

Report of: Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 19th March 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations (CVO's) 2007/08.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: For Executive Board to make decisions on the allocation of Grants to Community & Voluntary Organisations for 2007/08.

Key decision: Yes

Portfolio Holder: Councillor van Zyl

Scrutiny Responsibility: Community

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by

Legal: Jeremy Thomas

Finance: Andy Collett

Strategic Director: Michael Lawrence

Policy Framework: Oxford Community Strategy

Recommendation(s):

1. That the inflationary increase referred to in Table 1 is offered up as a budget saving for 2007/08.
2. To consider the comments received from community scrutiny, area committees and disputes panel received by the report deadline and officers response as set out in Appendix 2 (to be circulated separately).
3. To approve the grants for 2007/08 as set out in schedule 3 (to be circulated separately).

Introduction & Applications received

1. Local community and voluntary organisations were invited to apply for Oxford City Council grants for the 2007/08 financial year, following the guidelines that were published in August in the Grants Prospectus 2007/08. This report contains details of officer recommendations.

2. **Appendix 1** sets out in more detail the request received and the rationale for the recommendation. The information in this document may change in light of comments received from Scrutiny / Area Committees and the grant disputes panel.
3. **Appendix 2** provides a summary of comments received from Community Scrutiny and Area Committees that have considered officer recommendations to date. It also includes comments from the grants disputes panel held on 14th March and sets out officers responses to these comments. At the time of writing not all meetings have happened so this appendix will be circulated separately prior to the meeting.
4. **Schedule 3** lists the final recommendations in light of comments received and will be circulated separately prior to the meeting.

Budget Summary

5. The budget available for allocation as grants to community and voluntary organisations is set out below.

Table 1.

Base Budget 07/08	1,627,063
Inflationary increase	38,809

6. In an environment where front line Council services have to deliver year on year efficiency improvements it would be inconsistent not to challenge the voluntary sector to also build in efficiency savings. It is therefore recommended that the inflationary increase of £38,809 is offered up as a saving. Therefore the budget figure is assumed to be the base figure (before inflation) of £1,627,063 and recommendations have been limited to this amount.

7. The total recommendations of £1,627,063 are broken down as:

Table 2.

Grants committed 2007/08 (listed in paragraph 7)	1,331,535
Maximum set aside for Bowls Clubs / Phoenix	10,000
Set aside for Arts Development grants 07/08	10,000
Set aside for Emergency grants 07/08	10,000
Set aside for Small grants 07/08	6,339
All other recommendations 2007/08 (Set out in Appendix 2)	259,189
Total	1,627,063

8. In addition to the above a rent adjustment of £6,027 will be made for the Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre if agreed.
9. As indicated, it is planned to make available small grants that can be applied for during the rest of the 07/08 financial year. Those organisations whose request was unsuccessful will be encouraged to apply for a small grant if appropriate.
10. It is also proposed that a sum is set aside for emergencies for those organisations that face serious funding shortfalls. The criteria, application forms and decision making process for these grants will be reported to Executive Board and Area Committees in May 2007, along with a monitoring report for grants made during 2006/7. In addition to these grants a sum of £10,000 has been ring fenced for small arts development grants during 2007/08.

Grants Committed 07/08

11. Thirty five grants were agreed in principle at Executive Board on 21 August 2006 and committed for 2007/08. These grants are to groups who have previously had a three-year grant agreement with the City Council and are on the whole for the running costs of a particular aspect of the organisations service or a contribution towards core running costs. These grants are set out in table 3 below.

Table 3.

Organisation	Grant committed for 2007/08	Additional request submitted 2007/08	Total recommended 2007/08
Agnes Smith Advice Centre	45044	25000	57044
Artweeks	4120	N/a	4120
Asylum Welcome	3750	750	3750
British Sub Aqua Club (rent)	11900	N/a	11900
Citizen's Advice Bureau	170000	30000	170000
Citizen's Advice Bureau (Benefits in Practice project)	20000	N/a	20000
Chinese Community & Advice Centre	30000	22000	36027
Connection Floating	20468	N/a	20468

Support			
Cranstoun Drug Services	5000	N/a	5000
Oxford Credit Union	20000	N/a	20000
Donnington Doorstep	21600	N/a	21600
Elmore Team	41200	N/a	41200
Ethnic Minority Business Service	5000	N/a	5000
Fusion	46642	N/a	46642
Gatehouse	9270	N/a	9270
Hinksey Sculling School (rent)	1020	N/a	1020
Ithaca	5281	N/a	5281
Lake Street Playgroup (rent)	14900	N/a	14900
Lord Mayors Rent Deposit Scheme	95000	N/a	95000
Modern Art Oxford	72100	N/a	72100
Night Shelter	126385	3792	130177
Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action – Furniture Store	27810	N/a	27810
Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action	29486	N/a	29486
Oxford Community Work Agency (Barton)	81060	N/a	81060
Oxford Film & Video Makers	33303	5000	38303
Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council	24720	N/a	24720
Oxfordshire Touring Theatre Company	8720	N/a	8720
Oxford	17500	N/a	17500

Association of Neighbourhood Watches			
OXS RAD	12360	12000	12360
Pegasus Theatre	26459	N/a	26459
Oxford Playhouse	44290	7400	51690
Porch Steppin Stone Centre	50000	N/a	50000
Rose Hill & Donnington Advice Centre	62233	21217	62233
South Oxford Adventure Playground	9373	N/a	9373
The Bridge	41943	N/a	41943
The Gap	93598	N/a	93598
Total	1,331,535	127,159	1,367,754

12. In July, Executive Board agreed that the Lord Mayors Deposit Guarantee Scheme was transferred in house and a review of the effectiveness and value for money of the service was carried out following on after a year of operation. The grant money is therefore ring fenced until the review has been completed.

Grant Themes

13. The table below summarises the amounts budgeted and agreed for the grant themes and shows the amount of requests received for each theme.

Table 4.

Theme	Budget 2007/08	Amount requested
A Better Living Environment	55,700	124,767
Safer Communities	31,600	55,724
Active & Healthy Communities	183,103	423,635
Opportunities For Life	14,800	181,964
A Vibrant & Inclusive Economy	13,500	10,364
Total	298,703	796,454

14. As is apparent from the figures, the total amount requested far exceeds the available budget.

Evaluation Process

15. The evaluation process followed was as that agreed in the Grants Prospectus 2007/08. Officers met to evaluate the grant applications over a two-week period. There was an evaluation panel for each grant theme.
16. Applications were firstly screened for eligibility (from a constituted CVO run by a committee, primarily Oxford beneficiaries, annual accounts and bank statement supplied, equal opportunities statement supplied) and then evaluated against criteria relating to evidence of need, who the project is targeting, what risks are associated with the project, how the application meets the Councils aims, how the group will monitor and evaluate the impact of the grant, whether the group receives any other subsidy from the City council, if the group is financially competent, if the application demonstrates a financial need and if the grant would be value for money. A recommendation is arrived at after considering these factors for each application.
17. Initial officer recommendations were circulated to Councillors for comments. Comments received back were considered by a disputes panel that reviewed the applications and made final recommendations.
18. Members are advised that application forms and the notes of the disputes panel are available to read on request from the grants officer.

Ineligible Requests

19. Seventeen requests were rejected as ineligible. Some of the applications were incomplete (for example by not enclosing accounts or bank statements) or whose activities did not primarily benefit Oxford City residents. Application guidelines were explicit that incomplete and ineligible applications would be rejected. These applications are listed below. These organisations have been notified that their applications were unsuccessful. Information about small grants available during the year will be circulated to these organisations and they will be invited to apply.

Table 5.

Blackbird Leys Preschool	Capital project, not eligible
Bullington Community Association	Capital project, not eligible
Equality in Diversity Organisation	Incomplete application
Far Eastern Club	Incomplete application
Lake Street Playgroup (equipment)	More than 6 months unspecified reserves

Mpower Oxford	Event taking place in 06/07 not 07/08
Oxford Malayalee Club	No accounts submitted for 2006 by closing date
Orinoco	Not eligible
Oxford Centre for Tamil Education & Fine Arts	Not eligible
Oxford Tai Chi Gong Fu Institute	Incomplete application
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind	Incomplete application
Oxford Adaptive Rowing Club	Incomplete application
Oxfordshire Play Association	Incomplete application
Street Games: Street Olympix	Incomplete application
Volunteer Reading help (2x applications)	Not eligible
West Oxford Community Association	Incomplete application

Rents

20. The following applications included requests from organisations that occupy City Council premises for grants towards rent.

Table 6.

Organisation	Rent 2007/08	Grant for rent recommended 2007/08	Comments
Phoenix Sports Association	5,500		A maximum of £10k has been identified within the grants budget for the transitional period for all the bowls clubs / sports pavilions affected, and the appropriate allocation to each club will be determined in due course.
Blackbird Leys Bowls Club	10,000		See Above
Falcon Rowing & Canoe Club	4,250	0	Application did not provide sufficient evidence of need - see Appendix 1
Florence Park Bowls Club	8,220		See Phoenix

Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	5,000	5,000	Total grant recommended £6,000 - additional £1,000 grant towards help line.
Agnes Smith Advice Centre	7,250	7,250	Total grant recommended £57,044
Donnington Doorstep	1,000	1,000	Total grant recommended £21,600
Modern Art Oxford	47,000	47,000	Total grant recommended £72,100
Oxford Community Work Agency (Barton)	10,000	10,000	Total grant recommended £81,060
Oxford Film & Video Makers	5,250	5,250	Total grant recommended £38,303
Oxford Federation of Community Associations	20,000	20000	20000
Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre	18,000 (Changed after negotiation with Estates Dept.)	3,336 + 6,027 paper transaction rent	Total grant £36,027 recommended including £9,363 rent.
Lake Street Playgroup	14,900	14,900	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	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	For refurbished premises at Hinksey pool. Earmark rent £10k and additional £1,900 running costs associated with premises as above.
The Story Museum	2,350	2,350	Rental of accommodation in Town Hall.
Tower Playbase	N/K	0	Application is for activity that is the primary responsibility of County Council and not enough budget available to allocate - see Appendix 1.

Key Issues

Advice Centres.

21. The total amount available to be allocated under this theme was £14,800. This was topped up by £9,875 transferred from the Vibrant & Inclusive Economy theme as it was undersubscribed, giving a total of £24,675. The amount requested totalled £152,014 – over six times the budget available. This was the financial reality with which officers were faced when making their recommendations. It is understood that the County Council have agreed a years ‘grace’ for it’s funding towards advice agencies in 2007/08 but it will be reviewing its position on funding advice centres during the year. A report from strategy & review elsewhere on the agenda sets out the options for future funding of the advice centres for Councillors to consider.

Bowls Clubs

22. Parks have reviewed charges for Bowls Clubs for both green and pavilion rental. Applications from Bowls Clubs addressed only this issue and in order to find a sustainable solution for the future, Parks are proposing a staged increase in rents and are working with the Bowls Clubs on how this will be funded. A maximum of £10k has been identified within the grants budget for the transitional period.

Impact on Smaller groups

23. During the process it became apparent that the smaller groups had to compete unfairly with larger voluntary organisations, many of who employ paid staff, and have greater capacity and experience of applying for grants. Steps are being taken to address this and are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Older People / Small BME Groups

24. Applications for small amounts from older peoples groups and Black & Minority Ethnic community groups who do not have the same capacity as larger organisations were competing with much larger applications and this was to the detriment of these activities. The community development officer responsible for older people is linking in with other organisations that provide support for activities for older people to see how in future this issue can be taken forward. The community cohesion officer is also looking at future arrangements so that more support is available for community cohesion and BME activities.

Twinning

25. Similar to above, a solution is being looked at so that support for twinning activities is secured for future years.

Play activities

26. The Oxford City Children and Young People's Plan, that was adopted by Executive board on 18 December 2006, proposes that the following areas should be the priorities that the City Council focuses upon over the following year. These are:

Ensuring that the City Council meets the guidelines of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, including it's policy and procedures, recruitment, awareness raising and staff training programme.

To work with the County Council and other District Councils to develop a standard consultation process for children and young people.

To continue to support affordable holiday play activities, sports, leisure and cultural activities, in line with the City Council Social Inclusion, Healthy Communities and Crime Reduction strategies.

27. In addition, there has been the establishment of the Children's Trust, (Oxfordshire County Council). It is their duty to establish and support children's centres including childcare, family support and out of school care, for which they receive additional funding.

28. The impact of this has been that applications for after school activities have not been supported, as it is our understanding that these are care schemes whose responsibility falls to schools that are able to tap into Extended Schools funding. Projects who offer open access to play facilities such as adventure play schemes are not affected by this and officers recommend continued support for.

Grants Review and Future Support

29. The review of how the City Council supports community and voluntary organisations (also known as the Grants Review) is addressing the sorts of issues raised in the previous paragraphs.

30. Officers are reviewing what the outcomes are that the City Council wants, and how best to deliver them working with community and voluntary organisations. Examples include helping groups to adapt to changes in focus, and reducing problems of applying for grants. There is still some way to go with this as groups continue to request grants for rent for example, rather than for describing the outcomes or impact that the grants will have. Officers would like to support groups more but lack the capacity, as there is only one grants officer to manage the process.
31. In late spring/early summer there will be wide consultation on the Prospectus for 2008/11, through Community Scrutiny, Area Committees and through community and voluntary sector forums and meetings. It is intended that longer term funding arrangements will be implemented from 2008/09.

Recommendations

1. That the inflationary increase referred to in Table 1 is offered up as a budget saving for 2007/08.
2. To consider the comments received from community scrutiny, area committees and disputes panel received by the report deadline and officers response as set out in Appendix 2 (to be circulated separately).
3. To approve the grants for 2007/08 as set out in schedule 3 (to be circulated separately).

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Background papers:

Grants Prospectus 2007/08
Grants Applications 2007/08
Grants dispute panel notes
Scrutiny / Area Committee minutes

