

# **Report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Sport to the meeting of Audit and Governance to be held on the 20th March 2015.**

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**Subject:**

**AJ**

**Environment and Sport's administration of the voluntary sector grants related to Community Development, Community Centre Core Costs, Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support and 'Bradford Environment Forum'.**

## **Summary statement:**

This Report outlines the process the Department of Environment and Sport has undertaken to allocate funding, since taking responsibility for part of the 'Voluntary Sector Budget' in April 2014. The process undertaken sought to achieve agreed savings within the Council budget, to increase democratic accountability and transparency and maximise the impact of the remaining resource.

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**Portfolio: Safer and Stronger Communities**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**  
**Corporate**

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Report outlines the process the Department of Environment and Sport has undertaken to allocate funding, since taking responsibility for part of the 'Voluntary Sector Budget' in April 2014. The process undertaken sought to achieve agreed savings within the Council budget, to increase democratic accountability and transparency and maximise the impact of the remaining resource.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Until 31st March 2014 the Community Funding Unit within the Department of Adult and Community Services administered the entire Voluntary Sector Budget. In 2014-15, prior to splitting the budget between four Council departments, the value was £5,957,736. In 2014-15 the Voluntary Sector Budget was split between the following four Council Departments:

- Environment and Sport - Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support, Community Development, Core Costs and Environment. The total value of these funds in 2014-15 was £1,209,000 (+ £75,000).
- Children's Services - Early Years and Youth Work. The value of these funds was £854,464.
- Regeneration and Culture - Learning and Culture £503,639.
- Adult and Community Services retained responsibility for Advice Work, Older People's Day Care, Domestic Violence and housing related support. The total value retained was £3,317,109.

- 2.2 As part of the 2014-2015 Council budget process, Council resolved in February 2014 to make savings of £300,000 from the Voluntary Sector Budget. Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support was to be reduced by 25%, Advice Work, Domestic Violence and Community Centre Core Costs were all protected and other areas are expected to find savings of 10%.

- 2.3 The Safer and Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder set out to relevant Council officers from the four departments and the Commissioning and Procurement Service the requirement to continue to coordinate the funding across the four departments – as one 'Community Fund'. In relation to the funds the Department of Environment and Sport were responsible for, officers were instructed to.

- Ensure that there was greater democratic accountability and transparent related to these funds.
- Wherever appropriate to devolve decision making to the Council's five Area Committees.

- 2.4 Following a review of the funds allocated to Environment and Sport and how to increase democratic accountability and transparency the following was determined for each element of funding that the Department undertook responsibility for.

## **VCS Infrastructure Support**

2.5 VCS Infrastructure was determined not to be appropriate to devolve due to the following considerations:

- Officers assessed that efficiencies required to deliver the 25% reduction in funding could be best achieved by combining 11 separate agreements into one agreement and this could be best achieved through a district wide funding agreement.
- Continuing to have a district wide agreement offered the best option to engage the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the aspiration to have a joint agreement with health organisation to maximise efficiencies (the three CCG boundaries are not conterminous with Council Areas).
- A significant part of VCS infrastructure is organised on a district wide basis including the VCS Assembly, Volunteer Centres and information services. Hence this would present a challenge to devolving this responsibility to Area Committee.

2.6 A Report proposing a process for VCS Infrastructure Support was taken to Council Executive on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Executive resolved:

- That the basis of commissioning Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support through a grant, as outlined in Document "T" be agreed.

2.7 The department has followed the process agreed by Executive and – at the time of writing - is negotiating the final parts of the agreement with the VCS partnership Lead. The CCGs decided in December 2014 not to jointly fund VCS Infrastructure Support with the Council and are currently undertaking their own separate process.

2.8 The 25% saving has been negotiated with the infrastructure providers to maximise the outcomes on the valuable support provided to voluntary groups across the Bradford District.

## **2. Bradford Environment Forum**

2.9 Bradford Environment Forum funding, following consultation with the Environment and Sustainability Portfolio Holder, was also determined not to be appropriate to devolve to Area Committees for the following reasons:

- This resource funds three organisations who work with a number of schools and community organisations providing support around developing environment projects. The current providers were offering good value for money.
- £47,600 was a fairly low amount to split between five Area Committees.
- The Bradford Environment Forum providers are delivering support on a district wide basis

2.10 The three grant holders have been notified of a 10% reduction in funding and asked to consider how they can align the work more with Council priorities to reuse, recycle and reduce disposable waste.

### **3. Community Development and Community Centre Core Costs**

2.11 There were clear benefits of devolving Community Development and Community Centre Core Costs to Area Committees. The reasons included:

- Community development workers and community centres operate mostly within localities and there are clear benefits of local elected Members making decisions on how to maximise this resource locally
- Potential to integrate into ward based working

2.12 A Report titled 'Devolution of Commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees' was taken to the July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Executive. Executive resolved:

That the proposed basis for the allocation of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost grants with transitional adjustment outlined in Table 1 of Document "N" and the budget splits between the five Area Committees for these be agreed. The percentage transitional Area budget splits will be reviewed at the end of the two year grant period.

#### **Community Development and Community Centre Core Costs process following Executive resolution.**

2.13 The 22<sup>nd</sup> July Executive report highlighted the relevance of community development and community centres within the current context and an assessment of need and budget splits between Area Committees. A needs based model was deployed in order to determine a fair way to distribute the resources between the five areas. The needs based approach led to a distribution outlined in the following table – albeit with a transition that lessened the impact on the Shipley Area.

**Table 1: Distribution of resources between the five Area Committees (Transitional adjusted)**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Percentage Combined budgets</b>	<b>Financial value of Community Centre Core Costs*</b>	<b>Financial value of Community Development</b>	<b>Total financial allocation to each Area Committee for 2015-16</b>
Bradford East	24.6%	£51k	£100k	£151k
Bradford South***	17.1%	£30k	£75k	£105k
Bradford West**	26.5%	£63k	£100k	£163k
Keighley	17.1%	£43k	£62k	£105k
Shipley***	14.7%	£22k	£68k	£90k
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£209k</b>	<b>£405k</b>	<b>£614k</b>

\*The Community Centre Core Cost element is based on current distribution of Grants within each Area.

\*\*This allocation includes District wide centres based within the City Centre that will need to seek funding through Bradford West Area Committee

\*\*\*This includes a transitional adjustment between Bradford South and Shipley

2.14 Invites to express and interest were sent out to organisations through networks. Organisations were also invited to attend a consultation event. Elected members were also invited to these events. The events took place in the five areas during the first two weeks of September.

2.15 The report highlighted the framework by which grants would be deployed. It highlighted the importance of a balance between a consistent approach and enabling Area Committees priorities the resources towards achieving the best possible outcomes based on their local knowledge and perspectives.

2.16 A report was then taken to each Area Committee in September 2014 outlining the process and to enable the Area Committee to identify its priorities for Community Development Grants and Community Centre Core Cost Grants.

2.17 All five Area Committees opted to use their existing Grant Advisory Panels to consider the Expression of Interest. The Grant Advisory Groups then made recommendations for approval at Area Committee. This included both Community Centre Core Costs and Community Development Grants.

2.18 The five Area Committees have now made decisions on the allocation of community development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants and organisations involved have been notified of the decisions.

### **3 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 The following points cover key areas of learning from the grant process where problems have occurred and local solutions have been sought that are not necessarily consistent across the district but are worth noting for future commissioning processes.

## **Consultation events and timings**

3.2 Participants at the first consultation event that was held in Keighley suggested that the timeframe was too tight. It was suggested that organisations should not have to enter their Expressions of Interest until after the Area Committee had met – this would enable the Area Committees to set any specific priorities. No Area Committees chose to set any specific priorities.

3.3 Shipley Area Committee requested that the application process was left open for a further period to enable more groups to apply to the process.

## **Grant Advisory Groups**

3.3 All five Area Committees decided to deploy Grant Advisory Groups in supporting Area Committees to make their decisions. A high level of attention to detail was required in the process to ensure that robust decisions were made by Area Committees. Delegating to the Grant Advisory Group enabled elected Members to take the time they required to process the different options. Grant Advisory Groups do not currently have decision making powers and consequently the Grant Advisory Group had to refer back its recommendations to the Area Committee for approval.

3.4 Shipley Grant Advisory Group was unable to make a firm recommendation and therefore the Area Committee needed to process the options within the setting of the Area Committee. This may have contributed to the specific decision at Shipley Area Committee being called into the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Equality Impact**

3.5 Some of the organisations that had previously been funded to work with specific sectors of the wider community. This issue was raised at the Bradford West Area Committee, in relation to both African Caribbean Communities and Women.

## **Expression of Interest Forms against more specific submissions**

3.6 The Expression of Interest Forms were designed in a way to enable applicants to provide information on their suitability for a grant. As it was an Expression of Interest the option existing for Grant Advisory Group to request further details from organisations. This was taken up in the case of Bradford South. This process enabled a fair degree of flexibility.

## **Shipley Area Committee Call in**

3.7 A Member of the Shipley Area Committee called in the decision. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee debated the merits of the call in. The Committee ultimately decided that the most appropriate place to make the decision was in the Area Committee and not by either Corporate O&S or Full Council. Some Members expressed the view that Shipley Area Committee had not been given sufficient time and this had limited their options.

## **Complaints and disquiet about the Community Development and Core Cost commissioning process**

- 3.8 A number of concerns were expressed about aspects of the process in Bradford West. The second Bradford West Area Committee had a number of people attend who expressed their disquiet about the outcome of the process. Two organisations brought petitions to the meeting of the committee. One organisation later made an official complaint. The complainant believed that significant information had been withheld from elected members making recommendations within the Grant Advisory Group.

## **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 The allocation of funding through the grant processes outlined in this report will be within the amount agreed within the 2014-16 Council budget agreement. The agreements that cover 2015-17 in the second year are subject to the 2016-17 Council budget.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

### **Grant funding arrangements**

- 5.1 The allocation of funding has been in accordance with Council's practice on grant giving. The Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Grant is of an amount that would not normally be given in a grant. An exception was requested and agreed by the Assistant Director of Commissioning and Procurement due to specific circumstances.

### **Monitoring of grants**

- 5.2 Robust arrangements are in place to monitor outcomes from the grants. The monitoring in relation to Community Development and Community Centre Core Costs will be reported to Area Committees.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 There are no legal issues

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

See 3.3 above. As part of the grant agreements there will be an expectation that organisations work with all communities and groups and do not exclude people.

## **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None

## **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None

## **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

None

## **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

None

## **7.6 TRADE UNION**

None

## **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Devolving of community development should have a positive impact on Ward working

## **AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)**

**7.8** Community development will be better placed to contribute to Area Committee Action plans

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 None

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Audit and Governance Committee is asked to note the approach taken towards the allocation of voluntary sector funding within the Department of Environment and Sport

## **10. APPENDICES**

No Appendices

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

‘Commissioning of Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support’.  
(Document T) Report to the Council Executive on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

“Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre

Core Cost Grants to Area Committees” (Document N) report to the Council Executive on 22 July 2014.

“Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees”, (Document K) report to Keighley Area Committee on 11 September 2014.

‘Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees’ (Document N). Bradford East Area Committee 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014

“Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees” (Document R) report to the Bradford West Area Committee on 17 September 2014.

‘Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees’ (Document Y). Shipley Area Committee 24 September 2014.

Devolution of commissioning of Community Development and Community Centre Core Cost Grants to Area Committees’ (Document N). Bradford South Area Committee 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Allocation of Community Centre Core Cost Grants and Community Development Grants for 2015-17 (Document AH) Bradford South Area Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015

‘Devolution to Area Committees’ (Document AG) report to the Council Executive on 9 October 2012.

Devolution to Area Committees” (Document AG) 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012

“Methodology for Allocation of Devolved Service Resources to the Five Area Committees” (Document CE) report to the Council Executive on 16 April 2013. Report to Keighley Area Committee