

GRANTS ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

1 MARCH 2012

Chairman: * Councillor Nana Asante

Councillors: * Sue Anderson * Mrs Vina Mithani
* Krishna James * Chris Mote
* Manji Kara * Joyce Nickolay
* Kairul Kareema Marikar (2) * Sasi Suresh

Adviser: * Deven Pillay, Representative, Voluntary and Community Sector

* Denotes Member present

(2) Denotes category of Reserve Member

90. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Nizam Ismail

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar

91. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: That

- (a) the following personal interests were declared and that all Members remained in the room during the discussion and decision-making:

Item 7: Grant Funding 2012/13

Councillor Nana Asante – Flash Musicals, Harrow MENCAP, Harrow in Europe, Harrow Agenda 21 and Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

Councillor Susan Anderson – Harrow Association of Disabled People, Harrow MENCAP, ADHD and Autism Support, Harrow Agenda 21

Councillor Krishna James – MIND in Harrow, Harrow Carers, Harrow Association of Disabled People, Rethink, Harrow Law Centre, Harrow Healthy Living Centre

Councillor Manji Kara – AGE UK, Bentley Priory Nature Reserve, Harrow in Europe, Harrow Indian Association

Councillor Mrs Vina Mithani – Navnat Vadil Mandal

Councillor Joyce Nickolay – Harrow in Europe, Bentley Priory Nature Reserve

Deven Pillay, Adviser – Age UK, Bentley Priory Nature Reserve, Harrow in Europe, Harrow Indian Association

Councillor Sasi Suresh – Harrow Bengalee Association, Harrow Tamil Association, Harrow Tamil School Association, London Kalibari

- (b) The following prejudicial interests were declared and Councillors would leave the room should the relevant individual organisation be discussed:

Item 7: Grant Funding 2012/13

Councillor Nana Asante – Age UK

Councillor Susan Anderson – Harrow Agenda 21

Deven Pillay, Adviser – Harrow MENCAP

Councillor Joyce Nickolay – Harrow Association of Voluntary Services

92. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2012 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to an amendment on page 3 to read: ‘allowing each individual on the course organised by Community Link-up to be responsible for their memory sticks was acceptable as the individual unit cost was low and the expected benefit to the group’s members was high.’

93. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Panel's policy (Minute 60: 28/07/03) be revoked, and that in the future, Deputations be received in accordance with procedure rule 50 as set out in the Constitution;
- (2) to note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

94. Grant Recommendations 2012/13

The Chairman welcomed the Corporate Director Community, Health and Well-Being to the meeting.

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director Community Health and Well-Being which set out grant funding recommendations for 2012/13. The report requested that Members award funding from the Main Grants Programme to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to support the delivery of services and projects.

In presenting the report, the Divisional Director Community and Culture made the following points:

- a total of 78 applications had been received by the deadline and the total funds requested amounted to over £1.5 million. However, the amount of funding available for distribution from the Main Grants programme in 2012/13 was £669,360;
- the report recommended that £74,000 be ringfenced to support the delivery of a new infrastructure support service for Third Sector organisations. This would leave £595,360 available for grant allocation;
- the total amount applied for by small grant applicants was £130,651. In keeping with a recommendation from the Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture, 15% of the budget (£89,304) would be allocated to small grants to ensure a wide distribution of funds. If the Panel decided to award 90% of the grant fund requested to those groups with an assessment score above 50%, then the maximum number of applications that could be funded was 21 and would total £86,414;
- if the above suggestion regarding small grants was implemented, the sum available for large grants would amount to £506,056. If the Panel decided to award 71% of the grant fund requested to those groups with an assessment score above 86%, the maximum number of applications that could be funded was 18, and would total £500,275.

The Divisional Director emphasised that awarding a significantly lower level of grant than requested might mean that some projects could not be delivered or might be delivered at significantly different levels. Furthermore, any recommendation to Cabinet relating to the allocation of grant funding would be subject to the appeals process. Therefore the final amounts awarded could be subject to change.

Following a brief discussion, Panel Members agreed that the suggested deadline of 2 April 2012 be deleted and that where grant awards were made, these should be subject to receipt of satisfactory references and supporting documents from applicants two weeks after notification of the grant funding decision.

Members made the following points concerning the proposal that an independent adviser be included as part of the appeals process:

- in the interests of transparency and fairness, the Panel recommended an appeals panel of members rather than an independent adviser with the Divisional Director and the Portfolio Holder;
- the need for a rigorous, open and transparent process at the appeals stage would be better served if the decision-making involved Members;
- the importance of being sensitive to the public perception of what constituted fairness and transparency in the appeals process was key;
- that three Members of the Panel who had not been members of the 1 March 2012 Panel, two Labour and one Conservative, be invited to take part in the appeals process. Such appeals to take the form of meetings which were open to the public. The three Members could be from Reserves or Members who had not been part of the decision-making at the 1 March 2012 Panel meeting.

The Corporate Director Community Health and Well-Being made the point that the appeals process could include both reserve Members and an independent adviser. The Chairman pointed out that any adviser appointed would have a non-voting, advisory role. The Panel agreed that an Independent Advisor could add value but their main concern was to ensure that the process was transparent and seen to be transparent, which a Member Panel offers.

Following questions from Members of the Panel, the Divisional Director Community and Culture advised that:

- the proposal concerning an appeals process utilising an independent adviser was the same as operated in 2011/12;
- if Panel Members agreed to the involvement of an independent adviser in the appeals process, then this individual should preferably be from outside Harrow;

- the final decision regarding the appeals would be taken by the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services, and this process would be subject to call-in.

Members pointed out that the cross party recommendation in 2011/2012 was to have a Member Panel with members who had not taken part on the decision making. Notwithstanding call in and other considerations, it was the view of the Panel that the value of transparency and confidence were important factors. The Advisor pointed out that the Voluntary and Community Sector would welcome the process proposed by Members.

Members considered the various funding scenarios for the allocation of both the small and large grants. Members stated that it would not be possible to award groups the full amount requested in their individual applications, as the total amount requested was higher than the funding available. Members agreed that their decision-making in awarding grant funding would be informed by the guiding principles set out below.

In allocating grant funding, the Panel would:

- (a) recognise and reward excellence;
- (b) ensure the widest possible spread of resources;
- (c) allocate funding according to a two-tier system whereby the highest scoring groups received a larger share of the funds;
- (d) take into account deliverability of projects.

These guiding principles would ensure that the grant allocation process was fair, transparent and open to scrutiny and took into account the funding available.

During further discussion Members commented that:

- in the interest of fairness, the same grant application form had been used for both small and large grants in 2012/13;
- those organisations which had struggled with completing the grant application form, and had received low scores because they had omitted key criteria, could also struggle with the rigorous monitoring process;
- many of the applicants should be seeking additional funding from other organisations. The Panel thanked Officers for providing feedback which applicants could use to improve their applications. Helpful information about external funders had also been provided;

- the Panel noted that the two tier system would help lower scoring applicants even though they were getting a lower percentage because some external funders were often more likely to award funding to groups that had received funding from their local authority.

The Panel unanimously agreed that small and large grants be allocated as follows:

Small Grants

- those scoring 70-100% be awarded 90% of the amount requested;
- those scoring 50-69% be awarded 60% of the amount requested.

Large Grants

- those scoring between 93-100% be awarded 80% of the amount they had requested;
- those scoring between 90-92% be awarded 71% of the amount they had requested;
- the above amounts were subject to verification by officers and the appeals process.

The Panel also agreed that:

- the above allocation levels for both large and small grants were subject to verification by officers to ensure that the allocations were within the financial envelope of funds available;
- final confirmation of funding awards would also be subject to the outcome of the appeals process.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet) That

- (1) £74,000 be ring-fenced from the Main Grants budget to fund the commissioning of an infrastructure support service for the Third Sector;
- (2) the grant applications to be awarded grant funding and the level at which these should be awarded as outlined in paragraph 2.2.4, subject to:
 - (a) receipt of satisfactory references and supporting documents from applicants two weeks after notification of the grant funding decision;
 - (b) completion of the appeals procedure and any changes to the amounts awarded necessitated by decisions on appeals;

- (3) applications with a score below the threshold agreed for grant funding be placed on a reserve list;
- (4) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Community, Health and Well-Being, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services, to:
 - (i) withdraw grant offers where organisations did not comply with the conditions of grant funding as detailed in (2) above;
 - (ii) award available funds to organisations on the reserve list in order of highest scores achieved if sufficient funds become available (where scores are tied, funding will only be distributed when sufficient funding is available to fund all projects with the same score);
 - (iii) vary the threshold and percentage award as appropriate in light of new information;
- (5) three Members of the Grants Advisory Panel, who had not participated in the 1 March 2012 meeting, in the ratio of two Labour and one Conservative, determine appeals and agree any variance of either the percentage grant awarded and/or the threshold above which grant awards are made in light of decisions taken on appeals, and submit such recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services for decision.

Reason for Decision: To award funding from the Main Grants Programme to Third Sector organisations to support them in delivering their services in 2012/13.

(The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.30 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR NANA ASANTE
Chairman