

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD

11 January 2016

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 KEY VOLUNTARY SECTOR BODIES – REVIEW OF CORE GRANT SUPPORT

To set out proposals to review grants awarded annually to key voluntary sector bodies.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Borough Council currently provides annual funding support to a number of key voluntary sector bodies who provide support services to residents within the Borough. These grants are subject to adopted service level agreements with those bodies setting out what needs to be provided in return for the grant support. The total annual cost of these grants are £147,000 with the majority of this (£111,000) being awarded to Citizens' Advice. The other bodies awarded grant support are:

- those that promote volunteering in the community and provide other support services such as community transport (Involve Kent, formerly Voluntary Action Maidstone) and Imago (formerly Voluntary Action Within Kent)
- those that provide support to older people (Age Concern Malling and Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge)
- those that provide mediation services (West Kent and Maidstone).

1.1.2 A report was made to the former Communities and Health Advisory Board in March 2015 suggesting that one year service level agreements be adopted for each of these bodies for the 2015/16 period. This allowed for a more fundamental review of grants and services to take place and inform new three year agreements for the period 2016/17 to 2018/19. Changes to the Tonbridge and Malling CAB were also then in train at that time involving a merger with Sevenoaks and Swanley and Gravesham CABs. That new merged organisation is now in place, Citizens Advice in North and West Kent, and a new service level agreement is therefore now required.

1.1.3 The following core grants were agreed for the current financial year:

Tonbridge and Malling CAB - £111,000
 Voluntary Action within Kent - £5,000
 Voluntary Action Maidstone - £5,000
 Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge - £10,000
 Age Concern Malling - £10,000
 Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Services - £6,000 (shared grant)

1.2 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy

1.2.1 As Members will be aware, the Council has recently adopted a Transformation and Savings Plan which sets out the need for the Council to identify savings of some £1.4M by April 2018. The recent local government financial settlement now suggests that a further savings tranche of an additional £700,000 will be needed. Given this challenging financial situation we now face, a review of the grants that are currently awarded to outside bodies, including those in the voluntary sector, needs to be undertaken. Whilst any significant reduction in such grants is regrettable, the Borough Council must explore savings across a wide range of Council services in order to meet these growing financial challenges.

1.3 Next Steps

1.3.1 The Borough Council is a signatory to the Kent Compact, an agreement between Kent Councils and the voluntary sector. This requires prior consultation with the voluntary sector should any changes in agreements or future funding be proposed. The above voluntary bodies have therefore been informed of the start of this review and engagement with them is underway to explore future funding and draft revised service level agreements.

1.3.2 It is recognised that any reduction in grant support to our voluntary bodies will need to be carefully managed. To be consistent for all groups affected, we have consulted those bodies on a reduction in the range of 15% - 25% in annual grant for each voluntary body.

1.3.3 The above option would enable the Borough Council to reduce its annual budget for voluntary sector support thus creating an annual saving of at least £21,750. It is therefore recommended we report to the next meeting of this Board on 1st March 2016 to receive the comments of those consulted, to make a final decision on the levels of grant going forward and to adopt revised service level agreements with each body for the next three year period.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 To be considered as part of the review of individual service level agreements.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 As set out above.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Any potential risks to future service delivery are likely to emerge via the consultation process.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 At the consultation stage, the decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the Borough's key voluntary sector bodies **BE CONSULTED** on proposals to reduce grant support, as set out in this report, and that a further report **BE MADE** to the next meeting of this Board on the outcome of that process.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive