

Agenda Item No: 5
Report To: Selection & Constitutional Review Committee
Date: 4 May 2010
Report Title: **Formation of a Grants Gateway Panel**
Report Author: Kim Harlow **Report Owner:** Mark Carty



Summary: This report relates to ABC's recent adoption of a new corporate policy for the Support and Funding of Voluntary and Community Organisations and the roll out of a Single Grants Gateway approach (min 460/040310 refers). It recommends changes to the membership of the Community Grants Panel and new terms of reference to allow extension of its remit to consider grants gateway allocations for 2011-2012 and onwards. Known as the Grants Gateway Panel, the Panel will retain responsibility for recommending Community Grants Fund allocations.

The Grants Gateway Panel will meet three times per year in May, October and January to consider Community Grants, and once per year starting September 2010 to consider Single Grants Gateway allocations for the following financial year.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: The funding policy applies to not-for-profit groups operating for the benefit of residents across the borough.

Recommendations: **The Committee is asked to recommend the new terms of reference to enable the formation of a Grants Gateway Panel.**

Policy Overview: ABC 5 yr business plan will direct funding priorities for the grants gateway.
There is a raft of national guidance to local authorities on funding and relationships with VCS. Please refer to the Policy itself for key national and local policy drivers.

Financial Implications: Ashford Borough Council currently provides in excess of £960k annual funding to approximately 155 different voluntary and community organisations across the Borough mostly through grants (including discretionary rate relief), some attached to funding and service level agreements.

The PAG supported future budget allocations to VCS funding in line with current totals, subject to our budget position and financial targets in our five year business plan.

Risk Assessment	All funding recipients were given formal written notice on 31 October 2008 that their funding may be at risk from 1.4.10. There is a potential risk for some ABC revenue funding recipients in moving to a Single Grants Gateway if they were not to satisfy the criteria and/or address our funding priorities.
Equalities Impact Assessment	The Policy and Single Grants Gateway will ensure equality of opportunity and that all applications for funding from VCOs are administered and considered equitably and transparently.
Exemption Clauses:	N/A
Background Papers:	<p>Policy for Funding & Support of Voluntary & Community Organisations & The Single Grants Gateway – Report to Exec 4 March 2010</p> <p>Review of Ashford Borough Council Funding to Voluntary and Community Organisations – Report to Exec 23 October 2008</p> <p>ZBB Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations – Report to PAG 1 October 2008</p> <p>Minutes of PAG task groups 1 (30.6.08) and 2 (18.8.08)</p> <p>Review of funding and support to voluntary and community organisations – Report to PAG 8 May 2008</p> <p>Update report to PAG 13 March 2008</p> <p>ZBB Introductory report to PAG 23 October 2007</p> <p>These papers are available to members online by logging on to the Agenda & Minutes system.</p>
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Formation of a Grants Gateway Panel

Purpose of the Report

1. This report recommends changes to the terms of reference of the Community Grants Panel to form the Grants Gateway Panel with immediate effect.

Background

2. The Single Grants Gateway is a model which co-ordinates various funding arrangements into a coherent corporate programme by channelling all applications from voluntary and community organisations (regardless of the service to which they relate) through a single point of entry and administration in the Council.
3. The grants gateway will allow us to accommodate a broader mix of formal funding arrangements in line with the findings of our PAG review (which identified we predominantly 'give' but rarely 'shop' or truly 'invest' for the future when we fund VCOs) such as a commissioning scheme, loans and emergency funding. In addition, it will enable us to consider reallocation or provision of funding to new priorities led by the Council's 5 year business plan, and to ensure we are making best use of resources and receiving maximum value for money.

Terms of Reference

4. The new terms of reference include some changes to the community grant panel's membership, extension to its remit and an additional yearly meeting dedicated to grants gateway applications. Known as the Grants Gateway Panel, the Panel will retain responsibility for the Community Grants Fund.
5. The Grants Gateway Panel will meet three times per year in May, October and January to consider Community Grants, and once per year starting September 2010 to consider Single Grants Gateway allocations for the following financial year. The Panel will recommend grants gateway allocations to the Executive for final decision.

Handling

6. Cultural Services has agreed to administer the grants gateway and will work with Heads of Service (as part of a Corporate Funding Team) to establish funding priorities from our 5 year business plan, shortlist bids for the Panel to consider, and monitor the impact of our funding arrangements.
7. Heads of Service will present shortlisted bids relating to their area of service and expertise to the Panel for their consideration.

Conclusion

8. Ashford Borough Council is facing serious financial challenges and it is increasingly necessary to ensure that we target our resources to best effect. The single grants gateway provides a framework through which we can be confident that our funding relationship with the voluntary and community sector is transparent and productive, our funding arrangements can deliver

additional value in the achievement of our corporate priorities, and that our internal processes inspire corporate 'ownership' and accountability.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Cllr Michael Cloughton – “This seems eminently sensible and the right way to proceed for the future.

So I fully support the recommendation.”

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Grants Gateway Panel

Membership

4 members including Portfolio Holder for Resource Management and Control and 4 external representatives (2 from Ashford Community Network Board, 1 from Active Ashford Board and 1 from Ashford Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Only members or substitute members, and council officers are permitted to attend meetings, together with appropriate ward members and applicants, with the consent of the Chairman.

Terms of Reference

Community Grants Fund

To consider recommendations from the Head of Cultural & Project Services on the allocation of capital grants over £1,000 and up to £10,000.

Each application to be assessed by the Panel in terms of the Council's funding priorities, budget position, the stated benefits of the project, its social value, value for money and taking account of the recommendation of the Head of Cultural & Project Services.

The Head of Cultural and Projects Services has delegated powers to determine such grants.

To meet three times per financial year in May, October and January to consider shortlisted applications from rounds closing in March, August and November respectively.

Grants Gateway

To consider recommendations from the Corporate Funding Team on the allocation of all Ashford Borough Council funding to voluntary and community organisations* other than capital grants, in line with the Council's Policy for Funding and Support of Voluntary and Community Organisations.

Each application to be assessed by the Panel in terms of

- the Council's funding priorities and budget position
- the direct benefits and any wider/social benefits of the project or service
- value for money and
- the views and recommendations of the Corporate Funding Team.

The Executive committee has power to determine such allocations as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

To meet once per financial year in September.

Notes

All applications submitted for the panel's consideration will have already been judged to meet the following eligibility criteria (and any additional entry criteria for the specific scheme i.e. NNDR, Community Grants Fund) in order to pass through the gateway.

Eligibility Criteria for Single Grants Gateway (inc Community Grants Fund)

- Not-for-profit organisations* with either charitable status OR a constitution with a formally appointed management committee OR a parish council (not NNDR). No individuals, public sector or private business.
- Non-political
- Operating in Ashford borough and/or serving borough residents.
- Service or project open to any resident in the borough (unless clear, non-financial justification for targeting or prioritising client group)
- Not for projects already started or completed, or to replace funds already spent
- Not for mainstream public services eg health, education provision; or religious instruction
- Bank or Building Society account in the organisation's name
- Accounts either audited or signed by Chair or Treasurer OR if new organisation less than a year old, 12 month cash flow forecast and balance sheet to date signed by Chair or Treasurer.
- No more than 12 months' running costs in unrestricted/free reserves.
- Must have relevant safeguards, insurances and policies in place i.e public liability insurance, health and safety, child protection policy.

Kim Harlow
19 April 2010

* as defined in the Policy for Funding & Support of Voluntary & Community Organisations