

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Executive on Monday 8th August 2022

Review of Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations

Report of the Chair of Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee

Classification	This report is Public
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PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To present to Executive the completed report for the recent Review of Voluntary & community Sector Grant Allocations.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 The Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Review of Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations, as part of the 2021-22 Work Programme.
- 1.2 The suggestion came direct from the Executive and Partnerships Team and Members agreed to consider this alongside other work carried over from the previous year.
- 1.3 The last review of the programme took place in 2013/14. As such the service felt it was timely to review the whole process to ensure it is current; meets the needs of the sector; meets the ambitions of the Council; and if the allocation to any of these organisations needs to alter, given the current climate and anticipated needs emerging in our communities. It was noted that to-date, all organisations have provided an excellent service and incredible value for money based on the evaluation of investments.
- 1.4 Within the process of the review, the Committee has taken into account the potential impact of any changes to the current scheme in terms of the impact on the sector. It is essential as stated in section 1 that the Council complies with its Best Value Duty when progressing changes to current policies and procedures in terms of grant allocations to the sector. This is addressed further in section 5.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

2.1 The aim of the review was:

- To ensure the VCS Grant Allocation Programme remains fit for purpose, value for money, and sustainable.

2.2 The objectives agreed were:

- Review existing SLAs and allocations, including how they support delivery of the current Council Ambitions.
- Analysis of integration of VCS Grant Programme with additional VCS contracts.
- Analysis of BDC Grant Allocation against other funding received
- Assessment of existing performance monitoring – is the SROI method the best approach

2.3 The key issues identified for investigation were as follows:

- The existing scheme is not a result of open commissioning of providers to deliver outcomes on behalf of the Council.
- Lack of change in grant recipients – there has been no recent assessment of whether the current amounts allocated are still adequate and that the organisation that the Council is engaging with are best placed to meet our needs.
- Value for money of existing grant levels and consideration of any adjustments
- Potential for duplication/double funding
- Gaps in delivery as a result of the pandemic that cannot be addressed through core service delivery or existing VCS Grants.

2.4 The Committee met on six occasions in total and sought evidence by way of:

- Internal enquiries to establish existing procedures used by the Partnerships Team and analysis of recent monitoring reports;
- External enquiry to establish approaches to VCS Grant Allocations across East Midlands authorities. This was supplemented by additional web-based research of neighbouring authorities schemes due to low response rate;
- Survey of Parish Councils to establish which had grants schemes in place and whether any duplication could be identified
- Brief survey with current recipients assessing how they meet the Councils Ambitions and Priorities.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The Committee have put together twelve recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in ensuring grant allocations to the voluntary and community sector are transparent; have clear outcomes and monitoring arrangements and meet the current needs of the Council and local residents.

3.2 The key findings arising from the review are:

- The review has proved both timely and invaluable in identifying potential duplication and assessing the advantages/disadvantages of different allocation processes.
- A refreshed approach to centralising grant allocations will ensure better communication between service areas and eliminate duplication.
- That the use of SROI as an evaluation tool gives the Council a clear indication of value for money on the investment made. While our existing mechanism of calculating this via the HACT model achieves this, it is clear that evaluation tools have significantly advanced and it is an appropriate juncture for the Council to look to use a more advanced evaluation tool.
- That existing reporting mechanisms are sufficient and will be further strengthened by the ability to create more detailed evaluation reports using the new software.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Given the length of time since the previous review of grant allocations and the increased pressures on Council finances, the option to not review current processes and allocations is unsustainable.
- 4.2 Executive could choose not to endorse the recommendations of the review, where they feel the course of action recommended is beyond the delivery capacity of the Authority.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Executive endorses the recommendations of the review outlined in section 2 of the attached report.
2. That for recommendations approved by Executive, monitoring by Committee takes place over a twelve month period via the PERFORM system with an update report to Committee at the end of the monitoring period.

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

None from this report. Clarification of the revised allocation process and any new grant allocations for 2023/24 will be presented in a future report.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

In carrying out scrutiny reviews the Council is exercising its scrutiny powers as laid out in s.21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation which added/amended these powers e.g. the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Council has a statutory duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

There are no staffing implications from this report.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	None
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes Details: Relevant Service Managers and Portfolio Holder engaged during the review process.

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.

The review supports the Corporate Ambition of 'Customers' and the Priorities of 'Actively engaging with partners to benefit our customers' and 'Promoting equality and diversity and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people', but does not link directly to any Corporate Targets.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
5.1	Review of VCS Grants FINAL

Background Papers

(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).

Please contact Scrutiny & Elections Officer where further information is required.