

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

28 NOVEMBER 2019

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS REVIEW FUTURE PROPOSALS

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the current discretionary grants the Council provides to a limited number of voluntary sector partners, present findings from a review and propose a three-year grants programme (2020 – 2023) to four core third sector partner organisations.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Council currently supports five voluntary sector partner organisations with grant support ranging from £4,690 to £68,330 to deliver services to the community that have supported the Council's strategies and priorities.

2.2 The table below provides an overview of the grants provided under Service Level Agreements (SLA's) for the past 3 years that are within the scope of this report:

Discretionary Grants Programme					
Organisation	Value of Grant				SLA Term
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	
Sherwood and Newark Citizens Advice – Core Funding	£78,330	£68,330	£68,330	£68,330	One year
Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire RCAN	£16,720	£16,720	£16,720	£16,720	One year
Newark & Sherwood Play Support Group	£9,650	£9,650	£9,650	£9,650	One year
Newark & Sherwood Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) Volunteer Centre	£11,260	£11,260	£11,260	£11,260	One year
Home Start Newark	£4,690	£4,690	£4,690	£4,690	One year
	£120,650	£110,650	£110,650	£110,650	

2.3 With the exception of Citizens Advice, who received an uplift when it expanded to cover the Sherwood area, the Councils discretionary grants have not increased since 2011/12.

2.4 In addition to the grants above, the payroll for the Citizens Advice is administered by the Council and has been for a number of years. Money is paid from the Councils' bank account and is recouped quarterly in arrears, net of the core grant that is payable.

2.5 Under the agreed one year SLA's, an annual review of objectives and performance outcomes takes place and targets are negotiated/agreed for the year ahead. An overview of the performance outcomes delivered under these SLA's are outlined in **Appendix A**.

2.6 In addition, the Council has granted concessions on the rent to co-locate at Castle House for two of its partners (Citizens Advice and CVS). This has ensured the shared benefits of co-location and shared working and feedback from partners located in Castle House has been very positive. Having a number of partner organisations in the one building has improved the customer experience and made communications between organisations much easier. The current Desk Charging Policy will be subject to a separate review, led by the Councils Asset Management Business Unit.

3.0 Review

3.1 With the adoption and launch of the Council's new Community Plan 2019 to 2023 in February 2019, it was considered timely to review the current SLA's and the Council's relationship with our voluntary sector partners. Firstly, to determine whether the services provided still meet the requirement of the Council in respect of its Community Plan objectives and, secondly, to consider if a longer-term commitment of three years funding would provide added value from greater financial certainty.

3.2 Over recent years, our voluntary sector partners have faced significant reductions in other core and project funding which has led to reviews of service delivery. In all cases, these organisations have made significant changes to their management and staffing structures, service provision and delivery mechanisms to reflect their capacity to deliver based on available resources. At the same time as reducing resources and capacity the demands for these services has increased, which support the most vulnerable members of our local community placing further pressures on already stretched provision. Therefore, feedback received from our partners is that they would really welcome a three-year grants programme.

3.3 Having reviewed the performance outcomes compared to the targets, the scope of the current SLA's and position of the Council in terms of its resources, skills competencies and capacity to deliver these services, it is felt that our community/voluntary sector partners are best placed to deliver these; with the exception of the RCAN agreement. In respect of RCAN, the rationale for this view is based on the creation and proposed expansion of the Council's in-house 'Community Relations' function to deliver community based projects and initiatives.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 It is therefore proposed that the Council terminates its SLA relationship with RCAN at the end of March 2020 and re-negotiates its retained SLA's with the remaining four core voluntary sector partners:

- Sherwood and Newark Citizens Advice
- Newark & Sherwood CVS Volunteer Centre
- Newark & Sherwood Play Support Group
- Home Start Newark

4.2 It is proposed that the savings from the termination of the RCAN agreement of £16,720 per annum (£50,160 over 3 years) be re-invested in the remaining SLA partnership agreements at the discretion of the Business Manager / Director.

4.3 It is further proposed that these SLA's are for an extended period of 3 years from 2020/21 to 2022/23 to align the requirements of the SLA's with the Community Plan 2019 -2023 and that services are targeted, where appropriate, to the priority areas that will be set out in the Council's emerging Place Plan.

4.4 The Business Manager – Housing, Health and Community Relations has had some early conversations and received a draft proposal from Home-Start Newark who have a strategic ambition to extend their services to the Sherwood area but costs need to be further developed by their Senior Officer and Trustee Board.

5.0 Equalities Implications

5.1 No equalities implications have been identified. In renegotiating the SLA's consideration will be given to the specific needs of persons with protected characteristics to ensure the Council's responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 have been fully considered and met.

6.0 Financial Implications FIN19-20/7622

6.1 This financial commitment of £110,650 per annum / £331,950 over 3 years can be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and gives greater confidence to partners that District Council funding is secured and they can concentrate on delivering improved services aligned to the Council's Community Plan. Once the termination of the RCAN agreement has been finalised the savings can be redistributed over the remaining 4 voluntary sector partners, as long as they provide sufficient evidence that the monies are required. Once all the amounts are finalised any savings will go back into the General fund reserve as part of the budget setting process, however if more funds were required another report would need to be presented to the committee detailing the additional budget required.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 The discretionary grants programme provides valuable financial resources to a number of voluntary sector organisations that deliver much needed services to those members of the community most in need of advice and support. The provision of these services primarily supports Objective 8 – *'Reduce levels of deprivation in target areas and remove barriers to social mobility across the district'* and Objective 9 – *'Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents, with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy and other health outcomes'*.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) the grant support SLA relationship with RCAN be terminated at the end of March 2020;
- b) savings from the termination of the RCAN agreement (£16,720 per annum / £50,160 over 3 years) be reinvested and re-negotiate SLA's with the retained four core voluntary sector partners for an extended period of three years (2020/21 to 2022/23); and

- c) the precise distribution and allocation of funds to each partner be agreed by the Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations/Director – Communities & Environment following consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson of the Policy & Finance Committee and will not exceed the budget available, which was £110,650 per annum / £331,950 over 3 years.

Reason for Recommendations

To enable the Council deliver a discretionary grants programme that's aligned to the Councils Community Plan 2019 – 2023 and provide three year grant certainty to core voluntary sector partners to ensure the delivery and sustainment of much needed services to those members of our community that are most in need.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information, please contact Leanne Monger, Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations on extension 5545 or Andy Hardy – Senior Health Improvement & Community Relations Officer on extension 5708.

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