

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9 July 2015

Report of: Head of Communities

Report: Grant Monitoring Information for 2014/15

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To inform members of monitoring information returned by community & voluntary organisations awarded a grant by the City Council in 2014/15.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Rowley

Policy Framework: Oxford City Council Corporate Plan primarily Strong & Active Communities

Recommendation(s):

The City Executive Board is asked to note the report

Appendices to report

Appendix 1 List of Community & Voluntary Organisations awarded a grant through the open bidding, commissioning, social inclusion fund and youth ambition grants programmes.

Appendix 2 Case studies

Appendix 3 Risk Register

Introduction

1. The Communities team ran four grant programmes during 2014/15. These programmes are in accordance with policy and prospectus agreed by Members.

The four grant programmes were:-

- Community & Voluntary Organisations (CVO's) Grants Programme
- Youth Ambition Grants Programme
- Social Inclusion Fund

- Positive Futures Holiday Activities (monitoring feedback for this programme is reported separately and will be going to CEB later in the year)

Table 1 below shows the allocations and expenditure.

Table 1	Budget Approved (£)	Amount spent (£)
CVO's grant programme		
Advice & money management	536,379	536,379
Homelessness	442,279	442,279
Inclusive arts & culture	255,262	255,262
Community safety	58,082	58,082
Community & voluntary sector infrastructure	48,736	48,736
Inclusive play & leisure for children & young people with disabilities.	15,000	15,000
2014/15 annual open bidding programme	97,700	97,700
Small grants programme	23,027	14,671
Youth Ambition grants programme	85,000	85,000
Social Inclusion Fund	60,000	47,316
underspend	0	21,040
Totals	1,621,465	1,621,465

2. The underspend is from the small grants programme and social inclusion fund. This is a result of careful evaluation and assessment of applications to establish what is needed for a project to be delivered.
3. During 2014/15, grants were awarded to 108 community and voluntary organisations and artists. The funding supported the delivery of a variety of projects from small community events to welfare benefits advice, community safety projects, training for volunteers and focused work with young people and the arts.
4. The majority of the groups funded through these programmes have received grant funding in previous years. However through the annual open bidding, small grants, social inclusion fund and youth ambition grants programmes 12 new organisations that the Council has not funded before were awarded a grant. Through our community engagement work more minority groups are being made more aware of the grant programmes and to promote the grant programmes wider social media mechanisms such as Facebook and Twitter are now being used.
5. £21,000 from the budget was made available for the commissioning of inclusive arts directly from the Arts & Culture team's core budget. (Details of how this funding was spent can be found in Appendix 1).

Process for gathering monitoring information

6. One of the conditions for funding is that organisations agree to provide feedback. This is generally by completing a monitoring form, site visit by officer(s) or a combination of both.

7. Monitoring ensures that the funding is used for the purpose it was given and gather evidence of the impact of the grant funding. It also provides the opportunity to find out if there are any external factors affecting the voluntary sector and how the organisation is weathering those effects.
8. At the 3rd July 2014 meeting of the City Executive Board it was agreed that for those organisations that fail to return monitoring information they will incur a penalty. The penalty is that the organisation will not be eligible for funding for one year and funding awarded to them will be reclaimed. All organisations funded in 2014/15 were written to notifying them of the change.
9. From April 2015 it was reiterated in their award letters informing them of the dates when their completed monitoring forms are due back and reminding them about the penalty. For the future, terms and conditions for grant funding will be updated to ensure funded organisations are aware that funding will be clawed back if monitoring is not returned.
10. The process for dealing with non-returns is as follows:
 - Three weeks past the deadline a reminder is sent out with a copy of the monitoring form and the organisation is informed that if monitoring is not returned this will impact on any future funding requests the Council may receive from them.
 - Five weeks past the deadline a second reminder is sent with a copy of the monitoring form followed up by email or telephone call reminding them about the penalty the organisation can incur if monitoring is not returned.
 - If there is still no response a letter will be sent to the organisation to inform them that by not returning their monitoring information they are not eligible for funding for one financial year and an invoice is raised reclaiming the funding awarded to them.
11. The majority of organisations respond to the first reminder. All organisations have returned their monitoring information for 2014/15.

Addressing Council Priorities

12. The community grants programme provides funding to a range of community and voluntary organisations who help deliver Corporate Plan objectives.
13. Groups funded through the open bidding, small grants, social inclusion and youth ambition programmes deliver activities and events that bring communities together building community cohesion supporting the Corporate Priority of Strong, Active Communities.
14. Voluntary organisations funded through the grants commissioning programme will be delivering services that have been identified by the Council as making a substantial contribution to the achievement of our corporate goals and supporting people in need from the most disadvantaged groups in the city.

Challenging Funding Environment for the Voluntary Sector

15. Since the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007 generally funding for the voluntary sector has slowly declined.
16. Through monitoring we are seeing stretched voluntary sector organisations spending more of their reserves on direct charity activity costs such as staff and bills.
17. Funding cuts are making themselves felt and with fewer funding sources available there is an increasing demand to grants providers.
18. Oxford City Council is receiving applications from organisations that in previous years would not have applied for funding such as those delivering care services and a far increased demand from organisations working with children and young people.
19. This was evidenced recently in March when the 2015/16 Youth Ambition grants programme opened for applications. The programme has a budget of £60,000 and the total amount requested was £101,621 compared to £45,430 in the same round last year. Consequently a review is currently on going to look at what the future implications might be for the Council.
20. We anticipate this trend to continue as further Government cuts are made.

Monitoring Information

21 Appendices 1 and 2 provide the following information:-

- Name of organisation / group
- Amount of grant awarded
- Description of project/activity
- Number of beneficiaries
- Brief description of what was achieved
- Total amount of match funding and / or funding levered in as a result of Oxford City Council funding.
- Case studies from a variety of organisations.

22. Table 2 below summarises the information listed in Appendix 1 for grants awarded through the 2014/15 Open Bidding Programme.

Table 2 – Annual Open Bidding Summary – grants up to £10,000

2014/15 Council Priority	Number of projects awarded a grant	Total amount of Grant Awarded	Total of other funding matched or levered in	Number of Beneficiaries from these projects	Some of the things the funding paid for
Strong, Active Communities	21	£97,700	£395,939	8,955 plus 20,000 households that received community newsletters	Community activities & events plus local newsletters

23. Table 3 below summarises the information in Appendix 1 for grants awarded through the small grants programme during 2014/15.

Table 3 - Open Bidding – small grants of up to £1,000

2014/15 Council Priority	Number of projects awarded a grant	Total amount of Grant Awarded	Total of other funding matched or levered in	Number of Beneficiaries from these projects	Some of the things the funding paid for
Strong, Active Communities	20	£14,671	£48,068	16,205	Community events, young people activities

24. Table 4 below summaries the information listed in Appendix 1 for grants awarded through the 2014/15 Youth Ambition grants programme

Table 4 – Open bidding - summary from Youth Ambition Grants Programme – grants of up to £10,000

2014-15 Council Priority	Number of groups funded	Total amount of Grant Awarded	Total of other funding matched or levered in	Number of beneficiaries of these project	Some of the things this funding paid for
Strong, Active Communities	15	£85,000	£123,280	346	Youth sessions, training volunteers, art focused activities and sport in our target areas

25. Table 5 below summaries the information in Appendix 1 for grants awarded through the 2014/15 Social Inclusion Fund.

Table 5 – Open bidding - Summary from the Social Inclusion Fund – grants of up to £7,000

2014/15 Council Priority	Number of projects awarded a grant	Total amount of Grant Awarded	Total of other funding matched or levered in	Number of Beneficiaries from these projects	Some of the things the funding paid for
		(£)	(£)		
Strong, Active Communities	11	£47,316	£22,893	1,021	Training, advice, transport for older people and an intergenerational project,

26 Tables 6 & 7 below summarises the information listed in Appendix 1 for grants awarded through the 2014/15 commissioning programme.

Table 6 – Commissioned Grants Summary

2014/15 Commissioning Theme	Number of groups funded	Total amount of Grant Awarded (£)	Total of other funding levered in (£)	Number of Beneficiaries from these projects	Some of the things the funding paid for
Arts	11	£255,262	£3,664,247	140,483	Training in film & digital media, music, Twinning events
Homelessness *	7	£442,279	£4,225,817	922 plus 139 households	Day centres, life skills, specialist workers,
Community Safety	3	£58,082	£107,094	561	Domestic violence outreach, helpline service for victims of sexual violence,
CVO Infrastructure	1	£48,736	£419,355	619 organisations who are members of OCVA of which 53% are in Oxford City	Providing information, support and advice to the voluntary sector.
Specialist Play	1	£15,000	£170,546	146	Supporting disabled children to participate in mainstream play
Oxford Credit Union	1	£20,000	n/a	1,156	Provides financial inclusion
Totals	24	£839,359	£8,587,059	143,268 people, plus 139 households & 619 CVO's	

* 9 grants were awarded through this programme however two projects were delivered by the Council (Sanctuary Scheme & Pre-Tenancy Training Scheme, see appendix 1 for details of these two projects)

Table 7 - Summary from Commissioned Advice Centres

2014/15 Council Priority	Number of Organisations	Total amount of Grant Awarded (£)	Number of Beneficiaries from these projects	Total Benefit take up (£)	Total amount of Debt Written Off (£)
Strong, Active communities	4	£498,379	10,398	£3,540,081	£901,950

Advice – General Trends

27. Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) reported that the income profile of their client's remains weighted towards those with least financial resource. A sample of 1,800 clients who gave information about their income levels in 2014/15 showed that 61% had incomes under £1,000 per month. This is made up of a mixture of things that include:-

- People in low paid full time work,
- People in low paid part time work and claiming benefits
- Or people just claiming benefits

28. Clients looking for help with debt problems continue to be one of the major issues people will visit an advice centre for. The total of client debt dealt with over the year amounts to £8,432,276. Priority debt (rent, mortgage, council tax etc) is still the biggest problem

29. Budgeting skills is built into the work the advice centres do with their clients. Ensuring that each client is helped to understand how their own budget works on a monthly basis and given the skills they need to help keep their finances under control.

Beneficiaries of the Grants Programme

30. The total number of people counted as benefitting from projects and activities funded through these grant programmes was 180,193.

31. It should be noted that one person might well have benefited from more than one project.

Climate Change / Environmental Impact

32. The report has no climate change or environmental implications.

Equalities Impact

33. Grant funding awarded to community and voluntary organisations has a significant and positive impact on equalities and promotes community cohesion. In particular, some grants actively support the achievement of equality by otherwise marginalised groups, such as funding supplied to Oxford Friend, to Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre and for a domestic violence case worker.

34. When applying for grant funding each organisation has to supply a copy of their equal opportunities statement to confirm they comply with this legislation

Financial Impact

35. The recommendations have no financial implications.

Legal Implications

36. There are no legal implications

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