

Subject: Grants to Outside Bodies 2010/11

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17th March 2010

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Portfolio Holder: Communities and Neighbourhoods

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Cabinet approval on the proposed allocation of Grants to Outside Bodies for 2010/2011.

To inform Cabinet about the impact of Council grants allocated in 2009/2010.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- Delivering quality services to our customers
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough
- Keeping the Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough
- Encouraging healthy and respectful communities

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Allocation of Community Grants which are not in accordance to the grants policy could impact on Council performance and negatively impact on the Council's reputation.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Community Grants account for a significant element of Council expenditure. Each year Rossendale Borough Council allocates approximately £200,000 in grants, operated through two discrete funds, Neighbourhood Forum Grants and Grants to Outside Bodies.

4.2 The first section of the report deals with approval of the grants to outside bodies for 2010/2011. The second section details the impact of the grants to outside bodies awarded in 2009/2010.

4.3 **Proposed allocation of Grants to Outside Bodies for 2010/2011**

The majority of the grants budget for 2010/2011 was allocated by Cabinet last year as part of a three year funding agreement that commenced in April 2009.

As part of that three year agreement the total committed for 2010/2011 is £115,075 (see Appendix 1).

The grants budget for 2010/2011 is £188,260, subject to budget approval by Cabinet and Council, leaving an uncommitted balance of £73,185.

In December 2009, organisations from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector were invited to apply for grants from the uncommitted balance for 2010-2011. The closing date for applications was 18th January 2010.

The Council received applications from 27 organisations requesting in total £251,064, far exceeding the available grant funding. The 'Grants Advisory Group' met on the 28th January 2010 to assess which funding applications should be recommend to Cabinet.

The Grants Advisory Group noted that the large number of applications received is a positive indication of the close links being developed between the Council and its communities.

Priority was given to those applications that directly contribute to the Council's priorities and the outcomes in Rossendale's Sustainable Community Strategy. Appendix 2 details the groups that applied, the amount requested and the recommendations of the Grants Advisory Group.

The Communities Team will work with those organisations that are unsuccessful to try and identify other sources of assistance including potential funding streams such as neighbourhood forum grants.

4.4 **Evaluation of the Grants to Outside Bodies awarded for 2009 - 2010**

All organisations in receipt of a grant for 2009/2010 are required to complete an evaluation form on the progress of the project/services being delivered as a result of the funding awarded. The form asks whether they had achieved the outputs and outcomes as agreed in their funding agreements, as well as reporting on the number of beneficiaries or service users and any gaps in delivery that had occurred.

The types of projects/services funded by the Council and those who benefited from the grants can be viewed in Appendix 3. Some of these include:

- The Citizen Advice Bureau provided advice to local residents on a wide range of issues including housing advice, employment related matters and debt relief. From March 2009 to 11th December 2009, a total of 1640 clients received assistance from the Citizen Advice Bureau.

- Through counselling sessions the Magdalene Project supports people who are victims of sexual abuse. Up to the end of December 2009, 118 clients have been seen mainly referred from GPs, family members, mental health service and churches.
- The Family Centre in Bacup has undertaken various activities for families ranging from playgroup sessions, family day trips and after school clubs. The centre helps to enhance parental skills and strengthen family ties.
- The Credit Unions have helped to reduce financial exclusion by providing easy repayment loans to those in financial difficulties.

The main beneficiaries of the Council's grant scheme have been young people, families, financially excluded, victims of crime and people in debt.

Some organisation's have told us that they have experienced difficulty in delivering their projects/services. They stated that recruiting and retaining volunteers and limited funding sources were the main constraints on delivery. We will work with our partners at REAL, the Community Network and Council for Voluntary Services to help overcome these problems.

4.5 Report of the Value for Money Task and Finish Group.

In June 2009, as part of its work programme Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to look at Value for Money of Grants to Outside Bodies.

The Task and Finish Group agreed to work with those organisations receiving the most money which were identified as the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), Sunnycrest Family Centre, Bacup and the Haslingden Credit Union.

The overall Terms of Reference of the Group were linked with the definition of Value for Money, which was:-

- **Economy** – careful use of resources to save expense, time or effort
- **Efficiency** – delivering the same level of service for less costs, time or effort
- **Effectiveness** – delivering a better service or getting a better return for the same amount of expense, time or effort

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Task and Finish Group's report's are presented at Appendix 4 with their recommendations outlined at 9.1 and 9.2.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 In addition to the financial matter in the report, members should note that one community group who rent Council property has failed to gain a grant received in previous years.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 Legal implications are commented upon in the body of the report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 No HR implications.

8. CONCLUSION

The work of the voluntary, community and faith sector is recognised as extremely important. The services/projects provided by the sector and the support it gives to individuals and groups across Rossendale is regarded as invaluable.

Council grants paid to these organisations play a key part in helping to deliver much needed services in Rossendale. They contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities and achieving the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy that by 2018, Rossendale will have strong communities with an enhanced environment and heritage. It will be an attractive place to live where tourists visit and employers invest.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 Cabinet approve the grant funding to those groups recommended by the Grants Advisory Group for 2010/2011, as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 9.2 Cabinet note the positive impact of the Grants to Outside Bodies awarded during 2009/2010 as detailed in Appendix 3.
- 9.3 Cabinet support the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny as outlined in their report at 9.1 and 9.2 in Appendix 4, and that following continuation of the value for money exercise with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Help Direct and Rossendale Borough Council, consideration should be given to adjusting the funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau in quarters 3 and 4 of 2010 – 2011.
- 9.4 That Cabinet ask Overview and Scrutiny Management to conduct a 'Value for Money' evaluation of the main recipients of grant to outside bodies funding.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Grants Advisory Panel; Portfolio for Communities and Neighbourhoods; Value for Money Task and Finish Group.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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