


Report of: Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager


To: Executive Board


Date: 13th March 2006

Item No:


Title of Report : Grant Allocations to Voluntary and Community Organisations 2006/2007


Summary and Recommendations


Purpose of report: This report summarises the grant applications received in Voluntary and Community Organisations for the 2006/2007 financial year, whose activities primarily benefit the citywide area and makes recommendations for consideration.



Key decision: Yes


Portfolio Holder: Councillor Dan Paskins





Committee Responsibility: Finance and Community

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Jeremy Thomas, Head of Legal and Democratic Services; Andy Collett, Financial Services.


Policy Framework: Community strategy


Recommendation(s): Executive Board is being asked to:

-  acknowledge the diversity and value of activities provided in Oxford by voluntary and community organisations across the City.
-  agree the recommended grant allocations for city-wide applications as set out in Appendix B.
-  consider each of the grant applications set out in the context of the well known provisions of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 and where it agrees to make such grants that it is satisfied that such grants will promote or improve the social, economic or environmental well being of Oxford.
4. agree to fund the rent support payable by organisations occupying City Council owned premises set out in paragraph 13.

5. consider the grant increases requested by Area Committees set out in Appendix C.

6. agree the recommendations to Central South and West Area Committee attached as Appendix D as the Area Committee ran out of time to consider this item at its meeting on 14 February 2006.

6. note that the grants review report outlining future support to the VCO will be considered by Community Scrutiny and Area Committees in March and Executive Board on 3rd April 2006.

Introduction & Background

1. Voluntary and community organisations provide a wealth of activities and support services within Oxford. These range from small locally focused based activities (for example playschemes) to large organisations whose core funding costs are supported (for example advice providers). Applications are currently invited annually for grants to support such projects and requests are assessed in line with the Council's vision. A wide range of activities and services have been supported through this process for a number of years.
2. Grant application packs were sent out to previous applicants and advertised through the website and Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) mailing. 151 applications were received by the closing date. Of these 3 were not eligible (two were from groups whose activities were concentrated outside of Oxford, one was for an activity that is to be funded through the Parks budget).
3. Of the applications received, 120 organisations had previously applied in 2005/06 and there were 31 new applications. Of all the eligible applications received 107 have been recommended by officers to receive grants and 44 have been recommended not to receive a grant. This equates a 'success' rate of 70%. Sixty-six applications were considered by Area Committees (Cowley 7, Central South & West 12, East 16, North East 10, North 2, South East 18). This report considers the 83 citywide applications received.
4. Grant applications and accompanying accounts were read by a group of Council officer assessors and appraised against the Council's vision and published criteria. The officer panels thoroughly discussed each application, completed an assessment sheet and agreed a grant recommendation accordingly. A blank assessment sheet is attached (Appendix A) which illustrates the scrutiny process each application underwent. Members are advised that application forms are available to read on request from the grants officer.

5. It is planned to make available small grants that can be applied for during the rest of the 2006/07 financial year. Those organisations whose request was unsuccessful will be advised and encouraged to apply for a small grant. It is also proposed that a sum is set aside for contingency that could be used to provide emergency funding for those organisations that face serious funding shortfalls. A total amount of £17,609 has been set aside for small grants and contingency and full criteria, application forms and decision making process will be reported to Executive Board and Area Committees in April 2006. In addition to these grants a sum of £10,000 has been ring fenced for small Arts Development grants during 2006/07.

Grants Review and Future Support

6. The grants recommended are for one year covering 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. No three-year grants or long term commitments have been recommended at this stage while the grants review is still ongoing. Appraising officers were advised to view the applications in the context of a 'holding year' pending the outcome of the grants review. Notwithstanding this, some recommendations have been reduced from last years grant if it was considered that the organisation would still be able to viably continue its activities, and some recommendations have been slightly increased if a case was clearly justified. As in previous years, the amount of grants requested vastly exceeds the budget available.
7. It is important for any organisation that has received Council grants in the past not to rely on funding in the future as the grants review is considering the types of support the Council enters into with voluntary and community organisations, and will be refocusing criteria. This may result in some projects that have received support for a number of years been not being considered for grants in the future. Revised criteria will be published and made known to future applicants in due course. A report outlining future support for voluntary and community organisations and a timetable for implementation is currently being prepared and will be considered by Community and Finance Scrutiny, Area Committees and Executive Board during February, March and April.

Legal Powers

8. The legal power enabling the making of the grants is the "well being" power of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. Members of the Executive Board must have satisfied themselves that the purposes for which the grant is made are likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of the City and must be consistent with and support the Councils community strategy.

Budget

9. The total amount of grants requested amounted to £2,478,075. The amount budgeted for grants for 2006/07 is £1,616,998. Taking into account pending rent adjustments from organisations with which leases are still being agreed, this figure is likely to increase to £1,643,848.
10. As in previous years, the current grants process is based around a centrally operated budget which any eligible Oxford City organisation can apply to, therefore the allocation is made to the applicant organisation and not by geographical or ward area. Any changes to recommendations that the Executive Board wishes to make must total the overall amount available to be allocated.

Recommendations



Total Budget for Allocation	1,643,848 (figure takes into account new rents currently being determined).
Total citywide grants recommended	1,194,718
Total Area Committee grants recommended	449,130

11. The recommendations for citywide grants are summarised in Appendix B and includes £10k to be allocated during the year as arts development grants and £17,609 to allocate as small grants / contingency.

Rent Support

12. Executive Board have agreed a transparent system of recording Council support to organisations through rents. For new and existing groups in HRA premises, rent costs have to be found from within the grants budget. Rent is deducted from the actual grant and the balance remaining credited to the organisations bank account. For groups in General Fund properties a paper transaction takes place. The only cost to the City Council in these cases is the opportunity cost if the premises were let out on the marketplace.
13. Applications for rent support are summarised below. There have been six new requests.

Organisation	Rent 2006/07	Grant for rent recommended 2006/07	Comments
Phoenix Sports Association	5,500	4,500	Group requested £4,500
Blackbird Leys Bowls Club	10,000	1,500	

Falcon Rowing & Canoe Club	4,250	4,250	
Florence Park Bowls Club	8,220	3,750	Reduced. Income shown on application exceeds expenditure.
Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	5,000	5,000	
Agnes Smith Advice Centre	7,250	7,250	Total grant £45,044
Donnington Doorstep	1,000	1,000	
Modern Art Oxford	47,000	47,000	
Oxford Community Work Agency (Barton)	10,000	10,000	
Oxford Film & Video Makers	5,250	5,250	
Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre	3,336	3,336	OCCAC are in negotiation to occupy additional space at 44b Princes Street and may request a grant for more rent in the future.
Lake Street Playgroup	14,900	14,900	New. For refurbished premises at Hinksey pool. Actual rent £11k. Additional £3.9 is for running costs associated with premises. This is in line with the Executive Board decision made on 08/08/05 that agreed support until 2009/10.
Hinksey Sculling School  	1,020	1,020	New. For refurbished premises at Hinksey pool. Actual rent £830. Additional £190 is for running costs

			associated with premises as above.
Oxford British Sub Aqua Club	11,900	11,900	New. For refurbished premises at Hinksey pool. Earmark rent £10k and additional £1,900 running costs associated with premises as above.
Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI)	14,500	14,500	New. For rental of accommodation in Town Hall. Unclear at present what exact rent will be so earmarking up to this amount. Grant will be adjusted if full amount not required.
The Story Museum	2,350	2,350	New. Earmark for rental of accommodation in Town Hall.
Tower Playbase			New. Earmark rent for premises in Maltfield Road, Northway.
Total		144,506	

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Background papers: Grant Applications 2006/07 and assessments.