

REVIEW OF COUNCIL SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Report By: Director of Policy and Community

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To seek Members views on the scope of the review of the Voluntary Sector.

Considerations

2. Some work was undertaken at the end of 2001 to establish the extent of the Council's support to the voluntary sector; as to review just one grant scheme in isolation would be unproductive. The support given encompasses the Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme, Community Buildings Grants Scheme, childcare grants, a variety of Service Agreements, accommodation provision, NNDR relief, payroll facilities and occasional one-off grants from within service budgets. In addition there are opportunities to support volunteering within the county both through publicity of volunteering opportunities and supporting council employees in becoming active volunteers.
3. Following the Policy & Community Directorate restructuring in 2002, responsibility for management and operation of the Voluntary Sector Grants scheme has transferred to the Local Development Team, and it is now proposed to progress the review. As Voluntary Sector Grant decisions for the 2003/04 financial year have to be made before the end of March to give applicants some financial planning time, it has been necessary to operate the Scheme under existing arrangements, making only a few basic amendments to the application form, and the assessment form. However, it is proposed that any recommendations arising from the review be implemented for 2004/05.

4. Scope

The review will seek to:

- Clarify the reasons for supporting the voluntary sector
- Clarify the distinction between grants and payments for services
- Produce a strategic funding document that clearly identifies the relative priorities of the services/strategies the council wishes to support through this service
- Strengthen monitoring arrangements
- Identify ways in which leverage can be maximised within the funding framework

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- Explore the scope/demand for provision of support services at marginal cost
- Clarification of the respective roles of development support, assessment and decision-making
- Establish clear and accessible application, assessment, decision-making and monitoring processes
- Ensure the involvement of the voluntary sector in decision making (ie the establishment of criteria, procedures, policies and priorities)
- Ensure a consistent approach towards supporting the voluntary sector across the Council

5. The Review Team is:

Social and Economic Development Scrutiny: Cllr Guthrie, Cllr Stockton
Voluntary Sector Grants Panel: Cllr Rees Mills
Local Development Team: Local Development Manager, Penny Jones
Local Development Admin Support & Grants Assist, Hannah McSherry
Community Development Officer, Annie Brookes
Re-generation Coordinator, Glyn West
Parish Liaison & Local Development Officer, Dorothy Coleman
Reps from relevant Herefordshire Plan (Ambition Groups)
Voluntary Sector Reps: (To be advised)
Audit/Treasurers: Principal Audit Manager, Tony Ford
Social Services: Project Manager, Lesley Libetta

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Members' views are requested.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None