

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Grant Allocations – Monitoring Report

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Grant Allocations Monitoring Report

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Christine Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the two recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Grant Allocations Monitoring Report at its meeting on 4 July 2016. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Christine Simm, Ian Brooke and Julia Tomkins for presenting this item and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Culture and Communities introduced the report and said that in a time of austerity there was less money to spend but increasing need in the City. The social and economic geography of Oxford was changing and was being impacted by things like the closure of children's centres. For many organisations a relatively small amount of grant funding could help to build resilience or leverage in other funding.

3. The Committee warmly welcomed the continued discretionary Council funding that facilitated the work of the local community and voluntary sector. The Committee agreed not to consider the merits of specific grant allocations and instead focused its discussion wider issues around grant monitoring.
4. The Committee questioned whether allocations could be conditional on recipients achieving match funding from other sources. The Committee heard that while this was taken into consideration, it should not be a requirement as the Council did not want to create barriers to small organisations seeking to access funding.
5. The Committee noted that the Council needed to achieve the best possible value for money from its grants programme. The amount of additional funding leveraged in and the number of beneficiaries were useful indications in this respect. The Committee noted that some types of interventions that benefit relatively few individuals, such as homelessness prevention, could deliver more social value than, for example, inclusive arts and culture schemes that benefit many more individuals. The Committee suggest that it would be useful to measure and monitor the social value impacts of grant allocations, perhaps at category level, in addition to leveraged funding and the numbers of beneficiaries.

Recommendation 1 – That consideration is given to how to quantify the social value achieved from the different grant programmes for community and voluntary organisations and to the inclusion of a measure of social value in future grant monitoring reports.

6. The Committee questioned how grant allocations were tied into service delivery and noted that they would like to see more research to inform how the Council could best focus resources (e.g. across homelessness grants and Discretionary Housing Payments). The Board Member said that the grant allocations were in line with the Council's strategic aims and that the Council's approach to advice commissioning, which was part of the Council's cross-cutting Financial Inclusion Strategy, was a good example of joined up thinking. The Committee suggest that consideration should be given to how the Council could do more of that and what the mechanism for doing so would be.

Recommendation 2 – That consideration is given to whether and how the Council could better integrate its grant programmes for community and voluntary organisations with related aspects of service delivery, with a view to focusing resources as effectively as possible.

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