

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	24 November 2009
Subject:	Response from Portfolio Holder to Grants Challenge Panel Recommendations
Responsible Officer:	Brendon Hills - Corporate Director, Community and Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jean Lammiman - Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Record of Community and Cultural Services Portfolio Holder's Decision

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides a record of the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services response to the challenge panel's recommendations on the grants programme for 2010/11.

Recommendation

To note the content of this report.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introductory Paragraph

- 2.1.1 The Grant Advisory Panel (GAP) met on 8th September 2009 to consider the recommendations from a scrutiny challenge panel meeting, on 22 June 2009, on the proposed changes to the grants programme for 2010/11, as set out in appendix 1.
- 2.1.2 GAP comments to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services are also set out in appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 The Portfolio Holder agreed all the recommendations set out in appendix 1, on 26 October 2009, as advised by GAP.

Name: George Curran



on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer

Date: 16 November 2009

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Appendix 1

TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION PHD **/09

Challenge Panel recommendations – 22 June 2009	GAP comments – 8 th September 2009
<p>Recommendation 1: To assist in the checking and monitoring process, we recommend that all application forms should ask, as applicable, for charity numbers and details of the last time the applicant applied for a grant from Harrow Council.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: On balance, whilst recognising the arguments against, we prefer the grant qualifying condition to read: "Grant aid will be available to support voluntary and community organisations to deliver services, where this resource is used for the benefit of people living, working or schooling in Harrow. The service provider can be based and/or provide services outside of Harrow but funding must be used to benefit people living, working or schooling in the borough."</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: In line with National Indicator 7 which is included in Harrow's Local Area Agreement, Harrow Council must support the development of the local voluntary and community sector (VCS). With this in mind, whilst its grants processes must demonstrate open criteria, they must nevertheless be supportive toward local VCS organisations. Flexible criteria must be transparent.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: All grant applications should be judged on merit and it should be clear that grants cannot be guaranteed on a year-on-year basis. We recommend that the grants budget should include an 'innovation fund' which encourages innovative ideas for small grants, based on value for money and quality of service, not historical performance. This fund should be more flexible than the grants budget and accessible throughout the year.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: The guidance which supports the grant application form should give an indication of previous proportioning of the grants budget, for example stating that historically large grants accounted for 73% of the grants budget so it is very unlikely that new/small groups can access funding however it is not impossible. This should help manage expectations.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: The grants budget should be ringfenced over a 3-year period, in line with the 3-year government financial settlement to councils, so that funding that CVS organisations can be assured of the minimum funding pot and decisions around grants can be informed in November. If the Council is unable to fit this into the timetable for the 2010/11 grants round, provision should be made for the 2011/12 round.</p>	<p>Although the council works on a 3-year budget cycle and set its budgets annually, GAP acknowledged this recommendation as it recognised that the need for certainty was important. It was agreed that 3-year service level agreements (SLAs) could not be offered but an indication could be given to the VCS that funding would continue, if available.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Whilst we recognise the difficulties in setting a definite split for the grant award allocations (percentages for small, medium and large grant awards), we recommend an innovation pot of not less than 1% of the total grants budget and small grants pot of not less than 5% of the overall grants budget. Parameters should be set loosely so that VCS</p>	<p>GAP agreed to accept this recommendations, as an objective rather than a prescriptive, and therefore suggested that the recommendation be amended to read: "To <u>work towards</u> an innovation pot of not less than 1% of the total grants budget and</p>

<p>organisations have some indication of the allocations and are able to make an informed decision about whether to apply for a small, medium or large grant. However allocation limits should not be so restrictive so as to exclude borderline grants.</p>	<p>small grants pot of less than 5% of the overall grants budget. “</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: We recommend that not all of the grants budget should be used to meet the Council’s corporate priorities – a small pot should be set aside for outside ‘innovations’, allowing VCS organisations to pursue needs that are perhaps not on the Council radar yet. We recognise that the VCS is often the first to identify and address needs in the community.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: The Council must clearly communicate what its grants budget does not fund and signpost VCS organisations to alternative grant-giving bodies as appropriate.</p>	<p>GAP accepted this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Any unallocated grant money, for example arising from groups who were awarded grants but were subsequently unable to furnish the Council with the required documentation or any underspends, should be reallocated to the innovations pot within the grants budget which is accessible throughout the year.</p>	<p>GAP agreed to accept this recommendation with the following amendment:</p> <p>“... any underspends, should be reallocated to the ‘innovations pot’ and <u>‘top-up’</u> current grants.”</p> <p>It was noted that assessment criteria would need to be established if an ‘innovation’ and ‘top-up’ fund was implemented.</p>