

CABINET – 7TH MARCH 2024

Report of the Scrutiny Commission

SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector report.

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

Meeting Discussion

- i. It was emphasised that grants were open as before, and that there had been two aspects added to the criteria for grants, referencing the cost of living and the Council's Climate Change Strategy. The criteria for grants was applied to give weight to applications. Organisations did not necessarily have to fulfil every criteria. The additional criteria would not automatically exclude existing Member Grants groups.
- ii. The ring fencing of £30k from the Community Grants sum for 2024/25 was for community groups. It was recognised that for some smaller groups, decisions were much more time critical and that it would be beneficial to alter the process slightly, as recommended in the report. The recommended process would allow smaller community groups to receive smaller funds quicker, without compromising the necessary due diligence and checks against eligibility criteria. Members could still nominate and support local groups to access funds through the grants process.
- iii. The Grants Panel was made up of officers and Chaired by the Communities and Wellbeing Manager. The purpose of the panel was to ensure due diligence by checking applications against the eligibility criteria. Applications were scored by panel members individually and an average score was identified. The final score for an application could be amended if further information was received to improve the strength of the application. The Grants team provided support to complete applications if required.
- iv. Members Grants were introduced a number of years ago to enable members to support projects in their wards. Research had been undertaken which

highlighted that some other Councils administered member grants schemes and the Council chose to develop a scheme.

- v. Some organisations (such as The Bridge) had Service Level Agreements with the Council to provide services, and were funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The Citizen's Advice Bureau were a Strategic Partner of the Council, and received funding through the Strategic Partner Grant. The Citizen's Advice Bureau also received funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant to provide services on behalf of the Council, to reduce homelessness. The additional funding of £25k to the Citizen's Advice Bureau was to increase capacity and to enable them to support more residents.
- vi. The Citizen's Advice Bureau reported to the Council on a quarterly basis, detailing the services accessed by residents by ward. The Communities and Wellbeing Manager agreed to share this report with members following the meeting.
- vii. It was suggested that the list of voluntary sector organisations which the Council provides funding to, and the services offered, be circulated to members following the meeting.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Scrutiny Commission Procedure Rule 11.12 sets out the procedure by which a report of a Scrutiny Committee should be considered by Cabinet.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The information on this in the Cabinet report is not affected by the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no further financial implications associated with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Paper: Scrutiny Commission Minute 119 2023/24, 4th March 2024.

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