

Officer response to comments on key issues

Please note that comments were on an earlier version of the report that went to City Council committees and CVO organisations.

1. Suggestion that Area co-ordinators be included on the CVO support steering group, reflecting the importance of Area priorities and Area plans.

Officer response: The report has been amended to include a representative of the Area co-ordinators on the steering group.

2. Concerns about the proposal to fund salary costs from the grants budget

Officer response: The report has been changed, taking out the proposal to top-slice, but noting the need to re-configure resources to support the new processes. The CVO steering groups will review staffing needs and possible solutions.

3. Concerns that the proposals could inhibit smaller organisations by creating more bureaucracy through the emphasis on achieving targets.

Officer response: The report has been changed, with Position Statement number 10 saying that assessment of funding will be appropriate to the amount of money. The review does not rule out the use of small grants system to support small organisations, with the minimum of administration. Where more substantial amounts are involved (£1,000 or more) it seems reasonable to set specific targets. However the report sets out that the City Council will develop specific targets (outcomes and outputs) in consultation with CVOs.

4. Uncertainty about the need for the CVO support unit

Officer response: The unit is designed to support business units in their financial support of CVOs. The report identifies extra activities needed including consulting more, understanding needs better, developing outcomes and outputs, and co-ordinating between business units. Business Unit staff will need help in doing all this. In addition it is proposed the CVO support unit would become a one-stop shop for contact for CVOs, providing administrative back-up. This would not only be easier for CVOs, but also enable the CVO support unit to co-ordinate funding and other in-kind support across the Council.

5. Applicants for funding should be assisted in making applications, including to third parties.

Officer response: The City Council already does and intends to continue to support 'infrastructure' organisations providing such advice and training to other CVOs (See below). However where the City Council is pursuing particular outputs and outcomes, the Business Unit staff could actively work with a CVO to develop a project and seek funding. The report does not stop this from happening.

6. Concern that the report, by concentrating only on themes, and outcomes and outputs directly affecting people, does not address the funding of voluntary organisations providing 'infrastructure services' to other voluntary organisation.

Officer response: On reflection, the report does leave out infrastructure services that are not targeted to deliver outputs and outcomes. Including as a theme the providing of infrastructure services 'open to all' voluntary organisations could accommodate this concern. Councillors would then decide what proportion of the funding should go to it.

7. Concern that the report does not refer more to the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Development project (OVID)

Officer comment: OVID is focussed on ‘open-to-all’ support to voluntary organisations to help them develop their organisations, part of the governments concerns about our civil society. The Review is focussed on delivering outcomes and outputs that directly affect people on the ground. However, as conceded in 6. above there is a need for recognition of the option to fund “infrastructure” organisations providing services open to all voluntary organisations.

8. Concern about the tight deadlines:

- **Less than a month to apply for grants**
- **Just over a month to prepare potentially complex tenders**

Officer response: We were aware of the first problem but could not find a solution. In the first year of operation the time taken to develop the Prospectus and the Delivery Plan would not make it possible to give a longer time to apply for the smaller grants. In subsequent years it might be able to increase the application window if Council priorities and other factors do not change too much from year to year.

The second problem is eased by the fact that much of the groundwork for the complex tenders will have been done after the Executive Board or Area committee agrees the relevant Prospectus in late July. This would give nearer 6 months.

9. Some grant funding should be set aside so that local communities could participate in deciding how a proportion of the budget could be spent.

Officer response: Such a proposal could be built into a delivery plan by an area committee or Executive Board.

10. No explicit commitment in the report to “full cost recovery” as part of any procurement process

Officer response: Full cost recovery is part of the City Council’s procurement strategy and therefore would be part of any procurement or commissioning process used.