

Report to Grant Aid Review Task & Finish Panel

Report Reference: GAR-006-2015/16

Date of meeting: 15 February 2016

**Subject: Proposed Recommendations for
Service Level Agreements.**

Responsible Officer: Julie Chandler (01992 564214)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Grant Aid Review Panel receives an overview of the findings of the Panel during Phase Two of the review; and**
- (2) That Members agree the recommendations for inclusion within the final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in respect of proposed arrangements for the future operation of the Council's Grant Aid Scheme, as follows;**
 - (a) a proposal to cease use of written Service Level Agreements for groups receiving three- year Grant Aid funding below £5,000 in total over the period of the award and to introduce a more efficient, annual monitoring process; and**
 - (b) a revised, written Service Level Agreement for all Voluntary Sector Groups receiving three-year Grant Aid funding above £5,000, including Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau.**

Reason for decision:

The Review Panel has now completed all aspects of its work in consideration of the Council's Grant Aid Scheme and needs to agree recommendations to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Options considered and rejected:

To maintain current administration systems for Grant Aid.

Report:

1. The Grant Aid Review Panel has now received presentations from all of the key organisations receiving Grant Aid funding as part of three-year Service Level Agreements with the Council, and has considered in detail, the range of other local voluntary sector groups receiving lower levels of funding.
2. At the last two meetings of the Panel, Members received detailed presentations from the two main recipients of Grant Aid from the Council, these being Voluntary Action Epping Forest which currently receives £39,120 per annum, over a three-year Service Level Agreement, (in addition to £31,690 towards office accommodation and fixed network line costs) and Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau (EF CAB), which receives £113,840 per annum, over the same period (in addition to which the sum of £42,000 is awarded from the Housing Revenue Account towards the Bureau's Debt Mitigation posts.) Following the presentations, time was allocated for detailed questions from Members and where necessary, further information sought.

3. The Panel has also rigorously reviewed all paperwork and monitoring information utilised in the administration of the Council's Grant Aid Scheme, including pre-submission criteria, types of grant awarded, written Service Level Agreements and other requirements for groups receiving Grant Aid funding. This information has been considered alongside examples of Grant Aid arrangements operated by a range of other local authorities in Essex, and Officers have reviewed the Council's Grant Aid paperwork and SLA's to reflect Member preference from this discussion.

4. This report therefore includes a set of draft papers, which outline the proposed arrangements for monitoring and review of the range of grants available from the Council and seeks Members' final approval, prior to the full report submission to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.

Resource implications:

The recommendations in this report do not have any financial implications.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The report proposes enhanced governance arrangements for the Council's Grant Aid Scheme.

Safer, Cleaner Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

Consultation with voluntary sector groups in receipt of Grant Aid from the Council.

Background Papers:

Reports and minutes from previous Grant Aid Panel Meetings.

Risk Management:

Not applicable at this stage of the reporting process.