

**REPORT FOR: GRANTS ADVISORY
PANEL**

Date of Meeting:	13 th September 2011
Subject:	Grant Application Form and Assessment Sheet Update 2012/13
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Brendon Hills, Corporate Director Community and Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Perry, Portfolio Holder Community and Culture
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Draft Grant Application form 2012/13 Appendix 2: Draft assessment sheet 2012/13

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out proposed revisions to the grant application form and assessment scoring sheet for the administration of the 2012/13 Main Grant Programme.

Recommendations:

The Grants Advisory Panel is requested to recommend to the Portfolio Holder Community and Culture to approve the revised grant application form and assessment scoring sheet for the administration of the 2012/13 Main Grants Programme.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To improve the grant application and assessment process for the administration of the Main Grants Programme.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introductory paragraph

2.1.1 The Council is committed to supporting a thriving Voluntary and Community sector (VCS). The Council supports the sector in a number of ways including through the provision of grant funding. The revised draft grant application form (Appendix 1) and assessment scoring sheet (Appendix 2) have been designed to improve both processes. The improvements incorporate the following;

1. Provide a single, easy to use application form with clear guidance notes for applicants.
2. Provide grant applicants with a clearer understanding of the type of activity that the Council wishes to support through the Main Grants Programme.
3. Ensure grant funding decisions support the Council in fulfilling its public sector duty on equalities.
4. Provide a clearer assessment process.

2.2 Options considered

2.2.1 The Council undertook a consultation with the VCS in January 2011 regarding the future delivery of Council support through grant funding, Community Lettings and Community Premises. Options for the future delivery of grant funding were explored and views were sought on whether or not the Council should secure some services through commissioning and run a small grants programme for smaller organisations.

2.2.2 The results of this consultation and other feedback will inform the way that support is delivered in the future. The options for this are still under consideration. However, in the meantime, work has been undertaken to develop the existing grant application form and assessment scoring sheet in light of feedback received. The Grants Advisory Panel (GAP) is requested to consider the proposed revisions and recommend approval of the application form and assessment scoring sheet in readiness for any grant funding round for 2012/13.

2.3 Background

2.3.1 The proposed revisions to the application form and assessment scoring sheet have been informed by the results of the consultation (presented to the Grants Advisory Panel on the 2nd March 2011), feedback from voluntary sector representatives attending a consultation workshop held in June 2011, feedback from officers involved in assessment panels and officers with specialist advice eg. Legal Services.

2.3.2 The results of the consultation included support for the following criteria in the assessment of grant applications;

- Whether or not the proposed activity duplicates an existing project/activity being offered to the same client group. (68%)
- Whether or not the organisation has a track record of delivering the proposed project/activity. (83%)
- Whether or not the proposed project/activity can be shown to tackle disadvantage. (74%)
- Whether or not the project/activity provides value for money in the delivery of outcomes. (92%)

In addition to this, respondents suggested the following:

- An understanding of local need and ability to adapt to changing needs / requirements.
- Evidence of need / demand for project
- Feasibility of proposal, capacity to deliver it, given staffing levels, skills mix and other commitments.
- How the project fits with the aims and objectives and skills of the organisation/s involved?
- Promoting community cohesion, understanding and inclusiveness.
- Sustainability of the project, good arrangements for monitoring outcomes and involving beneficiaries in the project development.
- Whether the project can be delivered in partnership with another organisation?

2.3.3 Although there was support for the introduction of a criterion around duplication and track record, this was considered against the need to keep the process accessible for all, including new organisations.

2.3.4 Therefore a number of changes are proposed:

a) *Format*

- An electronic-only, single application form for all applicants irrespective of the size of grant applied for
- Stating the character limit for each section of the form
- Improved guidance notes

b) *Clarity of eligibility*

- Clearer essential policies and procedures section to guide applicants on what policy evidence is required
- Additional question to assess an organisation's financial position.
- Clear guidance on references in line with those already approved by GAP

c) *Equalities information*

- Which, if any, of the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 are targeted
- How the project tackles disadvantage, fosters good relations and promotes equality of opportunity

- d) Outcomes of project
 - Revised format to express and measure outcomes
 - Information on access to the project and how the project offers added value
- e) *Transparency of assessment*
 - Clearer links between the assessment sheet and the application
 - A clearer scoring mechanism for use by the assessment panel

2.4 Current situation

2.4.1 The Council's Main Grants Programme invites applications from all VCS organisations able to demonstrate that they meet the grants eligibility criteria. This year a record number of 131 applications were received and the total amount requested was £2.3million against a budget of £670,000. 38 applications in total were approved for grant funding after appeal.

2.4.2 The grant application form and assessment scoring sheet was adopted by Cabinet in September 2009 and has been used to manage two grant funding rounds.

2.5 Why a change is needed

2.5.1 The demand on the grants budget is likely to continue to be at a very high level. It is important that the process for the distribution of funds is managed by a clear process that supports the Council's duties and priorities. The changes will enable:

- Projects to be assessed on how they will tackle disadvantage, foster good relations and promote equality of opportunity thereby creating greater alignment of funding decisions to the Council's public sector duty on equalities as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- The identification of projects that offer added value through their use of volunteers and extent of partnership working with other agencies.
- Applicants to understand the need to link project activity to outcomes and state how these will be measured so that there is clarity on what the funding is supporting and what will be monitored at a later stage.

2.5.2 The revised grant application form and assessment scoring sheet have been designed so that they can be used to deliver either a small grants funding round or an open grant application process.

2.5.3 In 2009, different application forms were introduced for small, medium and large size grants. It is now proposed that a single application form is reintroduced to further simplify the process. This will ensure that there is just one set of guidance notes and requirements for applicants to consider and one set of assessment criteria to meet.

2.6 Implications of the Recommendation

2.6.1 Legal comments

The Equalities Duties are continuing duties, they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. However, the duties apply throughout any process from start to finish. Consideration of the duties should proceed the decision. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;*
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.*

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) Tackle prejudice, and*
- (b) Promote understanding.*

Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Gender reassignment*
- *Pregnancy and maternity*
- *Race,*
- *Religion or belief*
- *Sex*
- *Sexual orientation*

Before a decision is made, the Council must satisfy itself that it has sufficient information before it to properly consider the equalities duties

2.7 Financial Implications

2.7.1 The proposals for the future of grant funding for 2012/13 and beyond will give consideration to the potential to allocate specific budgets for commissioning, small grants etc at the beginning of a process. These proposals are currently under development and will be presented to Cabinet in due course as part of the overall proposals for the future of investment in the Third Sector.

2.8 Risk Management Implications

2.8.1 The potential risks identified are;

1. *The capacity of the voluntary and community sector to understand and respond to the changes in the application form.* This risk will be mitigated through the provision of information sessions that will be available during any application period.
2. *Ensuring that the assessment process is transparent and consistent..* This risk will be mitigated by ensuring that adequate quality assurance measures before during and after the assessment process such as moderation meetings between chairs of assessment panels, clear guidance to panel members etc.

2.9 Equalities implications

2.9.1 The proposed changes to the application form and assessment scoring sheet will support the Council's public sector duty under the Equalities Act 2010. The proposed changes ask applicants:

- (i) to indicate whether or not their project is specifically targeting any of the protected characteristics
- (ii) how their project will tackle disadvantage, foster good relations and promote equality of opportunity

2.9.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be conducted any future proposals for changes to the current grants process to be presented to Cabinet for approval.

2.10 Corporate Priorities

2.10.1 This report incorporates all of the corporate priorities as grant applicants will be asked to indicate which of the priorities their project relates to. This will allow the Council to monitor how grant funded projects are contributing to the corporate priorities:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.
- Supporting our town centre, our local shopping centres and businesses.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jennifer Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 2 September 2011		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 2 September 2011		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Kashmir Takhar, Head of Service Community Development, 020 8420 9331

Background Papers:

1. Grants Advisory Panel information report: Preliminary results of consultation in to review of Council support to the Voluntary and Community Sector through Grants, Community Lettings and Community Premises, 2nd March 2010
2. Overview and Scrutiny report: Delivering a strengthened voluntary sector, December 2008