

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th February 2014

Report of: Head of Service for Leisure, Parks & Communities & Head of Customer Services

Title of Report: GRANT ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: For the City Executive Board to decide the allocation of grants to community and voluntary organisations for 2014/15.

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Stephen Curran
Councillor Susan Brown

Policy Framework: Oxford City Council Corporate Plan & Oxford Sustainable Community Strategy

Recommendation(s):

Subject to Council subsequently agreeing the grants budget for 2014/15 as set out in Table 1, the City Executive Board are recommended to:-

1. Approve the recommendations for the commissioning programme as listed in Appendix 1.
2. Approve the recommendations as amended and listed in Appendix 2 for the Arts and Culture commissioning theme.
3. Approve the recommendations for the applications received to the grants 2014/15 open bidding programme as set out in Appendix 3.

Appendices to report

- Appendix 1 Recommendations for the following commissioning themes: Advice and Money Management, Community Safety, Inclusive Play and Leisure for Children and Young People with Disabilities and Community and Voluntary Sector Infrastructure support from April 2014.
- Appendix 2 Recommendations for the inclusive Arts and Culture commissioning theme from April 2014.
- Appendix 3 Recommendations for applications received to the 2014/15 open bidding grants programme.
- Appendix 4 Evaluation framework used when assessing grant applications received to the annual open bidding grants programme.
- Appendix 5 Risk register

Introduction

1. Oxford City Council continues to support the local community and voluntary sector with grant aid. The community and voluntary organisations (CVO's) grants programme is administered and monitored through the Communities and Neighbourhoods team within Leisure, Parks & Communities.
2. The CVO's grants programme has two elements to it:-
 - Open Bidding – one off grants, community and voluntary organisations can apply for on an annual basis or on a smaller scale throughout the year.
 - Commissioning – funding for activities that have been identified by the Council as making a substantial and central contribution to the achievement of our corporate priorities.

Grants Budget

3. The total indicative budget for the CVO's grants programme, as currently proposed, is set out below.

Table 1	Budget (£)
Commissioning	1,337,738
Open Bidding	97,700
Small grants programme to run during the year.	23,027
Total	£1,458,465

Commissioning

4. 2013/14 was the final year of a three year commissioning period. During that time officers have worked closely with the commissioned organisations who have achieved their contracted targets. Details of these achievements will be reported in the next monitoring report to the City Executive Board later in 2014.
5. Commissioning themes (which remain the same from April 2014) together with indicative budget allocations are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2	Budget (£)
Advice and money management	518,379
Homelessness	442,279
Inclusive arts & culture	255,262
Community safety	58,082
Community & voluntary sector infrastructure	48,736
Inclusive play & leisure for children & young people with disabilities.	15,000
Total	£1,337,738

6. The Grants Officer within the Neighbourhoods team works with a number of lead officers that have specialist knowledge of specific commissioning themes. Funding recommendations have been made in conjunction with the following Lead Officers:

Commissioning Theme	Lead Officer (s)
Advice and money management	Helen Bishop, Head of Service for Customer Services Paul Wilding, Benefits Operations Manager
Inclusive arts and culture	Ceri Gorton, Cultural Development Manager
Community safety	Liz Jones, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Coordinator Linda Ludlow, Drug and Human Exploitation Coordinator Hagan Lewisman, Positive Futures
Community & voluntary sector infrastructure	Julia Tomkins, Grants Officer
Homelessness	Nerys Parry, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager
Inclusive play and leisure for children and young people with disabilities	Julia Tomkins, Grants Officer Caroline Robbins, Youth Engagement Officer

7. Earlier in the year a review of the effectiveness of the commissioning programme over the past three years was undertaken. It also considered how best to take forward the programme from April 2014.
8. A report then went to the City Executive Board in October 2013 that set out the rationale for the Council's support to the community and voluntary sector from April 2014. It was agreed that 2014/15 will be a one year funding programme. This will be followed by a three year commissioning cycle from April 2015 for all of the commissioning themes.
9. Customer Services are already working with the Advice Centres to map current advice / information provision within the City. They are also exploring how Service Level Agreements with Advice Centres, from April 2015, can be further developed to reflect the positive learning from the Council's welfare reform pilot, the experience and skills of the advice sector and the forthcoming changes as a result of the Welfare Reform Agenda. A revised Financial Inclusion Strategy and the draft service level agreements to be effective from 1st April 2015 will be reported to the City Executive Board later in the year, which will further influence future advice commissioning.
10. Recent discussions with the Advice Centres indicate that debt is an increasing issue for customers as a result of the current economic climate and the impact of the Welfare Reform Changes. Valuable work is presently undertaken to support clients to manage their debts. However, there is evidence that some clients are unwilling to participate in personal budgeting training and make repeat presentations.
11. During 2014/15 the Council will therefore seek to work with the advice centres to ensure that by April 2015 the sector as a whole is able to deliver personal budgeting training for a proportion of clients with debt problems, providing a more sustainable outcome.

12. The Oxford Credit Union has an aspiration to become self-sufficient, and the intention has been for their grant to be reduced on a gradual basis. This is not presently possible with the number of active members. However, the City Council will work with the Credit Union during 2014/15 to explore how they can be made more sustainable.
13. A report will be submitted to the City Executive Board in March 2014 with the proposed allocations for both the Preventing Homelessness grant and the Council's Homelessness grant commissioning budget to voluntary sector organisations.
14. For the arts and culture commissioning theme the Cultural Development Manager has reviewed the organisations funded through this programme to ensure they continue to help the Council meet its three key priorities for culture, which are:
 - Lead a partnership-based approach to sustaining, developing and improving the cultural life of the city
 - Improve opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in high quality cultural activities
 - Improve opportunities for the diverse range of communities in the city to participate in high quality cultural activities that reflect their own identities and can be shared with the whole community.
15. The review highlighted that since Oxford Inspires amalgamated with Visit Oxfordshire, the size of the team has reduced along with their delivery capacity.
16. During 2013/14, and with the support of its partners, Oxford City Council's Culture Team has lead on cultural development and partnership working in the city. This has proved to be more successful than outsourcing this to a third party organisation.
17. Building on this successful pilot year £21,000 will be vired from the budget for the arts and culture commissioning theme into the culture team's budget for the following activities/programmes:-
 - To enable cultural organisations and individuals to enhance Oxford's cultural offer and leverage in new funding from philanthropic sources. There will be two rounds in 2014/15 offering grants of £500-£1,500 for projects that meet Culture Strategy objectives
 - Micro funding events under the CREATE regime. These events will invite Oxford's artists, performers, filmmakers, heritage, digital and community organisations to pitch for and support cultural funding and collaboration
 - To continue Culture Forums which are designed to provide professional development support for the city's diverse cultural sector and to provide specialist support for developing cultural groups and organisations.
18. These activities/programmes will deliver an enhanced cultural development programme for the city, enabling the Culture Fund and

CREATE to support up to 25 projects over the year that meet the Culture Strategy objectives and leverage in match funding from other non-council sources. In addition up to eight programming grants will support arts events/activity which engages with new, hard to reach audiences in the city during the Light Festival. Culture Forums will provide skills development for artists and arts organisations to share best practice.

Annual Open Bidding

19. A total of 30 applications were received to the annual open bidding programme by the closing date of 8th November 2013, the total amount requested was £187,354.
20. The total budget for the open bidding programme is £95,000.
21. Officers appraised applications to the open bidding programme over four days. Appendix 4 is a copy of the evaluation framework used by the panel.
22. Each application was first screened for eligibility, i.e. applicants must demonstrate that they are a constituted community organisation run by a committee, providing annual accounts, a bank statement and an equal opportunity statement. All applications are subsequently evaluated against criteria relating to:
 - Evidence of social need
 - Who the project is targeting
 - Risk
 - How the application meets Council priorities
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Whether the group receive any other subsidy from the Council
 - If the group is financially competent
 - Demonstration of financial need and
 - Value for money.
23. Appendix 3 is a listing of each application received, the amount requested and the rationale for the recommendation. The City Executive Board is asked to approve these recommendations.

Rents

24. Some organisations recommended for funding from the CVO's grants programme also occupy Council premises and their rent will be deducted from their grant. The organisations affected are listed below in table 3.

Table 3

Organisation	Grant (£)	2014 / 15 rent	Balance to organisation
Agnes Smith Advice Centre	85,289	7,750	77,539
Donnington Doorstep Family Centre	7,500	700	6,800
Film Oxford (OFVM)	25,000	5,000	20,000
Modern Art Oxford	70,000	70,000	0
Oxford Community Work Agency	122,611	8,100	114,511
Rose Hill & Donnington Advice Centre	90,478	3,000	87,478
Total	£400,878	£94,550	£306,328

Climate Change / Environmental Impact

25. We will make all successful applicants aware of the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and encourage them to take similar action.

Equalities Impact

26. As part of the bidding process each organisation must provide their equal opportunities statement to confirm they comply with this legislation and understand their responsibility to promote equality.
27. Some examples of how equality is positively enhanced by the grants programme include funding services for:
- Survivors of rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence for both men and women
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people through recommending continued funding for the Oxford Friend helpline
 - People with disabilities, particularly children and young people with disabilities through recommending funding for Parasol inclusive play
 - Older people, through recommending support for specific activities to help socially excluded older people access support and information
 - BME groups, through funding dedicated work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Risk

28. In order to manage any risk associated with awarding grants a successful applicant must agree to and sign terms and conditions for this funding. Within these terms they must agree to:
- Spend the funding on the project or specific items described in their application
 - Repay any unspent grant funding
 - Keep financial records and receipts

- Return a monitoring form detailing how the grant funding has been spent and how they have publicised support from the Council.
29. Each organisation awarded grant funding will be monitored by an officer from the grants panel. Please see Appendix 5 for the reports risk register.

Financial Impact

30. The allocations of grant funding as proposed are dependent on Council agreeing the 2014/15 budget in February 2014.

Legal Impact

31. The Council considers it reasonable and appropriate in exercising the Council's powers pursuant to the provision of s.2 Local Government Act 2000 and all succeeding and other relevant enabling legislation to offer grant assistance to community and voluntary organisations through its grants programme.

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