisations themselves, such as a resource centre, or drop-in venue
- That organisations should be able to book venues directly with schools rather than the Council operating as an intermediary

There was also support for the provision of a directory of venues for hire and concessionary rates on certain Council venues.

7.5 Based on the results of this consultation the Council will support the development of Third Sector hubs that offer opportunities for shared costs, community management and flexible use. A number of hub locations will be identified that could offer a range of facilities for the community and Third Sector organisations that include;

- Office space
- Hot desking space
- Shared meeting / training space
- Shared activity space
- Postage / internet / IT facilities

7.6 Discretionary rate relief

The Council provides support with business rates to non-profit making organisations by either topping up relief to charities, in addition to the amount of mandatory relief that may be given (up to 100% of the rate charge) or by granting relief of up to 100% to non-profit making bodies where the property is "used by one or more institutions or organisations,

none of which is established or conducted for profit and whose main objects are charitable, philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts.”

The Council currently provides different levels of discretionary and non-discretionary rate relief to Third Sector organisations in Harrow. The future provision of rate relief will be reviewed in line with the key principles set out in this plan.

8. Monitoring

8.1 In 2010 the Community and Environment and Adults and Housing directorates introduced a process of joint monitoring for organisations receiving above £10,000 of Council funding. This process will be further enhanced for 2011/12 and will involve all directorates.

Improvements to this process will include;

- A simplified monitoring form that is pre-populated with information provided by the applicant.
- Standardisation of SLAs across the Council.
- Identification of monitoring officers and training prior to monitoring visits
- Development of a library of essential documents

8.2 The development of a library of essential documents has been started and the aim is to ensure that the Council holds one set of documents for each organisation funded or supported by it (irrespective of which directorate is providing the support). The expectation is that policy documents, except for Health and Safety, should be updated every three years (Health and Safety policies should be updated every year). Organisations will be responsible for ensuring that their policy documents are updated in line with any changes in legislation, Codes of Practice, regulations etc. and updated documents should be sent to the Council. Specialist officers from across the Council will provide support to monitoring officers to quality check documents received from Third Sector organisations.

9. Other forms of support

9.1 Other support

The Council provides support to the Third Sector in a number of other ways including:

- *External funding advice:* The External Funding Manager provides advice and guidance to Third Sector organisations on potential funding sources

and general support with bid writing. The External Funding Manager has facilitated strategic links with funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund that has resulted in Harrow being identified as a priority borough. This type of joint working will be further developed in the future.

- *Access to procurement contracts:* The Council's procurement service has piloted a scheme to give Third Sector organisations access to Council procurement contracts such as stationery, enabling them to benefit from favourable terms for the purchase of stationery items. There is scope to develop this pilot in partnership with the Third Sector going forward.
- *One-4-One employee volunteering scheme and Harrow's Heroes:* The Council supports its employees to participate in volunteering by matching hour for hour, the time an employee gives to volunteer in the local community, up to a limit of 36 hours a year. The scheme has successfully registered 40 local organisations and placed 60 employees in to volunteering opportunities. The Council also promotes volunteering through it's annual Harrow's Heroes event, that celebrates and recognises the contribution of volunteers in the community.

Appendix 1

Adults and Housing commissioning priorities

Principles for future funding

1. Direct correlation to Adult's commissioning priorities (set out below)
2. Social care emphasis rather than health focused projects
3. Offering value for money
4. Move from core funding small number of organisations to full cost recovery – Service Delivery focus
5. Service delivery rather than consultation focused services
6. Reduce duplication of services

Adults commissioning priorities

- Prevention services including social and practical related tasks
- Advocacy, information/advice and sign-posting services
- Culturally specific services needed by new communities
- Carers breaks
- Employment for people with Learning disabilities and people with mental health issues

Children's Services Priorities (replaces Strategic Commissioning Focus 11/12)

1. **Early Intervention** - intervening early in the onset of difficulties to meet additional needs at the earliest point and preventing the escalation of need for more complex and costly interventions.
2. **Health Prevention** - improving physical and mental well-being of children & young people and educating them to make healthy lifestyle choices.
3. **Safeguarding** - making safeguarding every one's business and ensuring those most vulnerable to abuse are identified and intervention provided to ensure their safety.
4. **Narrowing the Gap** - between outcomes for the more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of young people and the general child population.

