

21 November 2017	ITEM: 6
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Voluntary Sector Corporate Grants Programme	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Natalie Warren, Community Development and Equalities Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham, Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Community Development	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Thurrock's Voluntary Sector Corporate Grants Programme is an established and recognised source of funding for key, strategic voluntary sector partners supporting communities in Thurrock. The current programme ends on 31st March 2018.

In 2016/17 this programme, totalling just over £ 300k, levered in a further £1.4m into Thurrock as a result of external and match funding.

This report considers the process for administering the grants programme from March 2018 and seeks comments on the proposal to continue the agreement for Thurrock CVS to administer the programme and maintain the existing split of funding - 80% for existing groups and 20% for new groups.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposal to continue the administration of the Voluntary Sector Corporate Grants Programme with Thurrock CVS from April 2018 – March 2021 with the option to extend by one year if required.**
- 1.2 **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposed process and criteria set out in Section 3.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council has supported a Voluntary Sector Grants Programme for many years. Criteria for the programme has reflected Council priorities, and funds have provided core support to a number of organisations whose work supports a diverse range of communities across Thurrock. Whilst some organisations work across a wider geographical area, funds awarded are solely to support work carried out in Thurrock.
- 2.2 In April 2013, the Joint Strategic Forum between Thurrock Council and the voluntary sector considered a number of options to modernise how the grants programme operated. A number of options were considered, and Cabinet agreed to pass administration of the fund to Thurrock CVS. This required CVS to ring fence 80% of the fund to those currently in receipt of funding and to open the remaining 20% to pump prime an annual programme to both Thurrock wide organisations and neighbourhood based organisations. A grants panel was established which included representation from Thurrock CVS, Thurrock Council including Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for communities, and an independent member without knowledge or experience of the applicant organisations. This role has been fulfilled by the Chief Officer of Chelmsford CVS.
- 2.3 In 2017/18, the budget provided by Council is £332,600. The budget has been subject to savings over recent years. Savings proposals in July 2014 included a £75,000 saving to 2016/17 and £75,000 saving in 2017/18. Reaction from the sector, including an alternative budget, resulted in a specially convened meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Chairs to consider the proposals. Cabinet subsequently agreed to reduce the saving in 2017/18 to £25,000.
- 2.4 Thurrock Council is a signatory to the Thurrock Joint Compact which sets out agreed principles for working with the voluntary, community and faith sector. We recognise that strong partnerships with the sector will benefit Thurrock residents as the sector delivers a range of activities, services, support mechanisms and engagement opportunities that compliment Council priorities, and very often, support people to remain independent of Council services therefore managing demand. The term 'voluntary sector' comes from the recognition that community services emerge when people choose to take local action. Whilst unpaid volunteers are very often a large resource within the sector, many organisations do require a paid staff team and some enter into contracts to support service delivery. The sector is committed to democratic principles of engagement and activity is underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity.
- 2.5 Nationally, the activities and services provided within the voluntary, community and faith sector are increasingly recognised as effective support services for local communities. This has resulted in an increase on the pressure on services within the voluntary sector, with increased expectations and referrals to local community based organisations which often have limited resources or infrastructure to meet the need presented locally. The Voluntary

Sector Grants Programme has therefore sought to build capacity and develop a strong and thriving sector in Thurrock.

- 2.6 As grant funding opportunities have decreased, the Council and sector have sought to encourage new initiatives to grow local funding and resource opportunities. There are several good examples such as the ‘Small Sparks Scheme’ - which helps support community ideas to make a small improvement by match funding volunteer time with up to £250. Another example is GiFT - Give it for Thurrock - a partnership between local business, charities and the statutory sector to encourage giving in Thurrock – be this funds, time, resources, equipment etc. GiFT was launched in September 2017 and aims to provide a framework whereby local businesses can work aside communities and public agencies to benefit agreed priorities. Small donations or gifts of time or products can be used to help fundraising activities as well as events that bring people together to meet social outcomes. By creating a call to action with specific requests, it is envisaged that companies and communities will be better able to contribute to making a difference across Thurrock.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 A public consultation was held June 14th – July 25th 2017 to seek views on the future administration of the fund. A copy of the consultation report is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation suggested three options regarding future administration:

Option 1 – Continue to administer via CVS with recommendations made by a grants panel, including Thurrock Council representatives. 91.84% of responses to the consultation supported this option.

Option 2 – Return administration to Thurrock Council – 2.04% of responses supported this option

Option 3 – Other, for example, use an external fund manager – ideas were requested through the consultation. 6.12% supported this option.

- 3.2 This report supports continuing the administration of the grants programme through Thurrock CVS. There are two direct benefits related to administering grants through CVS. The first is that CVS is the established infrastructure organisation supporting the voluntary, community and faith sector to develop in Thurrock. It has an extensive data base and can promote grant opportunities across the borough to a wide range of organisations. Secondly, as an infrastructure organisation, CVS is well placed to offer developmental support to organisations based on their applications. Often, the confidence gained by securing a small grant can help an organisation apply for larger, external grants or develop income streams.
- 3.3 A further benefit is that CVS does not charge a management fee for this function. CVS sees this role as a function which helps to deliver its core

objectives as an infrastructure support organisation. Council has previously explored using a third party grant provider to manage funding applications. This arrangement would result in a cost, reducing the amount available to organisations. Taking the funds out of the borough could also impact on the confidence of organisations to apply.

- 3.4 In supporting the administration of the grants programme, CVS is required to convene a grants panel. Currently, invitations to the grants panel include:
 - 2 x Thurrock CVS (Chair and Chief Executive Officer)
 - Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder
 - Shadow Public Protection and Communities Portfolio Holder
 - Community Development and Equalities Manager, Thurrock Council
 - Independent member from outside Thurrock with experience of grant funding – this role has up to now been supported by the Chief Officer of Chelmsford CVS.
- 3.5 In addition, where there is an opportunity for funders to invest into the programme and use the process to invite bids, the relevant fund holder is invited to join the panel. An example of this is in 2017/18 when Public Health invested £20,000 to support applications which helped to support weight management.
- 3.6 As part of the administration of grants, CVS issues Grant Funding Agreements to confirm the amount and performance expectations of the grant. This enables monitoring against spend. Poor performance is initially supported by CVS with any decisions about changes to funding agreements made in agreement with the panel. Overall performance is very good, and monitoring data to date from the main three year grants programme in 2016/17 shows:
 - £1.4m was levered into Thurrock through funding sources external to the Borough as a result of the Council's investment into three year grants. Sources for external funding include the Big Lottery, Esme Fairbairn Foundation, Essex County Council and the Home Office.
 - A further £1m was earned through these organisations either through charges, contracts or direct fundraising - including funds raised in Borough.
 - The overall funds raised result in a return on investment of £10.01 for every £1 invested by the Council.
 - Over 2,000 volunteers were involved, contributing almost 43,000 hours equivalent to £482,445 in kind support.
- 3.7 Future monitoring will aim to reflect the impact of the investment to Thurrock residents by quantifying the equivalent service outcome to local residents – for example, the number of young people supported or the number of counselling sessions supported, depending on the type of grant.
- 3.8 If the proposal for CVS to support administration of the fund is supported, the CVS would not want to be in a position where it had to compete against the wider sector to secure its own grant. In addition, security for CVS in this

period would need to be assured so that CVS could agree to the administration of the grants panel including the required resources. It is recommended that the grant to CVS is frozen for the three year period at the current value - £70,693.

- 3.9 It is proposed to continue to ring-fence 80% of the fund (£266,080) to existing organisations in receipt of a three year grant. This is to ensure core capacity and sustainability of key organisations providing bespoke services in Thurrock. Existing grant values, as well as key functions, are displayed in the table below.
- 3.10 20% (£66,520) will be available for small grants made in year. The value of each grant will be capped at £4000 with a requirement for each applicant to raise 10% of the value through fundraising means (e.g. Community Chest ticket sales).
- 3.11 All grants must reflect council priorities. Additional criteria may be included if more specific funding is available to award through the adopted process. In addition, all grant recipients will be expected to recognise the funds awarded by Thurrock Council through any promotion or activities supported in the local community.
- 3.12 Council issues grants through various programmes, and to support a range of initiatives in the voluntary sector. The Community Environmental Development Fund and Adult Social Care Grants are two examples of grant programmes with defined criteria and an application process. Some grants are issued to support specific strands of work. For example, the Citizens Advice Thurrock currently receives £50,000 to support its core work in Thurrock. We propose to move this particular budget into the voluntary sector grants budget and invite Citizens Advice Thurrock as one of the named organisations to bid into the ring-fenced amount. Citizens Advice Thurrock would need to apply for a grant within this ring-fenced budget which may increase or decrease depending on the applications and decisions made. Citizens Advice Thurrock would receive a secure amount for three years following the process, providing some security for their business planning and fundraising strategy.
- 3.13 If the above proposals are carried, the overall grants budget would therefore increase from £332,600 to £382,600 with £316,080 (80% of the original grant plus £50,000 CAB grant) ring fenced to organisations in receipt of three year grants. The grant to CVS would be frozen at £70,693, making £245,387 available for ring fenced applications.

Organisation	Current term	Current core grant P/A £	Proposal
Thurrock CVS – Community Voluntary Service supporting the development of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations that serve Thurrock residents via voluntary services, activities, clubs, events etc. The grant is used towards the core costs of providing a resource centre, infrastructure support such as training and advice, and strategic leadership across the sector.	3 year	70,693	Freeze amount with GFA agreed direct with Council
South Essex Rape & Incest Crisis Centre – Specialist, free services to any individual who has or is experiencing any form of sexual violence. The grant is used to support the core costs of running the organisation including accommodation, staff and administration, and supporting strategic work to tackle sexual violence in Thurrock.	3 year	63,443	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Ngage – now part of Thurrock CVS, ngage runs a Volunteer Centre, supporting people to find suitable volunteer roles, and helping charities to recruit. This includes Time Banking and employee volunteering. The grant covers core costs including administration, rent, communication costs, as well as promoting volunteering across Thurrock.	3 year	52,566	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Citizens Advice Thurrock – offers up-to-date and independent information and advice on many topics, including: debt, benefits, housing, discrimination, employment, immigration and other problems.	1 year	50,000	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget and extend grant term to three years.
Thurrock Open Door – Open Door works with young and vulnerable people, helping them overcome their barriers and achieve their potential through a number of services including schools outreach, housing support, counselling services, mentoring and missing children. The grant supports the core costs of the charity including staff, administration and accommodation.	3 year	38,066	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget

Organisation	Current term	Current core grant P/A £	Proposal
Thurrock Play Network – TPN provides advice, support and resources for play and recreation in the community. They operate a recycling scheme, diverting waste for play, and a toy library as well as advice and support for play workers, child minders, pre-schools etc. The grant supports the core cost of the charity including accommodation, staff and administration.	3 year	33,171	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Thurrock District Scout Council – Supporting 1700 members across 20 scout groups in Thurrock including Explorer Scouts, a scout network and active Support Units. The grant supports units across the borough via an application process which sets out local need.	3 year	16,722	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Thurrock Arts Council – an umbrella organisation supporting arts in Thurrock. The grant is used to support members across the borough via an application process which sets out the requirement for grant support which may include offsetting the cost of productions, including those at the Thameside Theatre.	3 year	10,876	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Thurrock Sports Council – Supporting the development of sports and local clubs and individuals in Thurrock. The grant is used to assist members across the borough via an application process which sets out the requirement for specific grant support.	3 year	6,888	Ask to apply to ring fenced budget
Total currently funded to organisations that can apply for a three year grant		£342,425	
Amount ring fenced for three year grants		£316,080	
Amount ring fenced for applications to the three year grants budget (minus direct CVS grant amount £70,693)		£245,387	

Organisation	Current term	Current core grant P/A £	Proposal
Small grants in year (2018/19) Up to £4000 with a minimum 10% contribution	1 year	£66,520	Panel will assess 2018/19.

- 3.14 Grants are managed separately through Grant Funding Agreements. Grant Funding Agreements set out the expectations and constraints of the use of the grant, and the timeframes in which the grant can be used. Grant Funding Agreements also set out the performance expectations of the grant including quantifiable data (number and profile of users, nature of enquiries, etc.) as well as qualitative data (how people feel as a result of an intervention for example).
- 3.15 Grant Funding Agreements from the voluntary sector grants programme are considered by the Legal Department and signed by the relevant Head of Service and organisation in receipt of a grant prior to funds being released. If the proposal in this paper proceeds, two Grant Funding Agreements will be issued by the Council to Thurrock CVS. The first will inform the grant expectations of the direct grant to CVS of £70,693. The second will cover the remaining budget (£311,907 assuming the inclusion of the Citizens Advice Thurrock budget is agreed) – this will confirm the expectations of the Council in administering the grants process including individual performance management of grants, with regular management meetings with Thurrock Council and Thurrock CVS.
- 3.16 The final paper to Cabinet will seek delegated authority for new funding agreements from 2018 – 2021 to be agreed by the Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods who will be a member of the Grants Panel convened by Thurrock CVS.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendations are considered to offer Council best value, stability for key organisations in Thurrock and investment opportunities for new initiatives.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A consultation has been carried out to consider the recommendation and future process. The consultation results and overarching principles set out in this paper have been shared with the Joint Strategic Forum between the Council and Voluntary Sector. Further comment is welcomed from Overview and Scrutiny.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 Supporting a strong third sector has the potential to support all priorities, in particular 'To Build Pride, Responsibility and Respect'.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**
Management Accountant

This report sets out the approach towards the allocation of grant funding, the level of which is set as part of the annual budget setting process.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Safeguarding

Whilst the Council does not have any legal obligation or statutory duty to provide funding to the voluntary sector, Local Authorities do have the powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

Voluntary, community and faith sector organisations play a vital role in community engagement and meeting local need. This is especially so with respect to underrepresented and vulnerable communities, but the sector also has a positive impact across sports, arts, heritage and environment. Positive engagement with the sector supports our equality duties with respect to building cohesive communities. A Community Equality Impact Assessment will be completed against the final criteria.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Cabinet Report Voluntary Sector Grants Programme 5 June 2013 Item 14 01104211

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Consultation report.

Report Author:

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