

13 December 2017

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Cabinet

Voluntary Sector Grants Programme: Appendix 1 Consultation Feedback (August 2017)

A public consultation was held between 14th June 2017- 25th July 2017 seeking views on the future administration of the Voluntary Sector Grants Programme.

Feedback from the consultation was designed to inform options relating to the administration of the fund including the grant split for funds assigned to cover core infrastructure organisation grants (currently 80%) and grants available to smaller organisations (currently 20%).

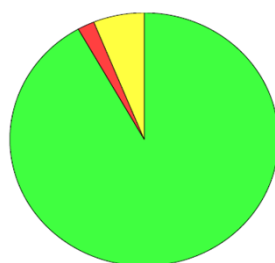
The following report provides an overview of consultees feedback to the Council in relation to these points specifically culminating in the recommended option set out in the main report (to which this document is an appendice). Additional feedback in relation to the Giving for Thurrock (GiFT) initiative, Thurrock Joint Compact, Social Values Framework and Commissioning, Procurement and Grant Funding Strategy with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector is also summarised.

Consultees

Of the **49** respondents to the survey, **44** noted their response either as a local resident, partner agency or representative from the voluntary sector.

15 noted they had received a Voluntary Sector Development Fund (VSDF) grant, whilst **28** hadn't and **6** were uncertain.

Grant administration options



	% Total	% Answer	Count
Option 1: Continue to administer via CVS	91.84%	91.84%	45
Option 2: Return administration to Thurrock Council	2.04%	2.04%	1
Option 3: Other	6.12%	6.12%	3
Total	100.00%	100.00%	49

14 provided feedback in relation to ongoing administration by Thurrock CVS their comments included:

- ❖ *'The voluntary sector is well placed to evaluate grant bids'*
- ❖ *'Option 2 and 3 would most likely involve more administration'*
- ❖ *'I think CVS is the best fit for the administration of these grants because of their understanding of the Vol and com sector'*
- ❖ *'Needs to be arms-length from the Council'*
- ❖ *'Provides ideal focus for the voluntary sector'*
- ❖ *'Thurrock CVS is more aware of Thurrock Voluntary sector organisations than the council or any other external organisation. Thurrock cvs have managed the development fund well'*
- ❖ *'It is important to assess the value of the volunteers in an objective manner and be able to assess the varying value of different kinds of volunteers in the community'*
- ❖ *'CVS work endlessly in the voluntary sector'*
- ❖ *'The CVS are in touch with local charities and have a good idea of the support available locally'*

Of the 3 that suggested 'other' means for administering the grant, their feedback was as follows:

- ❖ *'Help set up an independent organisation that does not have a vested interest in using the money for its own or subsidiary or members projects'*
- ❖ *'Voluntary sector organisations'*
- ❖ *'Some other neutral organisation, which has a wide range of community groups' interests at heart'*

13 additional responses were received relating to the rationale for the option they selected regardless of whether it was Option A, B or C, suggesting:

- ❖ *'These grants should be open to all voluntary sector groups, including Christian charities'*
- ❖ *'There should be a range of levels to apply for'*
- ❖ *'It has been very helpful to have an agreement to receive grant over a three year period to enable advance planning'*
- ❖ *'The forms were easy to complete and a quick response was given on both occasions'*
- ❖ *'Application a bit long and complicated'*
- ❖ *'Support needed for new groups in understanding data returns process, etc'*
- ❖ *'Gathering an expert opinion in the relevant field of the grant would be useful in assessing its value'*

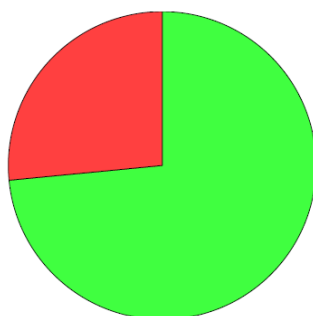
Promotion of grants programme

11 comments were received in relation to the promotion of the Voluntary Sector Development Fund, highlighting:

- ❖ *'Opportunities should be promoted as widely as possible within the Borough – they should be sent out to all voluntary sector organisations'*
- ❖ *'Good publicity from the CVS'*
- ❖ *'They do not always get publicised in advance, that would be helpful in financial planning for the years ahead'*
- ❖ *'I feel the advertising and advice is focussed for members of CVS'*
- ❖ *'More should be done to promote it – the kind of things it can support'*

Preferred option for grant split

36 consultees were keen to maintain the 80/20 split in grants whilst 13 preferred to consider an alternative option.



	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Option 1: Retain the existing 80/20 split in grants	73.47%	73.47%	36
■ Option 2: Consider an alternative ratio	26.53%	26.53%	13
Total	100.00%	100.00%	49

A sample of the comments received to inform the consultees selected choice is as follows:

- *'50/50. The current ratio penalises smaller organisations in the area which need funding to start and grow'*
- *'60/40'*
- *'I think an alternative ratio should be explored which may mean offering grants of three years to support smaller organisations which would help with their sustainability'*
- *'Some of the larger bodies mentioned can get funding from national sources denied to small(er) local bodies'*
- *'This all sounds like doing the same thing'*
- *'Why ringfence those that are existing takers – not the most meritorious'*

Additional suggestions included:

- *‘Maybe consider a further year role over option for some of the smaller groups if they achieve outcomes so that there is an incentive to achieve and continuity for the community, also maybe a separate category for new innovative ideas’*
- *‘If 80/20 has worked, then to keep it simple it would probably be best to continue’*
- *‘Core funding needs to be recognised for organisations that run services within Thurrock’*
- *‘Grants are vital to the voluntary sector, providing grants in this way is good practice and should be retained. Core grants should be ring-fenced under the development fund’*

Additional feedback

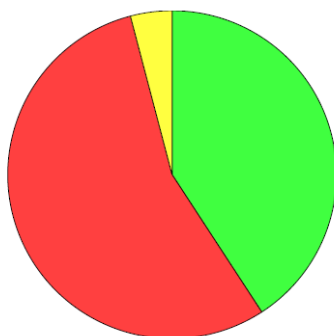
Additional survey questions sought consultees thoughts in relation to:

- ❖ awareness of the Giving for Thurrock (GiFT) campaign
- ❖ additional ideas to encourage local giving
- ❖ ideas for raising unrestricted funds for the community and voluntary sector or community projects
- ❖ the principles of the Thurrock Joint Compact, and,
- ❖ the implementation of the Council’s Social Values Framework and Commissioning Procurement and Grant Funding Strategy with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS).

This final section of this appendice provides an overview of responses including a sample of comments where they have been received.

❖ Awareness of the Giving for Thurrock (GiFT) campaign

Over half (**29**) of those that responded to this question had either not heard about giving for Thurrock or were uncertain, whereas **20** had heard of the initiative.



	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Yes	40.82%	40.82%	20
■ No	55.10%	55.10%	27
■ Unsure	4.08%	4.08%	2
Total	100.00%	100.00%	49

❖ **Additional ideas to encourage local giving**

9 suggestions were received for the purpose of increasing local giving. These incorporated the use of the Council's website for the purpose of direct donations through to reward systems for volunteers. Specific comments received are now set out:

- *'Add a 'Donate Now' button to Thurrock.gov pages with reference to giving to specific voluntary sector groups'*
- *'Expos promoting ALL voluntary sector organisations operating in the borough'*
- *'Bartering time or resources with the Council itself, so that the community gets a payback direct for the time and money it saves the Council; this could take the form of public works at weekends, support with local events'*
- *'Better reward system where volunteers can work towards achievements or like blood donor scheme bronze, silver, gold and get seeds such as pin badge or rose bowl'*
- *'Time credits are a good way to encourage people as they get access to tickets, freebies, etc'*
- *'Perhaps going into schools to encourage volunteering from a younger age. More events like the supper evenings'*
- *'I think there are volunteers out there, it's just making it known what opportunities are available'*
- *'We would be interested in a sharing scheme of ways to raise funds for our group. What are the successes of other groups for instance?'*
- *'Events such as, quiz nights, dances and fun community get togethers work better than sponsorships. Crowd funding for a particular piece of equipment can generate large sums'*

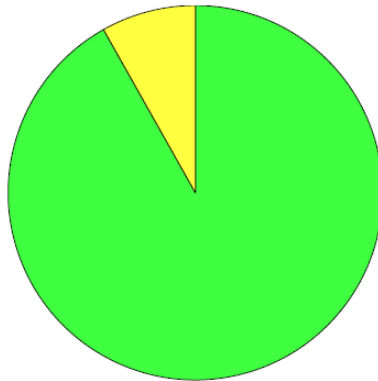
❖ **Ideas for raising unrestricted funds for the community and voluntary sector or community projects**

7 consultees had ideas relating to the creation of an unrestricted fund as follows:

- *'Add a 'Donate Now' button to Thurrock.gov pages with reference to giving to specific voluntary sector groups'*
- *'"Private sector" events such as the Orsett Show could provide a source of funding out of surplus funds. S106/CIL monies should be put into a central Trust Fund which is available to the voluntary sector'*
- *'More advocacy from Thurrock to trusts and foundations – support companies to set up local grant funds administered by CVS, use influence to develop major donors to give to projects in the borough. Tell Thurrock's story better'*
- *'I think it is very important to encourage the anti-obesity program as this is an investment in the future which takes the burden off of other nationally funded organisations (NHS)'*
- *'Entertainment fundraising events, using the college, Opera House and Thameside Theatre'*
- *'Some projects need to be unrestricted, due to the need of facilitation among certain groups of people'*

❖ The principles of the Thurrock Joint Compact

Most individuals agreed with the principles set out in the Thurrock Joint Compact.



	% Total	% Answer	Count
Yes	91.84%	91.84%	45
No	0.00%	0.00%	0
Unsure	8.16%	8.16%	4
Total	100.00%	100.00%	49

5 consultees felt that new principles should be considered with 4 sharing their comments as follows:

- *'Grant funding of the voluntary (sector) should not eclipse the statutory duties of local and central government and should not seek to replace it'*
- *'These principles are just waffle. Try to find something meaningful'*
- *'I think 'accountability' should be an integral part of any agreement on funding otherwise the money could just be wasted'*
- *'Whether or not a grant is an investment in the future or not'*

Other reflections included:

- *'Should be updated and revised to encompass and accommodate all groups not now included specifically'*
- *'More emphasis should be placed on the impact of faith in the process'*
- *'I wonder if number 3 should be changed to reflect the community involvement rather than for?'*
- *'How are funds made available to the Faith Sector?'*
- *'Ineffective and not upheld by Thurrock Council, but when challenged through CVS, people are told not to challenge or criticise it'*
- *'This document seems to only be in effect between council and larger voluntary organisations. Smaller independent groups struggle to challenge it'*
- *'All Thurrock statutory organisations need to adhere to the Thurrock Compact, this should also apply to Essex wide statutory organisations who have involvement in Thurrock e.g. Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Mental Health Trusts, etc.'*
- *'Not sure what is behind the principles in practice'*

❖ **Implementation of the Council’s Social Values Framework and Commissioning Procurement and Grant Funding Strategy with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS).**

16 individuals shared their thoughts on the implementation of the Social Values Framework and strategy. Comments were wide ranging though tended to focus on the need to ensure fair competition for smaller local organisations to compete in a clear and proportionate commissioning process with training and information relating to social value an essential for the community, voluntary and faith sector. A sample of the comments received is now detailed:

- *‘Good emphasis on local knowledge, networks. Benchmarking/market research against other organisations to understand what they offer and at what price to understand the competition. Presentation/training’*
- *‘This sounds like you are just trying to save money’*
- *‘More support is needed for local community sector organisations to apply for commissions’*
- *‘Simplify the tender process’*
- *‘Clearer guidelines on the tendering process and support pre-interview stage would help smaller organisations who seem to lose out to larger organisations usually on price. Perhaps smaller pots of commissioning lots rather than awarding large contracts to one organisation’*
- *‘A conference that organisations can attend to discover more information’*
- *‘Local training and workshops held at convenient times other than 8:30am’*
- *‘Full cost recovery is a vital component of grants and tenders; Thurrock Council does not uniformly adhere to this principle. The need for Proportionate monitoring to enable organisations to bid’*
- *‘Onerous monitoring’*
- *‘Issuing tenders when the funding amounts are so low that a grant process could be used’*