

Meeting: Grants Advisory Panel
Date: 6th July 2006
Subject: Voluntary Sector Advisor Report
Responsible Officer: Director of Financial and Business Strategy
Contact Officer: Chander Vasdev 020 8420 9249
Portfolio Holder: Business Development – David Ashton
Key Decision: No
Status: Part 1

Section 1: Summary

This report presents the key issues and recommendations of the Voluntary Sector Advisor.

Decision Required

To note the issues/concerns of the Voluntary Sector Advisor which are based on the Voluntary Sector Advisor's personal observations and the experience of a number of colleagues and organisations in the voluntary sector.

Reason for report

To note the issues/concerns of the Voluntary Sector Advisor.

Benefits

Implementation of the Voluntary Sector Advisor's recommendations will help in developing a more robust, transparent and equitable process.

Cost of Proposals

None arising from the proposals in this report other than the existing staff time.

Risks

There are no risks directly related to this proposal.

Implications if recommendations rejected

Some of the suggested improvements in the Grant Process may not be implemented.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

2.1.1 Introduction

The VSA in his official role over the past 8 months, has highlighted a number of issues in relation to the Grants process. As a result the Panel agreed to an analysis/review of its process.

The issues/concerns are based on Voluntary Sector Advisor's observations and the experience of a number of colleagues and organisations in the voluntary sector.

In addition a survey was conducted in March/April 2006 in the form of a questionnaire to the voluntary sector organisations to assist in the review process.

2.1.2 Key Issues

1. Meetings – long and convoluted; confusion regarding representations or deputations; Decisions are unclear.
2. Eligibility for Grants – Funding priorities too broad; Criteria not applied consistently; there is a perception of favouritism.
3. Application process – Information and advice seen to be poor; Process seen to be too complicated.
4. Decision Making – Cosmetic as funding for some groups already earmarked; Recommendations lack consistency; Reserves criteria unclear and applied arbitrarily; Risks never diminish and not based on

performance; Not based on Quality of application or VFM; Seen to be 'Politically motivated'; Unclear and poor feedback.

5. Appeals – Seen to be virtually non-existent; lacking in transparency.
6. Monitoring – Unclear and not consistently applied; inadequate.
7. Other Key Issues – Role of Strategic Groups unclear; New and emerging groups 'fit' with need unclear.

2.1.3 Recommendations

1. Focussed meetings e.g. separate meeting for Edward Harvist Trust;
2. Clarify rules re. Representations;
3. Clarify principles underpinning the whole process; Set Clear Priorities and apply criteria rigorously;
4. Provide opportunities for information sharing/surgeries; Streamline application form and assessment process – screening process prior to grants meetings;
5. Separate out funding already earmarked; Clarify reserves criteria; Develop performance monitoring process - link to Risk management;
6. Applications should be measured on Quality and VFM; Recorded decisions should provide basis for feedback;
7. Formalise Review process;
8. Clarify role and expectations of Strategic, Umbrella and new groups;
9. Annual review of the Grants Process – Outcomes based.

2.2 Options considered

- 2.2.1 As part of the review the Voluntary Sector Advisor has had a number of meetings and discussions with the Director of Financial and Business strategy, Grants manager and officer where we have discussed the above and the potential solutions for developing a more robust, transparent and equitable process.

3. Consultation

3.1 The issues/concerns are based on the Voluntary Sector Advisor's observations and the experience of a number of colleagues and organisations in the voluntary sector. In addition a survey was conducted in March/April 2006 in the form of a questionnaire to the voluntary sector organisations to assist in the review process.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6. Equalities Impact

6.1 There is no equalities impact associated with this report.

7. Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

7.1 No direct implications.