

# GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

## 20 FEBRUARY 2014

**Chairman:** \* Councillor Joyce Nickolay

**Councillors:** \* Mano Dharmarajah \* John Nickolay (2)  
\* Manji Kara \* Bill Phillips  
\* Kairul Kareema Marikar \* Christine Robson (1)  
\* Chris Mote \* Sasi Suresh

**Adviser:** \* Sarah Kersey, Business Development Director,  
Voluntary Action Harrow

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

### 146. Attendance by Reserve Members

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Members:

Ordinary Member

Councillor Mrs Vina Mithani  
Councillor Christine Robson

Reserve Member

Councillor John Nickolay  
Councillor Varsha Parmar

### RECOMMENDED ITEMS

#### 150. Small Grant Recommendations 2014-15

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing, which provided information on applications for funding from the Small Grants programme for 2014-15.

The Divisional Director, Community and Culture, informed members that of 34 applications, 31 had been judged eligible according to criteria previously agreed by the Panel. She reminded the Panel that the previous year, awards totalling £77k had been made in a 'two-tier' arrangement, whereby applications scoring 80% and above had received 75% of their grant request, and applications scoring between 55% and 79% had received 52% of their grant request. She outlined the funding allocation options for 2014-15 and invited members to consider whether they wished to continue to abide by the principle of 'recognising excellence', or fund all eligible applications.

The Chair commended officers on their report, for its clarity and range of information and proposed that the Panel should agree a funding option which rewarded excellence; she felt the current 'two-tier' system worked well.

Members considered if the suggested cut-off points for assessment were appropriate, and did not disadvantage any organisation unfairly. They agreed that all grant recipients should score at least 50% and above in order to be considered. Members also discussed the degree to which support was available for organisations, and whether having English as a second language disadvantaged certain applicants. Having considered the funding options and levels of grant available, members agreed that applicants scoring 80% and above should receive 85% of the requested grant, and applicants scoring 55% to 79% should receive 75% of the grant requested, subject to the conditions specified.

The Divisional Director then responded to queries from Panel Members on the following points:

- whether it was necessary to include a venue at application stage;
- whether a breakdown of costs is required;
- the appeal process;
- the role of panel members hearing appeals;
- the involvement of voluntary sector representatives as observers;
- the consequences of defaults and / or successful appeals and their impact on sums available for grant allocation
- the support available for organisations in making an application;
- channels for communication with voluntary sector organisations;
- the nature and location of target beneficiaries.

The Panel Adviser suggested that longer lead in times for the application process would be helpful as voluntary sector organisations did not always have the staffing or resources to access or respond to correspondence every day, and could miss opportunities as a result. The Panel considered that this was a possible factor for the relatively low number of applications, along with the requirement that grants should be made to align with meeting the corporate priorities of the Council. However, the Panel noted that a balance was needed in order for officers to have sufficient time to assess applications and draft their reports and recommendations prior to budgets being agreed.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Cabinet) That:

- (1) grant funding be agreed at the following levels:
  - i. applicants scoring 80% and above to receive 85% of the requested grant;
  - ii. applicants scoring 55% to 79% to receive 75% of the requested grant;

and subject to:

- (a) receipt of satisfactory references and supporting documents by 11 April 2014;
  - (b) confirmation from applicants that the proposed project or activity can be delivered at the same, or at a different, level with the amount of grant awarded, by 11 April 2014;
  - (c) satisfactory resolution of any queries raised by the grant assessment panels by 11 April 2014;
  - (d) completion of the appeals procedure and any changes to the amounts awarded necessitated by decisions on appeals;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture, to withdraw funding offers where organisations do not comply with the conditions detailed in recommendation 1, above;
  - (3) authority be delegated to the Divisional Director, Community and Culture, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture, to consider and determine appeals with the support of an independent voluntary sector adviser, and vary both the percentage grant awarded and the threshold above which grant awards are made (as at Recommendations 1a and 1b above), in light of decisions taken on appeals.

**Reason for Recommendation:** To award Council funding under the Small Grants programme to third sector organisations to support them in delivering their services to Harrow residents.

**151. Renewal of Service Level Agreements for Outcome Based Grants 2014-15**

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director, Community, Health and Wellbeing, which provided information on the renewal of service level agreements for Outcome Based Grants awarded in 2013-14.

The Divisional Director, Community and Culture, reminded the Panel that Outcome Based Grants were now awarded for three years in principle, with annual renewals subject to compliance with the conditions stated. She informed the Panel that the infrastructure service, which had been the subject of a tendering exercise at the time of the previous Panel meeting, had been awarded to Harrow Community Action, and their agreed grant of £75k was also due for renewal.

In response to Members' expressed concerns at the level and duration of the grant agreement for the infrastructure service, and in particular compared to the level of grant awarded in other Service Level Agreements, the Divisional Director stated that the grant, which had already been agreed by Cabinet, was to be used to develop capacity building, explore and exploit fundraising opportunities, attract other external funding, and support volunteering. The grant was subject to monitoring and compliance, and voluntary sector organisations had been involved in the tendering and selection process.

Members discussed the need to monitor delivery and outcomes achieved to date and whether these were satisfactory in the light of each individual organisation's circumstances. Further to this, officers updated the Panel on current progress for EACH and Harrow Churches.

The Panel Adviser briefed Panel members on the nature and function of a Council for Voluntary Service, and its role as an umbrella organisation for all voluntary sector bodies within a local authority's area. A member observed that it would be helpful to all members to be briefed on this, and suggested that it might be a useful topic to be covered within Member Development.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Cabinet)

That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director, Community Health and Wellbeing, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture, to

- (1) renew the SLA to the newly commissioned infrastructure support service to the level of £75k for 2014-15, and in principle for 2015-16, subject to the satisfactory delivery of agreed outcomes and annual confirmation of the budget according to the council's budget setting process;
- (2) confirm the renewal of SLAs for Outcome based Grant awards for 2014-15 at the same level of funding awarded in 2013-14;
- (3) terminate or amend SLAs if concerns are identified at any stage as a result of monitoring or breaches of the SLA.

**Reason for Recommendation:** To distribute Council grant funding to Third Sector organisations to support them in delivering services to Harrow residents.