



Responses to Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Report to Overview Committee

Title of the review : **The Council's Engagement with the Voluntary Sector**

Date review completed : **May 2013**

Date Presented to Cabinet: **8 August 2013**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor K Fox**

Response due to the Overview Committee
(28 days): **7 October 2013**

Chair of the review group: **Councillor P Allan**

Officer supporting the review : **Helen Lee**

Guidance

The final report and recommendations from the above review have been considered by Cabinet and a written response to the recommendations from the responsible Cabinet Member to the Overview Committee is required within twenty eight days of the date the review was presented to Cabinet.

If you need any further assistance in completing this response please contact the Officer that supported the review

Recommendation 1 (of 5)

Service Level Agreements should be replaced by contract arrangements for specified services increasing transparency of what the funding is used for and what it achieves.

When designing the contract it should:

- identify a set of objectives and what actions are required
- define what outcomes/outputs the contract should deliver
- establish targets that are SMART, specific, achievable, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely
- include a formalised set of monitoring arrangements to ensure the objectives and targets are met
- ensure value for money
- be phased in to avoid destabilising the finances of the recipient organisations.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☐ Partly accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

I agree that, where there are SLA's in place, then performance management arrangements should be robust and should be implicit within all agreements..

As Scrutiny is aware the existing SLAs with the voluntary sector organisations have been in place for several years and do not have effective, explicit or measurable targets in place. Over the past year the managers within the Council who now have responsibility for monitoring SLA's have been in discussions with the voluntary sector to make current SLA's more outcome focused and these are being managed more closely. However future SLA's should have measurable targets which can be monitored.

Recommendation 2 (of 5)

Recommendation 2

A new voluntary sector grant aid strategy should be developed that aligns with the Council priorities and sets out what the authority is hoping to achieve.

It should:

- identify which services the authority would like the voluntary sector to provide and how the Council can help them to do this
- be publicised and available to all organisations
- advertise and invite applications as widely as possible through the Gedling Borough Web pages, Contacts magazine and the Funders Fair
- use an application process that is available and accessible to all organisations, providing clear written guidance on how to complete the application, include an explanation of allocation process, possibly through the provision of an online form
- ensure that grant aid funding is available to a wide range of diverse groups
- have no automatic renewal
- include all grant aid funding streams
- record all grant aid funding by the authority, including the Member's Pots, to prevent duplication
- be necessary for organisations to disclose all funding streams to prevent duplication
- incorporate a mechanism to monitor outputs and outcomes. Monitoring should be undertaken but it should be proportional to the amount of funding allocated, not time consuming or onerous and could possibly include self-assessment against agreed criteria
- explore the possibility of awarding some of smaller grants on a three year arrangement
- consider aligning all grant aid within one directorate
- inform organisations well in advance of any changes that will be made to the grant aid strategy, giving them time to seek alternative funding streams.

Members concluded that Gedling as a borough was underperforming in attracting external grant aid funding. They considered that funding streams from national trusts, funds and organisations like the Lottery should be accessed to maximise funding for voluntary groups. The authority should determine the reasons for this failure to attract funding and develop arrangements to support and assist organisations to access external funding streams that would enable additional income to be drawn into the borough. This could be done either by the authority assuming the role or by contracting one of the umbrella organisations currently funded through a service level agreement to undertake this work

To be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☐ Partly Accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

Many of the grants, as opposed to the SLA's , are for small voluntary community groups with the average grant being very small in value for this reason. I acknowledge that some organisations target various small pots and this sometimes leads to duplications in that groups get funding from more than one source within the council, and indeed elsewhere. Trying to eradicate the duplication of these small pots could jeopardise the viability of many of the small voluntary organisations/groups who rely on multiple contributions to fund their core service delivery.

There is a need to ensure that application processes do not inhibit groups from applying for small amounts of money by introducing over complicated processes.

The management arrangements need to be proportionate to the funds available.

Currently the grant aid distribution is absorbed within several work areas and job roles. Combining this into job one role would mean that the Council would need to create a new post to carry out what could be viewed as an over bureaucratic process and currently the Council does not have available budgets to create new posts.

Recommendation 3 (of 5)

A scheme to support voluntary organisations maximise funding from national sources is established.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted Do not accept ☒

There are many streams of funding available to voluntary groups that are not available to the Council and earlier in 2103 the Council arranged a Funding Fair for voluntary sector groups and grant distributors. The event was held at Richard Herrod and attracted over 70 groups and organisations.

I would like it also noted that support for voluntary/ community sector groups is the main purpose / core business of the role of CVS and RCAN, and this is also reinforced for within the current SLAs that the Council has with CVS and RCAN.

Recommendation 4 (of 5)

Non-cash ways that the Council can support voluntary groups should be determined and publicised.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted Partly Accepted

Do not accept

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In recommendation 4 and the response above - the role of CVS and RCAN is to support voluntary sector and community groups and this includes not only assisting them in applying for funding but also in many other ways.

The Council, through the provision of facilities and services such as Leisure Centres, Community Centres, Park and Open spaces, already provides heavily subsidised services to all community groups.

In addition there is considerable support given to many voluntary sector groups through day to day work of the Council, for example- Parks, Friends of and Sports Development, Sports Clubs, Community Centre staff and HEAT.

CVS and RCAN can draw down funding, not available to the Council, to further support, promote and assist the development of and day to day activities of voluntary sector and community groups. In the current economic climate unfortunately the Council does not have additional resources available to duplicate the work of CVS and RCAN (and similar voluntary sector organisation like Groundwork) to give additional support to voluntary groups.

Recommendation 5 (of 5)

Define the purpose and role of Members who are appointed as representatives on outside bodies.

Part 1 – to be completed after the report has been presented to Cabinet

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted

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Partly Accepted

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Do not accept

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(Referred to Elections and Members' Services)

The Elections and Members Services Team is presently undertaking a review of current outside body representation. Details have been requested both from Elected Members and outside bodies of expectations, roles and issues of conflict of interest arising, with a view to producing a protocol to be adopted in time for re – nominations at next year's annual council.