

To: City Executive Board
Date: 19 September 2017
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Monitoring the Community Grant Programme – Report for 2016/16

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| Purpose of report: | To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations on the grant allocations monitoring report for 2016/17 |
| Key decision: | Yes |
| Executive Board Member: | Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of Scrutiny |
| Corporate Priority: | Strong, Active Communities |
| Policy Framework: | Corporate Plan and Community Centre Strategy |
| Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report | |

| Appendices |
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| None |

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the grant allocations monitoring report for 2016/17 at a meeting on 7 September 2017. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Dee Sinclair, Board Member for Culture and Communities, and Azul Strong, Locality Officer, who stood in at late notice, for attending the meeting to present the report and take questions.
2. The Executive Board Member for Culture and Communities introduced the report. She said the fact the Council was able to support so many groups and organisations to the tune of almost £1.5m was most welcome, a view shared by the Committee. The support offered to smaller groups was particularly appreciated by them. It was noteworthy that a significant proportion of the grants were directed to supporting people who were facing financial difficulties and/or homelessness.
3. The Locality Officer said that monitoring enabled the Council to assess the impacts of grant funding and also provided a window into the sector and the challenges

faced by community and voluntary organisations. She drew attention to some of the key elements of the report including the additional amounts matched or levered into the community for every £1 spent in each category of grant. She also highlighted the fact that 60% of funding had been directed to the Council's priority estates, having positive social impacts that helped in combatting inequality.

Summary and recommendations

4. The report's principal purpose was to report back on the programme for 2016/17. Many of the matters raised and recommendations considered related to the future programme and reporting of it, which would be the subject of a report to Scrutiny and the City Executive Board in November. The Committee agreed therefore to hold back on making recommendations that didn't directly relate to monitoring.
5. The Committee noted that monitoring was not a precise science and that the report relied to a significant extent on self-assessment by those in receipt of grants. The findings should, therefore, be treated with a little caution and this should be reflected in future reports.

Recommendation 1 - That the wording of future reports is be more nuanced to reflect the fact that monitoring relies to a significant extent on self-assessment, and perhaps comes with a 'health warning', notwithstanding the evidently positive overall picture.

6. The Committee noted that different grant allocations had different benefits and beneficiaries. Some grants benefited a small number of people to a large extent while others touched a lot of people but only had a slight impact. Given that the data in the report was principally quantitative in nature, the Committee suggested that future monitoring reports could include a greater focus on qualitative outcomes of grant awards, including, for example, case studies and equalities impact assessments.

Recommendation 2 - That consideration is given to including more qualitative data in future monitoring reports, a subset of which could be some form of equalities impact assessment.

7. The Committee commented that, in addition to more qualitative data, the 'spend per beneficiary' (i.e. the grant divided by the number of beneficiaries) would be a useful quantitative measure of a grant's efficacy and value for money to include in future reports.

Recommendation 3 – That future monitoring reports include data on the 'spend per beneficiary' of individual grant awards.

Further consideration

8. The Committee will consider a future report to the City Executive Board called Review of Community Grants Programme and Commissioned Advice Strategy 2018-2021 and may wish to revisit the following points and make recommendations at that stage:
 - That consideration is given to awarding grant funding to community and voluntary organisations over a longer term (e.g. 3 years), or on a 'rolling' 2 year basis, to reduce future uncertainties faced by these organisations and their staff.

- That closer scrutiny is given to how funding awarded to OCVA is deployed in supporting the needs of the wider community and actively helping to overcome barriers faced by excluded groups, as the current approach is not considered to be working.
- That consideration is given to arranging workshops in Community Centres and engaging with Parish Councillors to draw communities' attention to the opportunity of applying for grants and how to do so.
- That consideration is given to altering the proportions of the total grant fund available to different categories of grant with a view to increasing the proportion allocated to small grants.
- That feedback is given to groups and individuals who are unsuccessful in applying for grants.

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