

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Corporate Manager – Strong and Safe Communities	Report Number: JSC/07/16
To: Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date of meeting: 15 June 2016

GRANTS AND EXTERNAL FUNDING REVIEW PROJECT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview on the work of the Grants and External Funding Review Project to the end of April 2016 and provide an update on the emerging third phase in line with the Project Steering Board.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That, as part of the third phase of the Grants and External Funding Review Project we align our Revenue Grants procedures to match the Capital Grants including:

- All Revenue Recipients **directly** meeting our Councils Strategic Priorities and the new and emerging Strategies at local, county and national level. This currently includes the Suffolk Volunteering Strategy, the Military Covenant and the Suffolk Poverty Strategy

- 2.2 Priority work areas to be assigned to the new External Funding Communities Officer from July 2016 are recommended to be:

- Building proactive strategic relationships with our external funders to enable alignment to the Councils Strategic Priorities and meet the needs of our communities
- Focusing these relationships to key funding bodies including the Landfill Credits, BIG Lottery, the Suffolk Community Foundation and a minimum of 6 local Trusts and Foundations
- Researching and actively applying for external funding opportunities for our Councils including enabling partnership bids both internally and externally
- Setting up a Funding Partnership Group with our neighbouring District, Borough and County partners to maximise our revenue funding and support our Revenue Grant Recipients in order to manage potential changes in local authority monetary support

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 For 2016-2017 we have had a 10% reduction on our Revenue Grant Budget. We have managed this reduction through streamlining the awards being made. With the ongoing pressure on our finances throughout the next years we need to ensure we develop and maximise the external funding opportunities available for our Districts to reduce the overall reliance on our grant funding.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 The District Councils have a commitment to notify and update Revenue Grant recipients of any changes to funding 12 months in advance of any decisions being made. All current recipients of Revenue Grants 2015/2016 were notified in March 2016 of potential changes to funding support.

5. Risk Management

5.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Streamlining the Revenue Grant Programme from 2017 - 2020 will have a negative impact on the services and facilities provided by our current recipients	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Tapering the reduction of revenue funding, building on the Update Letter from March 2016* Robust External Funding Programme & promotion of this across all networks* Working with our external funders to shape and design criteria specifically for our localities needs at a strategic level* Provide ongoing opportunities for skills development on external funding within the Communities Team

6. Consultations

6.1 In 2015 a Task and Finish Group was set up to scope the work on our grants and develop the opportunity to ensure the current processes and practices in place are fit for purpose.

The Task and Finish Group includes Officers from the Communities, Business Improvement and Communications Teams internally and the Communities Manager from the Ipswich Borough Council.

The Task and Finish Group from the initial scoping have included the work on external funding and the importance to dovetail this into the Project.

The Project is undertaking a feedback exercise with current grant recipients to gather further information on our service and the impact of our work.

7. Equality Analysis

7.1 The original Grant Review Project objective was to ensure our grant scheme was delivered effectively, equitably and inclusively.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

8.1 As a Communities Team we work closely with our District, Borough and County partners and the work of the Grants & External Funding Review Project is shared, as appropriate, with our contacts. This also ties-in closely to any changes or reductions Districts, Boroughs and County are making to their future funding support.

For instance - the recent changes to the Suffolk County Council Locality Budgets and the reduction in the overall annual budget per Councillor. An awareness of this reduction is important for our work in encouraging and enabling our communities to access these monies for their projects and activities.

9. Links to Strategic Priorities

9.1 The Project is key to the impact and delivery of the Councils Strategic Priorities. This is particularly important for ensuring our communities our resilient, empowered and encouraged to find local solutions to local issues.

10. Key Information

10.1 The original Grant Review Project objective was to ensure our grant scheme was delivered effectively, equitably and inclusively and that it was fully aligned to the delivery of the Councils Strategic Priorities. Work has included:

- Ensuring we have in place a consistent process for administering our grant scheme including the qualifying criteria, application process, assessment procedures as well as effective monitoring and evaluation processes
- Re-designing the discretionary grants as 1. Emerging Needs and 2. New Initiatives to align to the purpose and criteria of the funds available
- Aligning and simplifying the budget allocation within the Revenue, Capital, Minor and Discretionary areas
- Reviewing all grant allocations and recipients to ensure they fit within our criteria and provide recommendations to maximise the funding available to create community resilience and capacity
- Encouraging and enabling our wider communities to secure external funding through the provision of support, information and activities which stimulate and empower people's skills, confidence and experience
- Capturing this information to record the impact and significance of external funding

- Researching the development of an outcome based approach for significant areas of spend, ensuring we align this with the wider County, Regional and National conversations, actions and funding opportunities

10.2 Grants are invaluable to groups and organisations working to maximise community benefit and those meeting our Refreshed Strategic Priorities. This is further developed with our offer of help, support and guidance when discussing and exploring project and organisational ideas and plans. It broadens our impact on communities to take in the development and building of skills, providing confidence in applying for additional and external funds and ensures applications being made for our communities are fit for purpose and can reflect evidence of need and outcome measures effectively.

Our structured Events and Activities over the last 2 years have reflected this drive to better inform and upskill our communities.

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