



Policy and Resources Committee – 11 July 2016

Voluntary Sector Grants

Purpose of report

To ask Members to approve the process for providing Voluntary Sector Grants beyond 31 March 2017.

Attachments

None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 East Northamptonshire Council currently provides three grants to support the delivery of services across East Northamptonshire in three thematic areas. These grants cover a 3-year period and are now in the final year ending 31 March 2017.
- 1.2 The three grants were awarded following a detailed and rigorous application process. A Member Panel comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair of Policy and Resources Committee and Councillor Wendy Brackenbury was appointed to oversee the process. On completion of the application and evaluation processes, the panel made recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on the awards of the grants, which were approved 2 December 2013 (minute 271).
- 1.3 The table below details the current grants by theme:-

Theme	Grant Agreement service description and outcomes to be achieved	Amount per annum £	Provider
Advice and Information	Provide an advice and information service for tackling debt across East Northamptonshire which will deliver the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced debt across East Northamptonshire • Maximising available income of the district's most financially deprived communities • Increased access to financial and legal advice • Increased benefit take up across the district. 	50,000	Community Law Service (Northampton and County)
Counselling and Support	Provide a counselling and support service to individuals and families across East Northamptonshire. Priority will be given to areas where the council has specific legal duties. This theme will deliver the following outcomes:	20,000	Service Six

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of support available • Increased access to counselling and support to families and individuals • Increased take up of a range of specialist advice and counselling services for all individuals that may be experiencing issues/difficulties with regards to: equalities; family breakdown and relationships; mental health issues; and victims/witnesses of crime across the district. 		
Community Transport	<p>Provide a community transport service across East Northamptonshire to enable residents to access basic services at an affordable price, with medical services trips as the first priority. This theme will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to medical services as a priority. • Improved access to other basic services • Reduced isolation for residents in communities who have a high “Index of Deprivation” score for “access to services”. 	20,000	Consortium led by Serve and includes Volunteer Action Oundle

2.0 Progress and monitoring

2.1 The Council has formal Grant Agreements with each of the providers. Quarterly monitoring meetings are held to discuss progress against the outcomes and targets set out in each of the agreements. To date all three grants have achieved the targets set and, in the majority of cases, exceeded them. The Grant Agreements, details of the outcomes and targets and the results of the quarterly monitoring meetings are all published on the Council’s website.

2.2 The following table highlights the key areas of achievement with each grant so far:-

Theme	Key areas of achievement
Advice and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £7,067,640 of debt managed for residents to date at end of year 2 • Secured £2,424,500 of additional benefits to date for clients in East Northamptonshire (end of quarter 4 in year 2) • Total of 534 clients supported through the benefit take-up programme in year 2 compared to 443 in year 1 • Total of 1097 clients seen at outreach venues

	across the district (end of year 2)
Counselling and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 East Northamptonshire residents (both adults and young people) accessed services in year 2 while 193 accessed services in year 1317 clients provided with counselling and Support Plus programmes to date at the end of year 2 • 95% of enquiries (end of year 2) now from the targeted areas of East Northamptonshire (all 6 towns, Kings Cliffe and eastern villages) • Over 20 outreach venues used to meet clients across the district at the end of year 2
Community transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26,977 medical trips provided to clients across East Northamptonshire in year 2 compared to 25,609 in year 1 • Journeys in the target area of Thrapston and Islip have increased from an average of 170 in year 1 to 372 journeys in year 2 • A total of 734 new clients accessed services by the end of year 2

2.3 The three providers have recently met the Council's Scrutiny Committee. Each provider outlined how they delivered their services in East Northamptonshire and used case studies to illustrate the achievement of outcomes for local people.

3.0 Moving forward

3.1 Policy and Resources Committee is being asked to decide how these grants should operate beyond 31 March 2017. As in previous years, there are a number of options, which have been highlighted at para. 3.2 below. For that reason it is felt important that a Member Panel is appointed to consider these options and make recommendations to Committee on the way forward. The Member Panel would also oversee the application and evaluation processes prior to making recommendations to Committee on the final grant awards.

3.2 Options for the Member Panel to consider and make recommendations to Committee are set out below.

3.2.1 Thematic areas:

Should the three thematic areas of the current model (advice and information, counselling and support and community transport) be retained or different ones pursued?

3.2.2 Financial value of the grants:

The annual amount for grants under the current model is £90,000. Should this amount be retained and is the balance of the financial amounts between the three current themes appropriate or should different amounts be applied to the themes? It is understood that the Transport Scrutiny Panel is minded to propose an increase in the amount awarded to Community Transport on the grounds of an increasing older population.

3.2.3 Application and award process:

Should the process for awarding the grants be as before? The process was:-

- Member Panel develops and agrees the specification and outcomes to be

achieved with each theme and agrees the application material.

- Advertising that grants are available across certain thematic areas.
- Evaluate the application forms against set criteria and receive presentations from the applicants.
- Member Panel makes recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee regarding the awards of the grants.
- Policy and Resources Committee approves the awards.
- Grant Agreements for the 3 years completed.

3.3. If Members are minded to continue with the voluntary sector grants, the indicative timetable for the preparation, application, evaluation and awarding processes would be as follows:-

Stage	Timeframe
Member Panel formulates options on the voluntary sector grants process and presents its recommendations to Committee	P&R 5 September 2016
Application packs developed and finalised	By 16 September 2016
VCS Grants Scheme 2017-20 launched	Week commencing 19 September 2016
Member Panel to undertake evaluation and prepare recommendations on award of grants	Completed by 11 November 2016
Member Panel presents recommendations on awards to Committee	P&R 5 December 2016
Grant Agreements completed with new providers	By 28 February 2017
Grants commence	1 April 2017

4.0 Equality and diversity implications

4.1 The grant scheme aims to secure positive impacts for all our residents including those that fall into any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2000.

4.2 An Equality Impact Assessment for the grants has identified only positive impacts, importantly in the areas of rural isolation and socio-economic exclusion. All three of the current grant areas contain provision for outreach work across East Northamptonshire, particularly in those areas of the district where people have difficulty accessing services.

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Whilst the Council does not have any legal or statutory duties to provide voluntary sector grants, the Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities the power to promote wellbeing.

5.2 In so far as the current grants are concerned, the Grant Agreements specifically state that the Council gives no undertaking whatsoever to continue with funding or voluntary sector grants beyond 31 March 2017.

6.0 Risk management

- 6.1 Members are asked to keep in mind that withdrawing support for voluntary sector grants could impact negatively on the Council's reputation and potentially reduce services to residents in East Northamptonshire.

7.0 Resource and Financial implications

- 7.1 The current voluntary sector grants will terminate 31 March 2017 and provision has been made in the 2016/17 budget for the full amounts set out in 1.3 above.
- 7.2 Depending on Members' decisions regarding grants from 31 March 2017, the necessary provision will need to be included in the budgets for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. This is built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy based on the current arrangements of a £90K provision per annum.

8.0 Constitutional Implications

- 8.1 No constitutional implications have been identified.

9.0 Customer Services Implications

- 9.1 Customer services should have an awareness of the grant awardees and their services to be able to signpost residents to the relevant services. These services provided to our residents would not be available without our funding, as such any reduction in funding would have a negative impact on our residents.

10.0 Corporate outcomes

- 10.1 Currently, voluntary sector grants contribute to our corporate outcomes as follows:-

Good quality of life: Specialist support is available to local people affected by debt problems, family and relationship breakdowns and accessing key services. This helps them to enjoy a better quality of life now and in the future.

Good value for money: Investing in one organisation per grant theme avoids funding duplicate services and reduces the pressure on officer resources required to monitor the grants.

Good reputation: Supporting the voluntary sector that has the skills and people able to provide quality and specialised services to our local communities.

11.0 Recommendations

- 11.1 The Committee is recommended to:-

1. Confirm support for providing voluntary sector grants beyond 31 March 2017.
2. Approve the appointment of a Member Panel; the membership being three members of the Committee decided by the Leader.
3. Approve the indicative timetable for co-ordinating the process.

Reason: to support a voluntary sector whose services help us to achieve our corporate outcomes.

Legal	Power Local Government Act 2000				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the current Grant Agreements, outcomes and targets and quarterly monitoring reports: http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=70&pageNumber=1 • Presentations by the current providers, with case studies to Scrutiny Committee: held with the Democratic Services Team 					
Person Originating Report:					
Mike Greenway (Community Partnerships Manager) ☎01832 742244 ✉ mgreenway@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 28 June 2016					
CFO		MO		CX	

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