

Meeting:	Grants Advisory Panel
Date:	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2009
Subject:	Proposed assessment process
Key Decision: (Executive side only)	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Brendon Hills – Corporate Director (Community & Environment)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jean Lammiman, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	<b>Appendix 1</b> – Assessment grid <b>Appendix 2</b> – Proposed summary report template <b>Appendix 3</b> – Equality Impact Assessment

## SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out the proposed assessment process and the revised summary grants report template that will be used during grant round 2010/11.

### **Recommendation:**

The Grants Advisory Panel is requested to recommend to Cabinet for approval:

- The proposed grant assessment tool
- The revised summary grants report template

## SECTION 2 - REPORT

### 2.1 Introductory Paragraph

This report describes the tool that will be used to assess the grant applications received and sets out the grants report template that will be used to present the grant application summaries during the 2010/11 grants round.

## **2.2 Current Situation**

- 2.2.1 During the 2009/10 grants round, a number of concerns were expressed about the quality of the grant application assessment. Officers' grant report and recommendations have been criticised for being biased and subjective, and have resulted in a number of appeals and compact challenges each year.
- 2.2.2. The proposed assessment tool is linked to the revised application form which was amended and agreed by the Grants Advisory Panel (GAP) and approved by Cabinet in July 2009.

## **2.3 Why a change is needed**

- 2.3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Review : "Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow"(December 2008) found that there was a lack of confidence and trust in the current grant arrangements; and expressed a number of concerns about the grants programme that related to the application process.
- 2.3.2 During the last grants round, all applications were subjected to a 2-stage assessment. The first stage involved assessing the applicant's eligibility against the criteria and checking that the organisation had a constitution, a management committee and a bank account. If the applicant did not meet these requirements they were not recommended for funding, but if they did they were moved onto the second stage of the assessment. The second stage involved assessing the application against the funding priorities and whether the applicant had demonstrated the need for the service.
- 2.3.3 As the new eligibility criteria is less restrictive and more inclusive, it is likely that more applications will be eligible for grant aid. Therefore it will be necessary, during the next grants round, to use a rigorous assessment tool to ensure that grant awards are only allocated to applicants that meet the funding priorities and deliver value for money.

### **2.3.4 The Assessment Grid**

It is proposed that the assessment tool set out in appendix 1 be used during the next grants round. Each application will still undergo the 2-stage assessment process and to ensure a consistent approach the Grants team will use the tool to check that applicants meet the grant qualifying conditions. Only applicants that meet these conditions will progress on to the second stage of the assessment process. The second and third page of the tool will enable the grants team to undertake a thorough assessment of each application form. The questions in the tool have been designed to assist the assessor in analysing the applicant's response to each section in the application form. If the applicant provides sufficient information for the question, the number '1' will be inserted in the 'yes' column; if they provide insufficient information, the number '1' will be inserted in the 'partially' column but if no information is provided, '1' will be inserted in the 'no' column. Each column will be calculated to provide a total score. Each assessment question has been ranked in order of importance; 'E' denotes essential information, whereas "D denotes desirable information. If an applicant receives one mark in the 'no' column for an 'essential' question, they will not be recommended for funding. However, an applicant that provides more than an adequate response for a 'desirable' question will have a stronger application, whereas those who provide no information against these questions will still be considered for funding, if they have not received a mark in the 'no' column for the 'essential' questions. This process will enable officers to provide a clear rationale as to how their grant recommendations have been achieved.

- 2.3.4.1 GAP is requested to endorse the proposed assessment tool, described above with any amendments that GAP considers necessary, for use in the next grants round.

### **2.3.6 Officer's grants summary report and recommendation**

The officers' report provides a summary of the grant applications and recommendations for consideration by the Grant Advisory Panel. It is proposed that a report template is introduced during the next grants round to ensure consistency in report writing. See appendix 2 for details. The project summary will be informed by the application form, whereas the assessment summary will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the application. GAP's comments will be collated at the GAP briefing meeting in January and will reflect their local knowledge and experience of voluntary and community groups.

2.3.6.1 GAP is requested to endorse the revised grants summary report template, as set out in appendix 2, with any amendments that GAP considers necessary, for use in the next grants round.

## **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

### **3.1 Resources, costs**

There are no resources and cost implications for the Council related to this report.

### **3.2 Staffing/workforce**

There are no staffing/workforce implications for the Council related to this report.

### **3.3 Equalities Impact**

3.2.1 See appendix 3 for Equality Impact Assessment.

### **3.3 Legal Implications**

3.3.1 The Council is empowered to make grants to voluntary organisations under Section 48 of the Local Government Act 1985 as well as under other legislation. Having an approved process will ensure that the Council can comply with its legal duties and its statement of intention of the Compact with the voluntary sector.

### **3.4 Community Safety**

3.4.1 There are no community safety implications for the Council in relation to this report.

### **3.6 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications for the Council related to this report

### **3.7 Performance Issues**

The introduction of a robust and fair assessment process has the potential to contribute to the following national indicators:

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 national Third Sector Survey (2008) indicate that Harrow's performance against this indicator is 10.4%, which is below the national average of 16.2%. Harrow will be aiming to improve performance by a statistically significant amount, now agreed as an increase of 4.4%.

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'. The National Place Survey (2008) indicates that Harrow's performance against this indicator is 76.2%, which is in line with the national and

London average of 76.4% and 76.3%, respectively. Harrow's target for this indicator in 2010/11 is 78%. The improvements to the grants programme will contribute to the achievement of this target 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.

The provision of grant funding to voluntary and community sector organisations has the potential to contribute to NI 6 'Participation in regular volunteering'. The National Place Survey 2008 indicates that performance against this indicator is 24%, which is above national and London average of 23.2% and 20.8%, respectively. Harrow's target for this indicator in 2010/11 is 27.7%.

### 3.8 Environmental Impact

3.8.1 There are no environmental impacts for the Council related to this report.

### 3.9 Risk Management Implications

3.9.1 There are no risks management implications in relation to this report.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

## SECTION 4 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

<p><b>Name:</b> Sheela Thakrar</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 25 August 2009</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer</p>
<p><b>Name:</b> Matthew Adams</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 25 August 2009</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer</p>

### Section 5 – Performance Officer Clearance

<p><b>Name:</b> Alex Dewsnap</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 21 August 2009</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Divisional Director (Partnership Development and Performance)</p>
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## Section 6 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

**Name:** John Edwards



Divisional Director  
(Environmental Services)

**Date:** 21 August 2009

## SECTION 7 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

### Compiled by:

Audrey Salmon, Interim Service Manager – Community Resources and Projects (ext. 5332)

### Background Papers:

**Appendix 1** – Assessment grid

**Appendix 2** – Proposed summary report template

**Appendix 3** – Equality Impact Assessment