

Meeting:	Grants Advisory Panel
Date:	2 nd July 2009
Subject:	Proposed changes to the way the Panel receive monitoring information
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Brendon Hills – Corporate Director (Community & Environment)
Portfolio Holder:	Chris Mote, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	NONE

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report presents proposed changes to the way the Grants Advisory Panel receive information relating to monitoring of voluntary organisations in receipt of grant funding in the previous year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Panel is requested to consider the proposed changes and make recommendations for approval to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services accordingly.

Reason: (For recommendation)

The proposed changes in this report will enable Panel members to receive detailed monitoring information of grant funded voluntary organisations without the need for a formal meeting. It is proposed that a brief summary of any issues or concerns raised during the monitoring process be included within the individual grant reports presented to the Grants Advisory Panel in January each year. This will enable Panel members to make decisions on grant allocations, based on all available information.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introductory paragraph / Background

2.1.1 The Grants Advisory Panel at its meeting on 6th July 2006 recommended that the Grants team produce an annual monitoring report on grant funded organisations, which will provide useful background information in advance of considering new grant applications for the following year. This process informs the Panel of the level of services/activities delivered by funded voluntary organisations during the year and of any developments and achievements made. It also highlights any concerns and recommendations that have been raised by officers as part of the monitoring process.

2.2 Current situation

2.2.1 Monitoring of groups funded in the previous year normally commences in June, by means of either a formal meeting with the organisations by Grant Officers, or through a self-monitoring process using a standard Monitoring and Assessment form.

2.2.2 A timetable of visits is drawn up and monitoring of services and activities is carried out during June and July, then detailed reports are produced by Grant Officers. From these detailed reports, summaries are also produced and presented to the Grants Advisory Panel in November each year.

2.3 Options considered

2.3.1 The Panel is requested to consider and recommend for approval the following option in the way monitoring information is presented to members in the future:

- Grant officers to circulate via internal post the detailed monitoring reports (when completed) to Panel members rather than present these formally at the Grants Advisory Panel meeting in November each year;
- If necessary, the Grants Advisory Panel meeting in November could then be used to present other agenda items;
- Grant officers would highlight any monitoring issues, concerns or positive achievements in the form of a brief summary within the individual grant reports presented to the Panel at its meeting in January each year.

2.3.2 As highlighted in paragraph 2.2.2 above, the duplication of report writing is very onerous and time-consuming for officers, and it is felt that their time would be best served in focussing their attention to assessing, preparing and finalising grant reports well in advance of the Grants meeting in January each year for allocation of grants in the next financial year.

2.4 Why a change is needed

- 2.4.1 A change to the current process is needed in order to improve the availability of relevant information to the panel when grant allocation decisions are made.
- 2.4.2 Panel members will be able to refer to the detailed monitoring reports previously circulated and have to hand the brief summaries contained within the individual grant reports when determining grant allocations to applicants.
- 2.4.3 In addition, this alternative arrangement would ease the burden on grant officers in duplicating report writing, thereby enabling them to concentrate more fully in the preparation of grant reports for the funding round in the next financial year.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Staffing/workforce

- 3.1.1 The implications for staffing are that the proposed changes would ease the burden on officers' time in the duplication of report writing and allow them to focus more time on assessing grant applications.

3.2 Resources, costs and risks

- 3.2.1 There are no cost implications associated with this report.
- 3.2.2 There are no known risks associated with the proposed options in the way monitoring information is presented to the Panel.

3.3 Equalities impact

- 3.3.1 All voluntary and community organisations in receipt of grant funding in 2008/09 will be monitored during June and July 2009 using either a standard Monitoring and Assessment form and/or a standard monitoring questionnaire. Each organisation will be asked to provide evidence of equal opportunities monitoring and equal opportunities policies.

3.4 Legal comments

- 3.4.1 There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

3.5 Community safety

- 3.5.1 There are no community safety issues associated with the recommendations in this report.

3.6 Financial Implications

3.6.1 There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

3.7 Performance Issues

3.7.1 National Indicator (NI) number 7, which relates to creating an environment in which the voluntary and community sector can thrive, has been included within Harrow's Local Area Agreement. Results from the first national Third Sector Survey indicate that Harrow's performance against this indicator is 10.4%. Harrow will be aiming to improve performance by a statistically significant amount, now agreed as an increase of 4.4%.

3.7.2 The recommendations in this report have the potential to contribute to improving performance against this indicator by:

- Encouraging innovation within the sector.
- Clarifying the eligibility criteria;
- Improving the application process so that it is clear, transparent and easier to access;
- Improving the speed and effectiveness of the grant decision-making process

3.7.3 The provision of grant funding to voluntary and community sector organisations has the potential to contribute to NI 1 ' % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area'. Current performance against this indicator is 49% and target performance is 61%. This will be achieved by encouraging grant applications from all sections of the wide and diverse voluntary and community sector, so that:

- Different sections of the community can identify and address their own needs, in line with the Harrow Strategy Partnership priorities
- Community cohesion can be developed amongst the same and different communities.

3.7.4 The provision of grant funding to voluntary and community sector organisations has the potential to contribute to NI 6 ' Participation in regular volunteering'. The target increase in numbers volunteering is 300 for 'socially excluded' volunteers and 1,200 for other volunteers. The current position is an achievement against target on 'socially excluded' volunteers and a slight under-achievement against 'other volunteers'.

3.8 Environmental Impact

3.8.1 Not applicable to this report.

3.9 Management Implications

3.9.1 Risk included on Directorate risk register? No
Separate risk register in place? No

Section 4 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 22 June 2009		

Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 22 June 2009		

Section 5 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director (Partnership Development and Performance)
Date: 22 June 2009		

Section 6 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 22 June 2009		

Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Audrey Salmon, Interim Service Manager – Community Resources and Projects, 020 8420 9332;
Parveen Vasdev, Principal Grants Officer, 020 8424 7625

Background Papers:

None.