

Presentation — Revenue Grant Review

Portfolio	Support and Safeguarding
Ward(s) Affected:	All

Purpose

To receive a presentation from Ben Sword and Jayne Boitout relating to the Council Revenue Grant Review.

1. Background Information

Grant support to voluntary organisations is a discretionary function of the Council and the Executive therefore has the option to vary the level of support to organisations, or to withdraw funding for some or all of the grants. The annual budget for both the Community and Leisure Revenue Grants is £165,000 in cash, with in-kind benefits valued at a minimum of £48,600.

The Council have actively worked in partnership with the voluntary sector for many years to either undertake work on our behalf or awards revenue grants in areas that meet the changing needs, gaps and trends within Surrey Heath. The Council values this work, which is undertaken and delivered by the voluntary sector, enormously.

2. The Existing Scheme

At present, nine organisations are invited to apply each year to the revenue grants fund using a standardised application form which asks applicants to demonstrate how they benefit the borough of Surrey Heath and how grant funding will be used. Applicants are also asked to set targets which they become accountable for.

The grants over the past 16 years have generally supported the same organisations, with two notable changes being: 2014 funding ceased to the Butts, and in 2016 the Council started funding Camberley and District Job Club.

The scheme is not open to new applications, and all grants are monitored by Service Level Agreements, which are negotiated annually, with Council payments generally made quarterly following the submission of an update report.

The existing awards are addressed equally with a single classification, but our working relationships are in fact broader. Organisations funded by the revenue grant scheme can generally be broken down into two types:

- A) Those who independently provide services that meet local priorities, needs and gaps (e.g. Camberley Job Club)
- B) Those who undertake work on the Council's behalf where there are greater benefits achieved through economy of scale in comparison to the Council working alone (e.g. Basingstoke Canal Authority, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership).

Organisations in the latter bracket have expressed frustration that they are required to apply for grants on an annual basis, as they consider the work they perform to be part of long standing partnership agreements.

3. The Considerations for Change

The Executive meeting on the 22nd January, whilst awarding the revenue grant awards for the year 2019/20, asked that the External Partnerships Select Committee review the existing Revenue Grant Scheme. Any recommendations for change will be considered by the Council Executive on the 17th September 2019.

This timescale will ensure that the Council complies with the existing compact arrangements and enable implementation from the 1st April 2020.

The current grant application process has not been reviewed for a number of years and does not recognise the difference between the two types of organisations funded listed in section 3 above.

Options to Consider

- A) No change, retain the existing application process
- B) Totally open scheme, using the Council Annual Plan as a basis for organisations to deliver and enable the Council to be responsive to changing local needs and priorities. However this will not give any security of funding to organisations which could affect their delivery (always having one eye on new funding opportunities rather than focussing on delivering as efficiently as possible) as it gives no funding security to organisations like Citizens Advice.
- C) Ring fence funding for certain organisations that perform functions on the Councils behalf, such as Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership and Basingstoke Canal Authority, and consider extending this for a two year period. Open the remaining funding to organisations that can deliver services that can meet our changing local priorities such as: homelessness, social prescribing for older people etc.

Background Papers:

1. Terms of reference,
2. Executive Agenda item for Grant Awards 2019/20
3. Executive Minute for Grant Awards 2019/20

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