

Questions from the OCVA



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Executive Board
Oxford City Council
Oxford Town Hall
St. Aldates
Oxford

Wednesday, 15th November 2017

Dear Executive Board

Prior to the Council Meeting on Tuesday, 21st November 2017 OCVA would like to submit the following questions to be addressed in relation to the Review of the Community Grants Programme.

Context: OCVA is the lead and main infra-structure support organisation for the Voluntary and Community Sector across Oxfordshire, of which there are approximately 5,000. Of these organisations and groups 52% of them are based in and delivering services in Oxford City. Most of these organisations are small to medium in size and have been organically grown in response to a need in the community in which they serve.

- 1. Given that the council currently grant fund OCVA to the value of £43,737 is it the council's intention to continue to fund the work at the same**



Enabling a diverse voluntary and community sector to flourish

level?

2. Given that the report highlights the following areas of focus for the future – help and support in *fundraising, advice and support on governance, and volunteering support,*

How do the City Council intend the Voluntary and Community Sector groups in the city to gain support in other areas of need, such as set up advice to new groups, policy development support, business planning, sustainability and development of organisations etc.

3. In reference to Appendix 5 CEB Report Risk Register. A risk assessment has been carried out considering risk to the council.

What risk assessment/impact assessment has been carried out in relation to the organisations that are currently funded through the grants programme, including OCVA? What are the results of this and how can they be accessed by the organisations affected by any changes made?

4. In response to the Scrutiny Committee minutes dated 7th Nov 2017 we would like to inform you that there are currently **124 groups** whose work is primarily targeted at BME communities based and delivering services in the city, who are registered with OCVA. Between April 2017-14th November 2017 **83 BME groups** have accessed one or more OCVA services.

Therefore, what information and evidence of the statement “Some members of the BME community did not see the OCVA as properly representing their interests” is there and where can this be accessed?

5. Currently the funding that OCVA receives from Oxford City Council via its grants process funds OCVA to deliver a Volunteer Brokerage service for the City, which includes signposting members of the public to organisations wanting volunteers *and* helping organisations work within the law to implement good practice in managing volunteers.

What are the City Council intending to purchase in the future in relation to volunteering support to organisations in the voluntary and community sector? How much resource will be allocated to it in the future? How do the City Council envisage the brokerage being provided in the city from next April?

6. Page 13 Point 24 of the report also says Quote “Through our monitoring additional areas of critical training have been identified such as financial planning and charitable trading. It is proposed that £5,000 of the allocation for this theme is retained by Oxford City Council to commission specialist training

for the sector”.

How has this figure been arrived at?

OCVA has an established training programme which responds to the ongoing changing needs of groups, delivered by a team of professional qualified specialist trainers. Currently the City Council purchased some specialist training for the sector (at no cost to the groups) as part of OCVA's grant agreement for the VCS.

Why haven't these 'findings' been discussed with OCVA as part of the grant monitoring process, for inclusion in the work targets currently?

I recently sought a meeting with the Executive Board member and Head of Service. Unfortunately, the date I was given I was unable to attend as I had a family funeral away from Oxfordshire. I was given an alternative date but this was subsequently cancelled and to date I await an alternative date to meet.

Thanking you in advance for your responses to the questions raised.

With regards

Kathy Shaw

K.A. Shaw
Chief Executive
OCVA

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Responses to questions from OCVA

Response to OCVA questions

Q1. Given that the council currently grant fund OCVA to the value of £43,737 is it the council's intention to continue to fund the work at the same level?

A1. Yes, £43,737 has been allocated for funding infrastructure support for the community and voluntary sector, however £5000 will be held back by the Council to commission some specialist training, which will be free for funded organisations to attend.

Q2 How do the City Council intend the VCS groups in the city to gain support in other areas of need, such as set up advice to new groups policy development support, business planning, sustainability and development of organisations etc.

A2. This will be provided through the service we commission

Q3 What risk assessment/impact assessment has been carried out in relation to the organisations that are currently funded through the grants programme, including OCVA? What are the results of this and how can they be accessed by the organisation affected by any changes made?

A3. No assessment is necessary because we aren't proposing changes to the essence of the commissioning programme only that it is made available for others to express an interest. All of our funded organisations are aware that 2017/18 is the last year of a three year grant programme and through this three year period funding agreements have been given on an annual basis.

We have been clear that there is no guarantee of future funding through any of our grant programmes and in the agreement signed by OCVA clause 8.3 states:-

'This Agreement shall remain in force for the period specified in the Payment and Monitoring Schedule (Schedule 2)* as being the period relating to the Organisation's receipt of the Grant Assistance and this Agreement shall not be permitted to roll over to any subsequent period thereafter under any circumstances whatsoever. Where the Organisation wishes to receive Grant Assistance after the expiry of the term it shall make a new application to the Council for such Grant Assistance.'

*schedule 2 states The funding is for the municipal year (1st April to 31st March). The period in which grant assistance has been approved is for the 2017 / 2018 financial year.

Question 4 relates to the anecdotal view of a Councillor on the Scrutiny Panel

Q5 What are the City Council intending to purchase in the future in relation to volunteering support to organisations in the VCS? How much resource will be allocated to it in the future? How do the City Council envisage the brokerage being provided in the city from next April?

A5. Part of the commissioned service will be to link volunteers and opportunities which is much as we do currently,

Q6a How is this figure arrived at?

The proposed budget of £5000 will enable us to deliver 3-4 free specialist training opportunities.

Q6b Why haven't these 'findings' been discussed with OCVA as part of the grant monitoring process, for inclusion in the work targets currently.

When monitoring organisations which we fund it has come up that due to the loss of funding the key thing that organisations are finding it difficult to pay for is training. In some cases we have managed to arrange free of charge training for small numbers on specific topics such as Prevent (preventing people from being drawn in to terrorism and keeping people safe) but we are taking the end of the funding cycle as an opportunity to more robustly respond to this challenge.

As part of our SLA with OCVA we ask them to provide 10 free training places for organisations that we refer to them but by retaining this fund we can fund many times more free training spaces for the sector. This will have a particular benefit to the sector in accessing specialist training which is of a wide benefit such as financial planning or charitable trading.

Question from Sue Tanner

Written question on item 8 of the meeting of the City Executive Board

We refer to the proposal to cut the budgets of advice agencies by 5% with effect from April 2018 in order to create a Development Fund (see paragraph 35 of the report).

We would like to ask Councillors Dee Sinclair and Susan Brown if they have considered the request to officers by all four advice centres affected by the proposal, to postpone this reduction in core funding until at least April 2019 for the following reasons:

- The advice agencies in question lost a significant amount of funding when the County Council withdrew all grants in April 2016. As a result of this, some have already had to reduce staff hours
- All advice agencies in Oxford, along with the City Council itself, are facing increased demand for their services because of the roll-out of Universal Credit
- The process for drawing down the grant pot is yet to be decided and it will take time for this to be put into place. As a result, the four agencies will have to budget for a further cut in April 2018 if this proposal goes ahead as tabled
- They would like to bid for projects with strategic impact for the future of advice and this will take some time, thought and discussion to do well
- A longer lead time could enable them to secure match funding and so increase the value of the grant and improve its impact for residents

Sue Tanner

Secretary to the Board of Trustees

Rose Hill & Donnington Advice Centre