



## Policy and Resources Committee – 14 February 2011

### Voluntary Sector Grants

#### Purpose of report

Members are asked to consider the findings and recommendations of the Member Panel evaluating applications for voluntary sector grants and approve the next stages of the process.

#### Attachment(s)

None

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 For several years the council has supported 10 voluntary sector organisations with funding for their core activities. This has been done through 3-year agreements, originally running from 2006 to 2009. These agreements were extended to cover financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 1.2 The Policy and Resources Committee approved the implementation of a new grant funding model at its meeting on 8 November 2010 (minute 259 refers). This new model moves away from supporting organisations with their core operations and focuses on activities that will help the council achieve its corporate outcomes.
- 1.3 All of the 10 organisations the council currently supports have been aware since April 2010 that the present arrangements and their agreements, referred to in 1.1 above would end on 31 March 2011.

#### 2.0 New model

- 2.1 The new model makes available funding to support work in three thematic areas. This will effectively be run as one grant per theme over a 3 year period and applications were invited under the following criteria:-

Theme	Grant available	Outline of service and outcomes
Advice and information	£50,000 per year	Provide an advice and information service for tackling debt across East Northamptonshire which will deliver the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced debt across East Northamptonshire</li> <li>• Maximising available income of the district's most financially deprived communities</li> <li>• Increased access to financial and legal advice</li> <li>• Increased benefit take up across the district.</li> </ul>
Counselling and support	£20,000 per year	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 should deliver the following outcomes:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of support available</li> <li>• Increased access to counselling and support to families and individuals</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
Community Transport	£20,000 per year	<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 should deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to medical services as a priority</li> <li>• Improved access to other basic services</li> <li>• Reduced isolation for residents in communities who have a high "Index of Deprivation" score for "access to services".</li> </ul>

2.2 The new model has been widely advertised using Nene Valley News, the voluntary sector's newsletter distributed by its Infrastructure Organisation (NVCA) and the council's website. In total 12 applications were received across the three themes.

2.3 The Policy and Resources Committee appointed a member panel (the panel) to support the preparation of the application packs, the assessment of the applications received and, based on this, make recommendations to the committee on the award of the grants. The panel is made up of the deputy leader of the council, the vice-chairman of the committee and the lead member for Customer and Community Services.

### 3.0 Evaluation of applications

3.1 To ensure consistency and transparency with the evaluation process the panel has considered all of the 12 applications against single criteria in each of the three themes.

3.2 Of the 12, one application was dismissed by the panel as it did not relate to a specific theme and lacked detail of how the services would be provided. A consortium bid involving three organisations was received in the counselling and support theme, however the other applications were from single organisations.

3.3 The summary of the panel's evaluation is as follows: -

Theme	Applications received	Summary of evaluation
Advice and information	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four applications for advice and information (all from individual organisations).</li> <li>• Two were found to be lacking in service delivery options (reduced/limited locations, lack of resource, reliance on existing client</li> </ul>

		<p>base to generate service users, and both stray from the theme outcomes into other areas of service which would not be appropriate to fund under this theme).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The remaining two applications show significant merit but members feel further information would be required before a decision could be reached.</li> </ul>
Counselling and support	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four applications for counselling and support (three from individual organisations and one from a consortium of three organisations).</li> <li>• None of the four applications covered all of the areas of specialism noted in our criteria but this was anticipated due to the broad spectrum of specialist support covered by this theme.</li> <li>• One application, while aiming to provide a reasonable range of services, gave cause for concern in their district wide approach (operation from three bases only with no outreach provision); the second application gave a reasonable spread also but there were significant concerns around funding and resources capacity to deliver the proposed service and reliance on donations from service users.</li> <li>• The remaining two applications are both felt to have significant potential but cover very different areas and it is felt that further information would be required from both applicants before a decision could be reached.</li> </ul>
Community transport	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three applications for community transport (three individual organisations).</li> <li>• None of the applications met the basic criteria of provision of district wide service/service available to all residents of East Northamptonshire.</li> <li>• There may be options to ask these organisations to work in partnership to deliver.</li> <li>• One of the three provided a robust application which would provide service to all but the far north of the district and gave clear detail on how service would be delivered and the breakdown of the grant requested. The other two provided limited information only, particularly in relation to the proposed grant expenditure.</li> </ul>

3.4 From the evaluation, the panel has short-listed four applications: two in the advice and information theme and two in the counselling and support theme. The panel believes that no award should be made under the community transport theme. The four short-listed applications are:

## Advice and Information theme

- Nene Valley Citizens' Advice
- Community Law Service (Northampton and County)

## Counselling and Support

- Service 6
- Consortium bid lead by Wellingborough & East Northants Women's Aid

At this stage the panel feels unable to make recommendations on the award of the grants without further evaluation of the four short-listed applications. It is proposed that this be carried out as set out below.

### **4.0 Next stages**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the four short-listed applicants be invited to discuss their applications further with the panel. By doing this the panel will be able to probe in more detail what each application offers in terms of actual service provision and future development.
- 4.2 If members are minded to approve this, the timeframe will not permit for the new arrangements to start 1 April 2011 as originally planned. It is proposed to extend the implementation period, with the view that the new grant arrangements would commence 1 June 2011. It is felt important to retain some level of service by the voluntary sector during this period and with that in mind it is proposed that the existing agreements with all of the 10 organisations, referred to in section 1 above be extended to cover the period 1 April to 30 June 2011. This would be based on their existing values, with no inflationary increases and on a pro-rata basis for the 3 months.
- 4.3 With regards to the community transport theme, the panel is not satisfied that any of the applications meet the basic criteria for providing a district-wide service. It is therefore proposed that one last attempt be made to see if such a service can be developed. If this cannot be achieved during the extension period, i.e. by 30 June 2011 the £20,000 will be allocated as savings and no further work be undertaken by us in respect of community transport.
- 4.4 The revised timetable for awarding the grants would be as follows: -
- Week commencing 21 February 2011 – the four short-listed applicants meet with the panel.
  - Monday 14 March 2011 – the Policy and Resources Committee approves the two grant awards (Advice and Information and Counselling and Support).
  - Week commencing 21 March 2011 – applicants formally notified of the committee's decision and the grant agreements with new providers are developed and signed.
  - 1 July 2011 – New grants commence.

### **5.0 Equality and diversity**

- 5.1 As no awards are being made at this stage there are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken to support the panel's recommendations on grant awards at the next stages.

### **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 Risk management**

7.1 There are no significant risks to the council as a result of the delay in decision making thus far as current support arrangements will continue and grant recipients are aware that these arrangements are due to end shortly. It should be noted that challenges may lie ahead in respect of community transport, particularly with the Government's proposals for future fuel subsidies and rural bus services. Although the implications and effects for this district are not clear at this stage, they could have a negative impact for rural transport providers in the future. If financial support becomes more and more limited, including any that might be made available from the council itself, East Northamptonshire may lose such services in the future.

## **8.0 Financial implications**

8.1 Provision for the new grant model (£90,000) has been made in the 2011/12 budget proposals.

8.2 Subject to the implementation period being extended (para. 4.2 above refers), the funding to cover the extension of the existing arrangements with the 10 organisations would be met from this £90,000 provision.

8.3 Depending on the outcome of further work in respect of community transport (para. 4.3 above refers), there is the potential for savings in 2011/12.

## **9.0 Corporate outcomes**

9.1 The new arrangements will contribute to the achievement of the corporate outcomes as follows:

9.1.1 Good Quality of Life – the service provided within each of the themes will support local people in enjoying a better quality of life, now and in the future. The overall outcomes of each area aimed to reduce debt, increase access to quality services and information, and reduce isolation.

9.1.2 Good Value for Money – our financial support will be aimed at the achievement of key outcomes rather than core costs of the organisations we are working with.

9.1.3 Effective Partnership Working – stronger and more robust agreements will be in place with each of the providers giving scope and capacity for future development of these areas of activity.

9.1.4 Good Reputation – supporting the voluntary sector that has the skills and people able to provide quality and specialised services to our local communities.

## **10.0 Recommendation**

10.1 The committee is recommended to:

1. Endorse the panel's findings as summarised in 3.3.
2. Approve the member panel carrying out further discussions with the four short-listed applicants in order to make recommendations on the final awards to the committee meeting 14 March 2011.
3. Extend the existing agreements with the 10 organisations as proposed in 4.2 and 8.2.
4. The £20,000 allocated for community transport be held until 30 June 2011 as set out in 4.3,

5. Approve the revised timetable set out in 4.4.

*(Reason - To continue with the implementation of the new grant funding model as approved by the committee and to allow sufficient time to appoint providers in the thematic areas.)*

<b>Legal</b>	Power: Local Government Act 2000				
	Other considerations:				
<b>Background Papers:</b> Applications from the organisations held with Community Partnerships Team					
<b>Person Originating Report:</b> Mike Greenway – Community Partnerships Manager Telephone 01832 742244 <a href="mailto:mgreenway@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk">mgreenway@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk</a>					
<b>Date:</b> 28 January 2011					
<b>CFO</b>		<b>MO</b>		<b>CX</b>	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)