

Report to Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel

Report Reference: GAR-005-2015/16
Date of meeting: 29 October 2015



Subject: Review of Grant Aid Scheme – Service Level Agreement with VAEF

Responsible Officer: Chris Overend (01992 564247)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That, having received the presentation from the Chief Officer at the last meeting, undertaken a visit to the organisation and considered comparative data from other local authorities, Members recommend whether to maintain provision for longer term funding to VAEF from 2016/17 onwards and, if so, the basis for any funding agreement.

Reason for decision:

When the terms of reference for the Task and Finish Panel were determined, it was agreed that the arrangements in respect of Service Level Agreements (SLAs), including those for Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF), would be reviewed during the second stage in 2015/16.

Jacqui Foile Chief Officer of VAEF was therefore invited to give a presentation on services and activities provided through VAEF, at the Task and Finish Panel meeting on 28 September 2015.

Panel members are now asked to consider further information in relation to other Voluntary Services (CVS's) in Essex, including level of support from Districts/Boroughs, to enable a more in-depth review of the current funding arrangements with VAEF.

Report:

1. Infrastructure organisations such as VAEF exist to support the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. They champion the voluntary sector and volunteering in general.
2. VAEF (formerly the Epping Forest District Council for Voluntary Service), was established during the early 1990s to undertake this role across the Epping Forest District. At the last meeting of the Task and Finish Panel, Members received a presentation from Jacqui Foile, Chief Officer at VAEF, on its history, development, current services and activities, and plans for the future. A copy of the presentation is attached.
3. Also attached are copies of VAEF's Organisational Strategy for 2015-18, the SLA between VAEF and the District Council and the document, *Building a Better Future for Essex*, which outlines some of the current activities of the various CVSs in Essex.
4. The District Council has provided financial support to VAEF by way of an SLA for many years. The funding agreed for 2015/16 is £39,120 and this amount has remained unchanged since 2009/10. From this sum, VAEF pays the Council annual accommodation

costs of £11,360 for use of premises at Homefield House.

5. To assist the Panel in reaching a decision, members are asked to consider the attached details, which set out information on the financial support to other CVS's in Essex, provided by District/Borough Councils. It will be noted that the majority of other local authorities continue to fund CVSs, and this is mostly through SLAs, on a similar basis to arrangements in Epping Forest District.

6. Having been presented with the information requested and had the opportunity to visit VAEF, members are now asked to consider the current funding arrangements and to make recommendations with regard to any funding to VAEF from 2016/17 onwards. These to include the level of funding allocation, and the nature of any funding agreement e.g. by way of an SLA or other mechanism.

7. Given the current uncertain financial climate faced by local government, it is vital that any funding agreement with VAEF includes a range of key performance measures and a requirement to show 'added value' through that agreement, year on year, not only in respect of its direct services but core activities as well.

Resource implications:

The current grant to VAEF by way of the SLA in 2015/16 is £39,120.

Annual accommodation costs for VAEF at Homefield House are £11,360.