

# Report to the ABINGDON AREA COMMITTEE



**5 November 2009**

Report of **Head of Corporate Strategy**

Report No. 68/09

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Wards Affected  
All wards in the Abingdon  
Area

## **Community Grants**

### ***Recommendations***

- (a) that the Abingdon Area Committee notes the remaining budget for community grants in 2009/10 for the Abingdon area of the Vale*
- (b) that the committee agrees payment of the Service Level Agreement grant to the two twinning organisations in this area*
- (c) that the committee considers the draft Service Level Agreement with APAGE and decides whether it wishes to enter into the agreement now or alternatively to award a community grant for the 2010 Abingdon Arts Festival*
- (d) that the committee considers and determines the new applications which have been received and appraised*
- (e) that the committee agrees to delay a decision on the need to re-establish the Abingdon Area Forum until the impact of the Choose Abingdon Partnership launch event has been fully evaluated*

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the budget position for the Abingdon Area Committee in respect of community grants, to invite the committee to consider and determine grant applications and grant awards under Service Level Agreements and to consider delaying the re-establishment of the Abingdon Area Forum.

## 2. Relationship with Corporate Plan

- 2.1 The award of grants to community and voluntary sector groups helps to deliver actions set out in the Vale's Sustainable Community Strategy, which aims to improve the quality of life for everyone in the Vale.

## 3. The community grants budget

- 3.1 The table below shows the budget position for the Abingdon Area Committee before the Executive met on 2 October to discuss the community grants budget. The figure for the grants allocated to date, £13,245, includes two commitments (£3,000 and £670) which were carried forward from 2008/09 following a decision at the March meeting of the Abingdon Area Committee. These commitments were for the Compass Café and The Vale of White Horse Foyer respectively, and were allocated in case the organisations were unsuccessful in obtaining funding from the County Council's Chill Out Fund.

<b>Budget b/f from 2008/09</b>	<b>Budget 2009/10</b>	<b>Total budget 2009/10</b>	<b>Allocated to date</b>	<b>Budget remaining to allocate</b>
<b>£1,764.72</b>	<b>£26,096.00</b>	<b>£27,860.72</b>	<b>£13,245.00</b>	<b>£14,615.72</b>

- 3.2 The Abingdon Area Committee is aware that the council is facing a difficult financial situation. Budget monitoring of the cost centre from which community grants are funded has identified a deficit of £12,000. This deficit has arisen due to a commitment to increase grant payments to Abingdon Citizens Advice Bureau and Wantage Independent Advice Centre by the annual rate of inflation.
- 3.3 Executive considered a report on 2 October and agreed with the recommendation to reduce the community grants budget by £15,000 to address the deficit of £12,000 with an allowance of £3,000 for any unforeseen costs.
- 3.4 Executive agreed to apportion the budget reduction between Executive and the four area committees in the same way that the annual community grants budget is apportioned. The Executive receives 21 per cent of the budget and the remainder is apportioned according to the percentage of the electorate in each area on 1 January 2009. Therefore the agreed budget reduction has been apportioned as follows:

	Reduction in budget	Remaining budget rounded up/down
Executive	£3,150	£8,314
<b>Abingdon Area Committee</b>	<b>£3,786</b>	<b>£10,830</b>
North East Area Committee	£ 2,710	£13,670
South East area Committee	£3,264	£8,531
West area Committee	£2,090	£413
Total	£15,000	£41,758

- 3.5 After the reduction has been taken into account the Abingdon Area Committee's remaining community grants budget for 2009/10 is £10,830. As outlined in paragraph 3.1, this figure includes a total commitment of £3,670 which may not be needed if

applications to the Chill Out Fund from Compass Café and The Vale of White Horse Foyer are successful. Applications to the Chill Out Fund will be considered on 4 November. Officers will advise the committee verbally at the meeting if the outcome is known.

- 3.6 In the past the budget has been apportioned into different agendas and a discretionary proportion in order to guide Executive and area committees in the allocation of the budget. However, the community grants scheme is a discretionary scheme and Executive agreed on 2 October that in future the community grants budget should be allocated to support the Corporate Plan and Vale Sustainable Community Strategy rather than the three former agendas.

#### **4. Twinning partnership grants (Service Level Agreements)**

- 4.1 In accordance with the decision of the Executive at its meeting on 6 August 2004 (Minute Ex.83) twinning associations are partners in service provision and signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to this effect. The funding for the SLA is allocated from Area Committee budgets. In the Abingdon Area the allocation is:

**Abingdon Town Council £2,500**  
**Drayton Twinning Society £500**

- 4.2 The original SLAs ran from 2004-2007 and came to an end on 31 March 2007. The Executive agreed that all SLAs should be extended. The SLAs have been extended on an annual basis for the last three years pending a review of all service level agreements. The twinning associations, in common with all SLA partners, are asked to provide specified information to enable officers to monitor that the partnership is meeting its commitments under the SLA. Both twinning associations have submitted the required monitoring information for 2009/10.
- 4.3 Members are asked to agree the payment of the SLA grants to Abingdon Town Council and the Drayton Twinning Association.
- 4.4 If the allocations for twinning SLAs are agreed in full by the Abingdon Area Committee, the remaining budget for the committee will be £7,830.

#### **5. Consideration of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) with APAGE**

- 5.1 At the last meeting of the Abingdon Area Committee Members discussed the funding of arts groups in the Abingdon Area. Members resolved to support, in principle, a 3-year Service Level Agreement with Abingdon Performing Arts Group Enterprise (APAGE) of £3,000 per annum towards the Abingdon Arts Festival. Officers were asked to meet with Malcolm Ross, APAGE's treasurer, to discuss terms and conditions and were requested to seek assurances regarding the printing of the festival brochure.
- 5.2 The purpose of an SLA is to provide some stability of funding to a voluntary or community sector organisation for a specified period. The organisation does not then have to apply for a grant each year under the Community Grants Scheme, but it does have to provide the monitoring information set out in the SLA in order to claim the grant.
- 5.3 An SLA is not a contract. A grant awarded under an SLA is subject to the budget being available, so it may not be possible in subsequent years to pay the level of grant agreed at the time of entering into the SLA. Any grant awarded to APAGE under an

SLA would be allocated from the Abingdon Area Committee's budget before any new grant applications were considered. As in the case of the SLAs with the twinning organisations, officers would report each year to the committee and seek agreement to pay the grant.

- 5.4 Members are advised that officers recently held a meeting with Malcolm Ross and have drafted an SLA based on their discussions. The draft SLA is attached under Appendix A. Most of the SLA is standard for all organisations but those sections which were the subject of discussion between officers and APAGE are highlighted in yellow.
- 5.5 Members are requested to consider and agree the highlighted sections of the draft SLA and to decide if they wish to enter into the SLA for three years beginning on 1 January 2010 with a grant of £3,000 per annum, or another amount. The SLA grant for the first year of the agreement could be agreed in this financial year but allocated from the committee's 2010/11 budget.
- 5.6 If Members decide that, because the budget for 2010/11 has not yet been set, they do not feel it appropriate to enter into an SLA with APAGE at this stage, they are advised that APAGE would wish to be considered now for a community grant for the 2010 festival. As the Abingdon Arts Festival is held in March - April each year, APAGE usually submits its application for a community grant to the autumn meeting of the Abingdon Area Committee. APAGE has not submitted an application on this occasion pending the outcome of the decision on an SLA.
- 5.7 If the committee does not enter into an SLA starting on 1 January 2010, Members are requested to allocate an amount towards the 2010 festival either from their remaining 2009/10 budget or from their 2010/11 budget, as yet unknown. If the former, the award should be subject to an acceptable community grant application being received before 31 December 2009. A grant narrative for APAGE's grant application submitted in 2008/09 for the 2009 festival, is included in Appendix B for information. Updated information relating to the 2010 festival will be provided at the committee meeting.

## 6. New grant applications

- 6.1 Applications totalling £6,139 have been received from the first two applicants listed below. Narratives providing additional details are in Appendix C:

- **Abingdon Sea Cadets, £1,139**, towards the purchase of a boat trailer
- **Abingdon Rugby Football Club, £5,000**, towards a new rugby pitch and floodlighting

- 6.2 Members are requested to consider and determine the new grant applications received.

## 7. Options

- 7.1 There are no alternative options to the consideration and determination of the grant applications received.

## 8. Abingdon Area Forum

- 8.1 At the area committee meeting on 2 July a request was made for a discussion about the re-establishment of the Abingdon Area Forum. Members are advised that the newly-

established Choose Abingdon Partnership is holding a launch event at Abingdon Guildhall on 30 November. The Partnership Board is made up of representatives of the town, district and county councils together with the chamber of commerce. The Board has also co-opted a number of local business representatives. The aim of the Partnership is to bring together the town's key players to co-ordinate a range of initiatives and activities that will help to boost the town's vitality.

- 8.2 Representatives of the public, private and voluntary sector are being invited to the launch event. The format of the launch event will be very similar to the format that has been used for forum meetings and it will include discussion about ideas for the improvement of Abingdon. It is likely that the Partnership will arrange regular consultation meetings so that it has a good understanding of the issues that are affecting Abingdon.
- 8.3 It is therefore proposed that members delay a decision on the re-establishment of the Abingdon Area Forum until after the impact of the Choose Abingdon Partnership launch event has been fully evaluated.

## **9. Financial, legal and any other implications**

- 9.1 Grant awards, if any, will be allocated from an Abingdon Area community grants budget and prior to determination the committee will be advised of the amount available to allocate.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 The Abingdon Area Committee is requested to consider and determine the new grant applications received.

Background Papers

Community grant applications and supporting documents

Appendices:

Narratives summarising the applications received

Draft Service Level Agreement