

Subject:	Grants 2014- 15	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	27 th November 2013
Report of:	Director of Customers and Communities	Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council and Communities and Partnerships
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Cabinet agrees the amended grant allocation process to support the allocation of £60,000 targeted funding to support financial inclusion services in 2014 - 2015, to be reviewed annually.
1.2	All future minor amendments to the grants process to be delegated to the Director of Customers and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 Following the agreement by Cabinet on 23rd October to support the allocation of £60,000 for the provision of grants for services to facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale, this report provides details of the adapted grant allocation process to be followed for the allocation of grants in 2014/15.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 4.2 Delivery of grants to third sector organisations not in accordance with the grants criteria could impact on the Council's performance.
- 4.3 Not issuing grant funding via robust, open and transparent criteria could open the process to challenge by those making or wishing to make an application.
- 4.4 The funding criteria is designed to ensure that councillors have information which will support responsible financial management through the allocation of grant funding against the Council's agreed criteria of allocating target funding to support financial inclusion services.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 The background to this issue was presented to Cabinet on 23rd October 2013. Cabinet agreed to allocate £60,000 in 2014-15 for the provision of grants for services to facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale, to be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process to reflect the serious financial pressures the Council is experiencing.
- 5.2 Cabinet agreed that the previous grant allocation process be adapted to support the allocation of target funding to support financial inclusion services. This report provides details of the adapted process and timetable to be implemented for the allocation of Council grant funding in 2014/15.
- 5.3 In March 2011 Cabinet agreed the proposals for a robust, open and transparent criteria including guidance for applicants, application form, scoring matrix and evaluation panel for the awarding and distributing of grant funding. These proposals were developed following extensive consultation with organisations that had previously received grant funding and were peer reviewed by Burnley Council and Help Direct. The application process including criteria, application form, guidance and scoring matrix were used to allocate the current three year grants which come to an end on 31st March 2014.
- 5.4 Cabinet agreed that this allocation process be adapted to support the allocation of target funding to support financial inclusion services, with clear expected outcomes developed in conjunction with the Rossendale Financial Inclusion Group.
- 5.5 Subject to approval by Cabinet, the Rossendale Council Grant for Financial Inclusion Services will be opened for applications from 9th December 2013. Applicants will be able to apply for a one year grant only and the closing date for applications will be 13th January 2014. Details of the grant will be distributed through the usual community networks and to current recipients of grants for financial inclusion services. It will also be advertised on the Council website.
- 5.6 The existing grants application process has been adapted to target funding on financial inclusion services, whilst retaining the principles of a robust, open and transparent process. Three separate application forms were developed in 2011, to cover the different amounts of grant funding offered – Form A grants of less than £1000, Form B grants of £1001 - £7000 and Form C grants over £7100. As grants are to be targeted on financial inclusion, and all current grants for financial inclusion services are in excess of £7000, only one grant application will be used (formerly Form C) and this has been adapted with applicants requested to apply for funding from £7000, as a one year grant only.
- 5.7 The Grants Explanation Form which includes pre application guidance (Appendix 1) includes the following criteria for applications:
- *Applicants must be Rossendale based constituted third sector organisations, or third sector organisations that carry out work in Rossendale, that provide services that facilitate financial inclusion*
 - *Applicants must be able to demonstrate a track record of working in partnership to deliver services to Rossendale residents which support the aims of the Rossendale Financial Inclusion Group, which are – ‘To improve financial inclusion in the Borough through a more co-ordinated approach to debt recovery, access to welfare*

benefits, access to financial services, prevention of problem debt and the provision of money advice’.

- *Applicants must have demonstrable experience of working with Rossendale residents and have local knowledge of the issues facing the different communities within the Borough.*

5.8 This clearly states that applicants must have a track record of providing financial inclusion services in Rossendale to Rossendale residents, in a partnership context. This information is repeated on the application form. Furthermore, the Grants Application Form (Appendix 2) includes the following criteria under Question 3: What is the funding for and what outcomes will it deliver:

Please detail what you require funding for and how it will help to enable people who live and work in Rossendale to:

- *Manage their money on a day-to-day basis, effectively, securely and confidently.*
- *Plan for the future and cope with financial pressure, by managing their finances to protect against short-term variations in income and expenditure and to take advantage of longer-term opportunities: and*
- *Deal effectively with financial distress, should unexpected events lead to serious financial difficulty.*

5.9 Other questions on the application form request information on

- *Equality and Access to services*
- *Project / organisation overview*
- *Value for money and added benefits*
- *Sustainability*
- *Project development and potential risks*
- *Partnership working*

5.10 Further guidance on the criteria and completing the form is contained in the Guidance Notes (Appendix 3).

5.11 It is proposed that responsibility for assessing the completed applications is delegated to officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and confirmed by Cabinet. All applications will be placed in numerical order against their score. The evaluation panel will consider those applications that score the highest and will allocate funding as they deem appropriate.

5.12 The applications will be assessed during the week beginning 13 January 2014. The recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet on 5th March 2014 for approval and those successful applicants will receive funding from 1st April 2014.

5.13 An initial equality impact assessment is attached to this report in Appendix 4. An overview is noted in section 8 of this report.

5.14 The recommendations are set out in section 1 of this report.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6 SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Financial matters are noted in the report.

7 MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 All relevant comments are contained in the body of the report.

8 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Extensive consultation was held with the current recipients of Rossendale Council Grant funding prior to the submission of the Grants report to Cabinet in October 2013. In addition a full equality impact assessment was completed on the proposals to target grant funding on financial inclusion services.

8.2 The Rossendale Financial Inclusion Group have been consulted on the criteria for grant funding outlined in this report, and the criteria has been developed in conjunction with the Group.

8.3 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of the policy decision outlined in this report, which has been informed by the associated consultation activity. No potential negative impacts have been identified as a result of the proposals to amend the grant allocation process to support the allocation of £60,000 targeted funding to support financial inclusion services, to be reviewed annually.

8.4 The proposal is allocate £60,000 for the provision of grant funding for services that facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale with no reduction to current levels, through which CAB, the Credit Unions and others could bid. Whoever the winning bid(s) were awarded to, there would be a provision of financial inclusion services delivered for customers to access locally. Therefore it is determined that there is no significant evidence of any negative or disproportionate impact on any protected equality groups as a result of implementing this policy decision.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 A robust, open and transparent process including guidance for applicants, application form, scoring matrix and evaluation panel for the awarding and distributing of grant funding was developed in 2011. As agreed by Cabinet this process has been adapted to support the allocation of target grant funding of £60,000 for 2014/15 to support financial inclusion services.

9.2 It is therefore recommended that the process outlined in this report, including the criteria, Explanation Form, Application Form, Guidance notes and evaluation panel be implemented for the allocation of grant funding in 2014/15.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Medium Term Financial Strategy – Achieval of Budget Reductions	www.rossendale.gov.uk
Grants Review: Rossendale Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants	www.rossendale.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Grants Explanation Form	Attached
Appendix 2 Grants Application Form	Attached
Appendix 3 Guidance Notes	Attached
Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment	Attached