

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

25 February 2020

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 agree future grant support to key voluntary sector organisations.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Borough Council provides funding to support a number of key voluntary sector bodies who provide support services to residents. We are now nearing the end of the existing one year term and each organisation has been asked to provide a brief summary of progress achieved (Annex 1 and Annex 2). Each of the organisations have made good progress against objectives set out in their respective SLA's and have provided consistent, professional support for residents.
- 1.1.2 We are now nearing the end of the term for existing SLA's and need to secure appropriate levels of funding going forward. We have consulted with each organisation to establish the implications to service delivery, if a reduction were applied to their grant. In doing this, we would then have an opportunity to extend the terms of the SLA's (for a suggested four year term) which would provide increased security and stability for the organisations. Providing a longer term for the grants will support organisations to manage their activity in the knowledge that income from the Council has been set for the four year term (subject to delivery of objectives within the SLA).
- 1.1.3 We are grateful for responses received from each grant recipient, a summary of which is attached (Annex 3).

1.2 Impact of Proposed Changes

- 1.2.1 As highlighted by all grant recipients in Annex 3, it is acknowledged that reductions to the grants are necessary in light of the financial situation and to provide the Council with the opportunity to fix grants for a four year period, which has been very welcome.

- 1.2.2 Both Imago and Involve have indicated that the reduction would not cause significant difficulties and the impacts could be managed within their organisations.
- 1.2.3 Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge have stressed that any reduction will cause problems for service users and they will need to try to raise additional funding to cover any reduction from the Council. An added problem for them is that the KCC contract for Wellbeing is not yet finalised and they will not know the outcome of any changes to this funding until March 2020.
- 1.2.4 The Mediation Schemes will endeavour to continue the same service, but they also mentioned that the demand for their services is growing. However, funding is also awarded to the Mediation Schemes via an additional grant from our Community Safety Unit. For 2019/20 they also received £2,500 from the CSU and are likely to be awarded a similar amount for 2020/21.
- 1.2.5 Citizens Advice North and West Kent (CANWK) have responded by exploring potential changes to their current delivery model, which would allow for greater efficiencies. The main changes would be a reduction in the drop in, face to face service offered at Tonbridge Castle to two days as opposed to the current three day service. The available day would then be provided as a digital service (benefiting the whole borough and not just those who are able to access services at the Castle). They would also make better use of room space to avoid hiring additional rooms at Tonbridge Castle (which would save CANWK £8,000). Under these suggested new arrangements, they will be able to help the same number of residents as before, but there would be more emphasis on telephone and digital services and less emphasis on face to face appointments.
- 1.2.6 CANWK have also noted that a potential increase to the level of support could be offered, if a lower reduction could be agreed upon. Within this option, they would still make the efficiency savings as detailed above but could use the additional funds to rent rooms and provide additional face to face support across Tonbridge and Malling.

1.3 Possible Options

- 1.3.1 It is clear from the responses received that the security of a four year settlement is favoured by some of the organisations who would value and appreciate longer term funding settlements. However, it is also noted that reductions faced by some of the organisations, in particular those where other funding streams are currently uncertain, would prove difficult.
- 1.3.2 In light of this, Members may wish to consider a more detailed review of the options, via the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee? If this were to be reviewed over the coming months, it would allow time to consult in further depth with the organisations involved, explore funding and delivery options and perhaps allow the Committee to hear from the organisations regarding how any specific

changes would affect delivery of their service. This review could also include other partnerships that are grant funded by the Council.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

As detailed in the report and Annex's 1-3. If existing grants are reduced it would allow for them to be fixed for a 4 year period (subject to delivery of objectives within the SLA). For reference, grants for 2019/20 were set at the following rates:

CANWK - £95,000

Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge - £8,000

Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Scheme - £4,800

Imago - £4,000

Involve - £4,000

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 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 based on good progress by all of the voluntary bodies and the vital support provided to residents, that grant funding is **CONTINUED** for each organisation in line with Service Level Agreements.

1.8.2 That, based on the positive responses received regarding the suggested longer term settlement of four years and the level of difficulty highlighted with any reduction to grant, Members consider and **AGREE** each of the following two options:

- 1) Maintain the grant to CANWK and Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge at existing levels for a one year term. Undertake a further more detailed review via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to fully explore options for the future.
- 2) In respect of Imago, Involve and Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Schemes, offer each organisation a choice, as follows: respecting the fact that they overtly welcomed the security of a four year settlement, set grants at the reduced rate for a fixed four year settlement, **OR** offer each organisation the opportunity to maintain the grant at existing levels for a one year term and

undertake a further more detailed review via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to fully explore options for the future.

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: Gill Fox

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive