

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel **Date:** 20 July 2015

Place: Chief Executive's Office **Time:** 7.00 - 7.55 pm

Members Present: C P Pond (Chairman), G Shiell and B Surtees

Other Councillors: H Kane

Apologies: A Mitchell MBE

Officers Present: G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

1. SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that no substitute Members had been appointed for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

3. MINUTES

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

(a) listing Cllr H Kane in the 'Other Councillors' section as, technically, Cllr Kane was not a Member of the Panel; and

(2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

(a) removing Cllr Knapman from the 'Members Present' section as Cllr Lea was substituting for him; and

(b) adding Cllr H Kane as being in attendance at the meeting.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted its Terms of Reference.

5. GRANT AID SCHEME REVIEW - STAGE II SCOPING REPORT

The Panel considered a report, presented by C Overend, concerning the scope of the second part of the review of the Grant Aid Scheme.

C Overend reminded the Panel that it had completed the first part of the review in 2014/15, which was concerned with the one-off grants applied for by various Groups within the District, and had reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 April 2015. The second part of the review would be concerned with those Groups in receipt of Grant Aid from the Council via three-year Service Level Agreements, including the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau (EF CAB) and Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) who were in receipt of the largest amounts.

C Overend drew the Panel's attention to the scoping paper attached to the agenda and suggested the next phase of the review be broken down into three sections to consider: EF CAB; VAEF; and the other smaller Service Level Agreements. The proposed timetable was as follows:

- (i) consider the smaller Service Level Agreements at the first meeting, and arrange visits to a sample of these Groups before the second meeting;
- (ii) receive a presentation from VAEF at the second meeting and arrange a visit for after the meeting, before discussing the smaller Service Level Agreements from the first meeting;
- (iii) receive a presentation from EF CAB at the third meeting and arrange a visit for after the meeting, before discussing VAEF from the previous meeting;
- (iv) consider the arrangements for Grant Aid put in place by other Councils at the fourth meeting, before discussing EF CAB from the previous meeting; and
- (v) discuss and agree the final report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the fifth and final meeting in December 2015 or early January 2016.

G Wallis added that the current Three-Year Service Level Agreements were all due to end in March 2016, hence it would be an advantage to complete the review as soon as possible. VAEF and EF CAB would be advised of the Panel's Terms of Reference before they prepared their presentations to the Panel, which it was expected would detail the impact of the Council's funding on their activities. C Overend suggested that the following sample of groups in receipt of smaller Service Level Agreements could be visited by the Panel:

- (a) Waltham Abbey Youth 2000 (except Cllr Kane);
- (b) The Alzheimer's Society;
- (c) The Lambourne End Centre; and
- (d) Zinc Arts.

G Wallis suggested that a questionnaire could be sent to each Group in receipt of a Service Level Agreement to assist in the Panel's deliberations, especially those Groups which the Panel did not visit. The Panel concurred and G Wallis undertook to put together a number of sample questions for the Panel to agree. C Overend also undertook to circulate a number of possible dates to be considered for the Panel's

visits to the Groups. Cllr Kane suggested that the four smaller Groups could all be visited during one day.

The Panel asked if each Group could be requested to provide basic financial information. C Overend responded that the Council received the annual accounts from each Group with a Service Level Agreement and that the Council's Finance Officers analysed the annual accounts received from VAEF and EF CAB. The Committee felt that each Group should be requested to provide their income and expenditure for the last financial year to inform the Panel's discussions.

Cllr Surtees suggested that the Panel could receive the presentations from VAEF and EF CAB on the same night. However, the Officers advised that this would be too much information for the Panel to deal with for one night and having separate meetings for the two presentations would be preferable. Cllr Surtees also queried the grant received by the Rural Community Council for Essex and the work they undertook within the District. Cllr Kane reassured the Panel that she had visited the Group and that they did have a number of projects in progress throughout the District.

C Overend explained the Commissioning Model to the Panel and that its basic tenet was to set key objectives for each Group to achieve, who were then effectively paid by results. Cllr Kane added that Harlow District Council used a Commissioning model for their Grant Aid Scheme and this was possibly a better method to be considered as part of the review. G Wallis added that it was a model being increasingly used by other Councils for their Grant Aid Schemes and the Panel could discuss the merits of commissioning at a future meeting. The Committee noted that it would enable Grant Aid monies to be directed to the core activities of the Groups which would be of most benefit to residents of the District.

The Chairman enquired if any new Groups were under consideration for the next three-year cycle of Service Level Agreements, but C Overend stated that the possible inclusion of any new Groups would be dependent on the budget agreed by the Cabinet for Grant Aid.

G Woodhall undertook to check available dates for further meetings of the Panel in November and December 2015, and possibly January 2016 as well. C Overend added that Mission Statements could be provided for each Group in receipt of a Service Level Agreement, and the Panel could also examine the Debt Advisors with the EF CAB paid for by the Housing Revenue Account as part of the review, along with the rent and utility bills paid for by the Council for the VAEF.

Resolved:

(1) That the scope of the second part of the Panel's review of the Council's Grant Aid Scheme be agreed as follows:

- (a) first meeting to consider the smaller Service Level Agreements and arrange visits to a sample of these Groups;
- (b) second meeting to receive a presentation from, and arrange a visit to, VAEF and discuss the smaller Service Level Agreements from the previous meeting;
- (c) third meeting to receive a presentation from, and arrange a visit to, EF CAB and discuss VAEF from the previous meeting;

(d) fourth meeting to consider the arrangements for Grant Aid put in place by other Councils, including the Commissioning Model, and discuss EF CAB from the previous meeting; and

(e) fifth meeting to discuss and agree the final report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee;

(2) That a Questionnaire be agreed and sent to all Groups in receipt of a Service Level Agreement to inform the Panel's discussions; and

(3) That all Groups in receipt of a Service Level Agreement be requested to provide an income and expenditure statement for their last, full financial year.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Panel noted that there was no other urgent business for discussion.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Panel noted that there were no issues arising which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted that the next two meetings had been arranged for 28 September 2015 and 29 October 2015.

CHAIRMAN