

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

15 February 2022

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 VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS

To agree levels of grant funding to key voluntary and community sector groups for the next financial year

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 For many years the Borough Council has provided funding to support several key voluntary sector bodies who provide support services to residents within the Borough.
- 1.1.2 Two years ago, we undertook a review of funding arrangements to secure appropriate grant agreements with each of our key organisations. The outcome of this review meant that three agencies opted to accept a slightly lower grant in return for the security of a fixed amount for the following 4 years. These were: Involve, Imago and Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Scheme.
- 1.1.3 Each of the above three organisations have produced a summary of their progress achieved against the objectives set out in the Service Level Agreements **[Annex 1]**. The pandemic has continued to add increased pressure and changed methods of operating for all, but the reports highlight the excellent and vital work that has been undertaken over this very difficult period.
- 1.1.4 At the review two years ago, Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Citizens Advice North and West Kent (CANWK) felt it would be difficult to continue to offer their support services on a lower amount. Both organisations opted to maintain their existing grant amount on a 1-year SLA, but to undertake a full review of the grant arrangements via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.1.5 The review was postponed as we were fully aware that the pandemic increased demand for the services offered by both organisations. We therefore did not consider any grant reductions whilst the organisations dealt with the emergency and provided vital support services in the community.

- 1.1.6 For the year to date, both CANWK and Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge have provided a summary of progress [**Annex 2 and Annex 3**]. Whilst it has once again been a difficult and extremely busy year for each organisation, the Council needs to review all areas of expenditure.
- 1.1.7 Both organisations were asked to consider the level of grant funding and provide their thoughts on any impacts in service delivery if the grant were to be reduced. To mitigate the effects of a reduced grant, a 2-year SLA would be offered to allow the organisations to manage the reduction with the least impact on service delivery.
- 1.1.8 The response provided from the CAB highlighted the difficulties this would bring. Although there have been some efficiencies in a move to a more remote operation for some of their services, this has also added costs in relation to IT infrastructure and support for volunteers working remotely. It was stated that at this time, any reduction in the level of grant from the Council would inevitably mean a reduced service for residents. It is therefore suggested that the grant remains the same for another 1-year term.
- 1.1.9 Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge appreciate the support given to the charity and fully understood the need for the Council to review all expenditure. It was stated that they felt they could manage a 20% reduction if the SLA was fixed for 2 years. It is therefore suggested that a 20% reduction is made to the existing level of grant funding (which is currently set at £8,000).

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 To be addressed via Service Level Agreements

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 For the three organisations with fixed 4-year grants, the funding as they enter year three of their agreements, will remain as follows:

Maidstone and West Kent Mediation Schemes - £4,320

Imago - £3,600

Involve - £ 3,600

- 1.3.2 For CANWK, it is suggested that another 1-year agreement be maintained at the existing level of £95,000.
- 1.3.3 For Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge it is suggested that a 2 year agreement is put in place, with a 20% reduction in grant funding taking the grant to £6,400.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 N/A

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 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.

1.6 Policy Considerations

- 1.6.1 Community
- 1.6.2 Crime & Disorder Reduction
- 1.6.3 Health and Safety
- 1.6.4 Healthy Lifestyles

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 That based on the good progress and the support provided to residents from Involve, Imago and the Mediation Schemes, that grant funding is **CONTINUED** for year 3 of the 4-year agreement.
- 1.7.2 That based on the good progress and the support provided to residents from CANWK, grant funding is **MAINTAINED** at current levels for the financial year 2022/23.
- 1.7.3 That based on the good progress and support provided, a **2-year agreement** is put in place with Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, at £6,400.

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:

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Nil

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