

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9 February 2017

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

**Title of Report: Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations
2017/2018**

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Grant Allocations for 2017/18 decision.

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of Scrutiny

Executive lead members:

Councillor Christine Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

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

Background

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the Grant Allocations decision at a meeting on 30 January 2017. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Christine Simm, Councillor Susan Brown, Ian Brooke (Head of Community Services) and Julia Tomkins (Grants and External Funding Officer) for attending the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

Findings and recommendations

2. The Board Members for Culture and Communities and Customer and Corporate Services introduced the report. They said that that County Council funding reductions were having an impact and that the financial pressures facing many community and voluntary groups were likely to get worse. The City Council was committed to protecting funding for this sector and the approach set out in the report was similar to that taken in recent years. The Committee welcomed the

report and commented that relatively small grant awards could be very valuable to community and voluntary organisations, and that multi-year awards enabled organisations to plan ahead.

3. The Committee received confirmation that £20k had not yet been allocated from the Advice and Money Management theme, which has a budget of £518k. The Committee considered whether to recommend that this funding should be allocated but concluded that it would be useful to keep some headroom in case there were additional calls on this funding during the year, for example due to additional unexpected County Council budget cuts. The Committee suggest that the unallocated funding should be kept under review during the year to ensure that all of the £20k is spent.

Recommendation 1 – That the unallocated funding for the Advice and Money Management commissioning theme is kept under review with a view to ensuring that all available funding is allocated during the year.

4. The Committee noted that relatively few funding applications had been received from BME groups and questioned whether more could be done to encourage and support under-represented groups. The Grants and External Funding Officer advised that the small grants programme tended to be more appropriate for these groups and that two workshops had been offered; in Rose Hill Community Centre and the city centre. Locality Officers were encouraged to work with under-represented groups across the city and a new Diversity Officer was also now in post. The Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services added that it was important to try to step back and look at the overall picture rather than to automatically fund the same groups each year, and the new Commissioned Advice Strategy would better enable this type of approach. The Committee suggest that offering additional workshops in different locations across the city would also help to enable an inclusive approach to the allocation of small grants.

Recommendation 2 – That workshops aimed at encouraging and supporting under-represented groups to bid for small grants are offered in a wider range of locations across the city.

5. The Committee asked whether groups applying for grants through the Annual Open Bidding programme had access to examples of completed applications or to the council's assessment criteria, and heard that this was not the case. The Committee suggest that providing details of the council's assessment criteria on the application forms would help to support community and voluntary groups in applying for grant funding and improve transparency.

Recommendation 3 – That details of the criteria used to assess applications received through the Annual Open Bidding programme are made available to applicants (e.g. on the application forms).

6. The Committee noted that the recommended amount of grant funding awarded to groups and projects through the Annual Open Bidding programme varied from nil to 100% of the amount requested. The Committee commented that the rationales provided for the recommended awards (the 'Why?' column in Appendix

2) were inconsistent and some explanations were not particularly revealing. The Committee suggest that transparency would be improved if a more consistent approach could be taken in future years.

Recommendation 4 – That in future grant allocation reports a consistently transparent approach is taken to explaining the rationale for the levels of grants awarded through the Annual Open Bidding programme.

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List of background papers: None

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