

Scrutiny Committee

Report of Interim Head of Corporate Services

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To: Scrutiny Committee

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Partnership Grants

Recommendation

That the scrutiny committee considers and comments on the information provided regarding partnership grants.

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the scrutiny committee with information about the partnership grant scheme for consideration and comment.

Strategic Objectives

2. One of the council's corporate priorities is to facilitate sustainable communities by supporting community groups and community events through our grants schemes. The partnership grants help us to meet this objective.

Background

3. The partnership grant scheme has existed in a variety of forms for well over a decade. Historically, award decisions were very informal and the budget for the scheme was based on these informal decisions and then agreed as part of the council's budget setting process. More recently, the cabinet member for grants makes the decisions based on officer advice about each organisation's financial situation, performance targets and business cases where relevant.
4. Over the last three years we awarded partnership grants to the following organisations:

TABLE 1					
Organisation	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	Comment	Purpose of grant
South and Vale Citizens Advice	103,754	103,754	103,714	Request for a four-year grant of £103,754 in 2017/18 then a 5% reduction year on year.	Core funding provisionally approved; £98,529 – 2018/19 £93,601 – 2019/20 £88,920 – 2020/21 (5% year on year reduction)
Wantage Independent Advice Centre	57,825	57,825	57,825	Request for a four-year grant increased to £95,000 plus inflation for 2017/18 onwards.	Core funding Only one year grant approved in 2017/18.
Community First (previously ORCC)	8,250	8,250	8,250	Discussions underway regarding wider support for voluntary sector and community groups.	Core funding
Oxfordshire Community for Voluntary Action	5,000	5,000	0	OCVA failed to meet the terms of the grant offer.	Core funding
Abingdon Museum	27,000	20,000	10,000	Grant discontinued from 1 April 2018. (See background papers).	Core funding
Albert Memorial, Abingdon	800	800	800	Grant legally committed until 2021.	Trust agreement
Wantage and Grove Street Pastors	1,500	0	0	Grant discontinued from 1 April 2016 (See background papers).	
Christ's Hospital, Abingdon (Albert Park maintenance)	3,000	0	0	Grant discontinued from 1 April 2016. (See background papers).	
Total	207,129	195,629	180,589		

5. Officers update the grants cabinet member regarding each organisation's position every year before the budget setting period. Last year, officers gave an update to cabinet members on partnership grants and arranged presentations by representatives from South and Vale Citizens Advice Bureau and Wantage Independent Advice Centre.
6. Having received information from officers and consultation with all ward councillors, the cabinet member for grants approved the 2017/18 partnership grant awards on 7 April 2017.
7. Due to financial pressures and the annual requirement to secure committed funding for this scheme, we are currently unable to accept new applications to the partnership grant scheme. We direct organisations seeking funding to our other grant schemes including; festival, capital and new homes bonus.

Financial Implications

8. In February 2017, the council approved the budget of four separate grant schemes; new homes bonus (£100,000), capital grants (£100,000), partnership (£185,600) and festival grants (£10,000).
9. We anticipate a saving of £5,000 from the partnership grant budget of £185,600 in 2017-18. This is due to withdrawal of a grant to Oxfordshire Community for Voluntary Action. See table one, paragraph four for more information.
10. The council will consider the 2018/19 grants budget at full council in February 2018. The following proposals will be considered; festival grants £10,000, new homes bonus revenue grants £100,000 (subject to approval of a growth bid) and a capital grants budget of £100,000.
11. The current proposal for partnership grants is to fund the following four organisations with a budget of £165,366. With the exception of the grant to the Albert Memorial, these organisations offer universal support towards our corporate priorities by offering advice services across the Vale.

Organisation	Amount £	Purpose
South and Vale Citizens Advice (S&V CAB)	*98,529	Core funding *as requested by S&V CAB
Wantage Independent Advice Centre (WIAC)	*57,787	Core funding *request of £58,000 received by WIAC
Community First (previously ORCC)	8,250	Core funding
Albert Memorial, Abingdon	800	Agreement to provide funds to maintain the memorial.
Total	165,366	

Legal Implications

12. The council uses its general powers under Chapter 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to offer partnership grants.
13. Organisations awarded partnership grants must accept our terms and conditions to receive funding. This may include specific conditions for state aid reasons.

Risks

14. There are no risks associated with this report.

Conclusion

15. Officers prepared this update regarding partnership grants following a request from the chair of the scrutiny committee. The committee is requested to consider and comment on the details of the report.

Background Papers

Individual cabinet member decision dated 19 November 2015

Individual cabinet member decision dated 7 April 2017