

GRANT AID COMMITTEE REMIT

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1. Purpose

1.1 To consider the role of the Grant Aid Committee.

2. Summary

2.1 In response to the Council's decision to establish a Grant Aid Committee, Officers have been working to determine the options for the role the Committee could fulfill.

2.2 The review has been conducted in the context of endeavouring to achieve strengthened relationships with voluntary sector partners.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Committee is recommended to:

(a) consider the options; and

(b) determine the most appropriate option for voluntary sector funding in the future.

4. **Background**

4.1 At its last meeting, the Committee considered a Member's question concerning the role of this Committee given its change in status, from Sub-Committee to Committee, made at the annual meeting of the Council. The Committee resolved:

- (a) that officers prepare a paper for the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 28 September 1999 or a special meeting, if appropriate, which addressed the comments of Members at the meeting on the implications of extending the Committee's role to encompass all applications to the Council for grants; and
- (b) that in preparing the paper, officers invite contributions from Members and the voluntary sector.

4.2 As a result Officers have consulted with Members, voluntary sector groups and other colleagues on a number of options for the role of the Committee these are detailed at **Annex A**.

5. **Issues and Choices**

Issues

5.1 The identified options raise a number of issues.

Funding of Voluntary Organisations

5.2 At reorganisation the process of funding the voluntary sector was sought to be simplified by drawing a distinction between those voluntary sector services which are contracted by individual committees and the wide range of town-wide and neighbourhood-based activities supported by Grant Aid.

5.3 Grant Aid to the voluntary and community sector is largely resourced, managed and developed through the Leisure, Youth and Community Division. Other grants are managed through Economic Development, Arts and Museums, Environment Directorate, and the Neighbourhood Directorate, the latter mainly supporting housing related organisations (attached at **Annex B**).

In addition the Corporate Policy Unit administer the Parish Partnership Fund.

5.4 Clearly, it could be argued that the combining of the Grant Aid budgets from across the Council would allow the Council to continue to support groups that it identifies as key to sustaining and supporting a robust voluntary sector in a coherent manner.

Focusing in Developing the Partnership with the Voluntary Sector

5.5 A broadening of the funding base for the Committee presents an opportunity to be central to the development of the partnership with the voluntary sector. In particular the Voluntary Sector Assembly, which reported previously to the External Partnerships Committee,

would enable the Committee to have a direct influence on the partnership. The report at Item X on this agenda provides some insight to the current work.

Modernising Local Government

- 5.6 The debate on Council structures raises a long-term issue regarding the relationship with the voluntary sector. The process of deciding applications has been very transparent and groups have welcomed the opportunity to listen and contribute to debates as well as make presentations to Members. A mechanism to continue this process will need to be established to maintain transparency and continue the level of trust that exists at the moment.

Choices

- 5.7 The choices available to the Committee appear at **Annex A**. Of these the most viable would appear to be one that extends to taking on all those funding arrangements across the Council that mirror Grant Aid arrangements in all but name.
- 5.8 The response to the consultation with the voluntary sector appears at **Annex C**. This is largely a mixed response but demonstrates some support for the broadening of the funding base and the developing of the Committee's relationship with the voluntary sector.

There has, at the time of writing, been no response from Members; any received subsequently will be reported to the Committee.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

There are a small number of annual grants awarded in support of Agenda 21 within the Environment Directorate.

6.2 Equalities

The broadening of the Committee's funding relationship will enable the Council to equitably treat all applications for funding received by the Council that fall outside of contracts/service level agreements issued by other Committees in pursuance of a Service objective.

6.3 Financial

The broadening of the Committee's financial base will enable it to take a holistic view of the voluntary sector if it has to re-prioritise its funding arrangements.

6.4 Legal

All groups currently funded are subject to Terms and Conditions of funding and are able to be supported under the terms of the Local Government Act.

The proposed change in activity would require a re-definition of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

There will still be a need to retain the current links that exist between current organisations and Council officers.

6.6 Cultural

Each organisation contributes to improving the cultural life of its clients and the community of Milton Keynes. This could be through the provision of health and fitness, advice and support, development of arts activities etc.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 Voluntary organisations have a key role as partners in realising the vision of Milton Keynes. They also have a central role to play in implementing the government's vision of a wider democratic process at the local level and are uniquely placed to assist the Council in reaching those groups least able to make their voices heard.

7.2 For a partnership between the Council and voluntary organisations to be effective identified support and funding issues need to be addressed.

Background Papers: None