

Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel Agenda



Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel Wednesday, 14th January, 2015

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel**, which will be held at:

**Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
on Wednesday, 14th January, 2015
at 7.00 pm .**

**Glen Chipp
Chief Executive**

**Democratic Services
Officer**

Gary Woodhall
(Directorate of Governance)
Tel: 01992 564470
Email: gwoodhall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors A Boyce, J Knapman, A Mitchell MBE, S Murray, Mrs C P Pond, Ms G Shiell and B Surtees.

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF SUBSTITUTES TO THIS MEETING IS
18:00 HOURS**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

(Director of Governance) To appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Director of Governance) To be announced at the meeting.

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23 JULY 2002 REFERS)

(Director of Governance) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Director of Governance) To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a personal or a pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and pecuniary interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

5. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel (not required on this occasion).

6. GRANT AID SCHEME REVIEW - SCOPING REPORT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 5 - 10)

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report (GAR-001-2014/15).

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, together with paragraphs (6) and (24) of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require that the permission of the Chairman be obtained, after prior notice to the Chief Executive, before urgent business not specified in the agenda (including a supplementary agenda of which the statutory period of notice has been given) may be transacted.

In accordance with Operational Standing Order 6 (Non-Executive Bodies), any item raised by a non-member shall require the support of a member of the Committee concerned and the Chairman of that Committee. Two weeks notice of non-urgent items is required.

8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion

To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Paragraph</u>
Nil	None	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Confidential Items Commencement

Paragraph 9 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

Background Papers

Paragraph 8 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the Officer responsible for the item.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

(Director of Governance) To consider the date of the next meeting of the Panel.

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Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel

Report Reference: GAR-001-2014/15

Date of meeting: 14 January 2015

SCRUTINY



Subject: Grant Aid Scheme – Scoping and Terms of Reference

Responsible Officer: Lyndsay Swan (01992 564146)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To consider the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review of the Grant Aid Scheme for voluntary, community and leisure groups, and to recommend these to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for adoption;**
- (2) To agree timescales for the review as set out in this report; and**
- (3) To discuss the arrangements for the review, specifically:**
 - (a) times/frequency of meetings of the Panel;**
 - (b) evidence required by officers/members;**
 - (c) issues to be covered by the review; and**
 - (d) any proposals for consultation.**

Report:

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 16 September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to review the Council's Grant Aid Scheme for Sports, Arts, Leisure and Community Groups in terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures for Major Grants and Service Level Agreements including those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages.

Background Information

2. Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring benefit to its area. This includes the activities of voluntary and community groups acting for public service. Many local authorities developed grant aid schemes for such purposes with 'dedicated' budgets and set criteria against which applications can be considered and determined.

3. The sector plays key roles as follows:

- Building 'social capital' by promoting self-organised communities and by encouraging volunteering and active citizenship;
- Providing services to local people and to particular groups in the community, thereby meeting social and individual needs;
- Advocacy on behalf of communities;

- Contributing expertise on policy formulation through dialogue with the Council and the wider statutory sector;
- Providing employment and income, thereby contributing to economic output; and
- Delivering public services and offering greater customer choice.

4. Recognising the value of these roles, the District Council has had a grant aid scheme in place since the 1980's. The policy governing the Scheme has been revised several times during this period in the light of changing Council priorities and as a reflection of changes in society. The most recent extensive review place in 2009 although minor amendments are made to the scheme on an ongoing basis in the light of experience.

5. Since 2001 decision-making with regard to the grants has been the responsibility of the relevant Portfolio Holder, currently the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing and Community Services. Prior to this, applications were determined by a Policy and Resources Sub-Committee which was later to become the Grant Aid Panel.

6. The Grant Aid Scheme currently has an annual budget of £94,970. This is made up of:

- One-off grants of up to £5,000 (20 in 2013/14) towards specific projects; and
- 15 grants of up to £5,000, totalling approximately £47,000, to support community groups over the longer term. These are funded under 3 year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) all of which expire in March 2016.

7. In addition to this the Council currently provides 2 larger grants to VAEF and the CAB totalling approximately £153,000 in 2014/15.

8. In December 2014, as part of a review of the General Fund in order to effect savings, the Cabinet agreed to reduce the budget for the Grant Aid Scheme for 2015/16 by the following amounts:

- £7,550 which had been allocated to Homestart (this was an amount subsidising the rent payable by Homestart for their premises at Oakwood Hill, Loughton and was separate from the £94,970 referred to above). Homestart ceased functioning during 2014 and it was decided not to re-allocate their funding); and
- An overall reduction in the one-off grant 'pot' of £11,517, reducing the Grant Aid Budget to £83,453 from April 2015 onwards.

9. The review will have to be carried out in the light of this overall budget reduction.

10. The Scheme's current eligibility criteria and policies have been developed in line with the Council's leisure and cultural strategies which have recently been reviewed. In its scrutiny of the Scheme the Panel may wish to consider recent revisions to these strategies.

11. Locally the Council has a long history of supporting, working and consulting with individual voluntary groups and VAEF the 'umbrella' body for the voluntary sector in the District. This review will provide an opportunity to ensure that the strategic and operational linkages between the voluntary and community sector, the Council and other partner bodies are strengthened further.

12. The proposed terms of reference for the Task and Finish Panel are set out at Appendix 1 to this report. It is proposed that the review be managed as follows:

- (a) to report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by [date to be set at the initial Panel meeting];
- (b) to take into consideration the budget available;
- (c) to gather evidence in relation to the review, where the Panel considers it

appropriate, through visits to some of the Schemes that have received grant funding, the consideration of relevant information and good practice elsewhere;

- (d) to have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (e) to consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process;
- (f) to consult other parties, such as voluntary and community groups, if the Panel considers it appropriate to do so; and
- (g) To meet the following timescales:
 - Task and Finish Panel to meet on 15 January 2015 to agree the Panel's Terms of reference and the scope of the review;
 - to undertake appropriate stakeholder consultation by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting];
 - to bring forward final proposals to the Panel by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting];
 - to report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting]; and
 - to report to Council by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting].

13. The review is due for completion by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting] to allow time for the final report to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a view to implementation by [date to be agreed at the initial Panel meeting].

Recommendations:

14. The Panel is asked to:
- (a) agree the scope and terms of reference for the review;
 - (b) agree the timescales for the review; and
 - (c) discuss options for undertaking the review.

Appendix:

- Task and Finish Panel Terms of Reference. Grant Aid Scheme

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GRANT AID SCHEME TASK AND FINISH PANEL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Origin

At its meeting on 16 September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to review the Council's Grant Aid Scheme for Sports, Arts, Leisure and Community Groups in terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures for Major Grants and Service Level Agreements including those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages.

Draft Terms of Reference

To review the current structure of the Grant Aid Scheme, taking into consideration the terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages and how this framework would best fit the structure of the Council.

(1) To specifically consider:

- The eligibility criteria and assessment arrangements for funding taking into account the budget available and the thematic areas in the leisure and cultural strategy;
- The grant maxima;
- Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding;
- Review procedures.

(2) To consider any other matters that are deemed appropriate.

Aims and Objectives

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by [date to be set at the initial Panel meeting];
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

TIMESCALE	ESTIMATED	ACTUAL
Commencement:	First meeting to be held on 14 January 2015	
<u>Finish</u>	To be agreed at first Panel meeting	

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