

Agenda Item No: 7

Report Title: **Voluntary Sector Support**

Report To: **Scrutiny** **Date:** **18 January 2018**

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Tony Nicholson**

Ward(s) Affected: **All**

Report By: **Nazeya Hussain, Director of Business Strategy and Development**

Contact Officer(s)-

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Purpose of Report:

1. The purpose of this report is to report on the performance of those voluntary organisations funded by the Council in 2017/18 and for Cabinet to agree the Council's policy on grants to voluntary organisations and the levels of grant funding for 2018/19 .

Officers Recommendations:

2. To scrutinise the performance of those voluntary organisations that received funding from the Council in 2017/18 as set out in paragraphs 18 to 34.
3. To note the proposed policy on Grant funding to voluntary organisations in the Lewes District as set out in paragraph 14.
4. To note the proposed allocation of funding to voluntary organisations for 2018/19 as set out in the table at paragraph 39.
5. To endorse the approach set out in paragraph 38 to allocation of the additional £30,000 for voluntary organisations to mitigate risks raised by the roll-out of Universal Credit.

Reasons for Recommendations

6. The Council may choose to give grants to voluntary organisations subject to delivery of agreed activities and outcomes. The Council funds a small number of strategic voluntary sector organisations which provide a range of essential services to our residents which address key Council priorities. The proposed policy set out in this document is designed to make explicit the reasons for funding these organisations and the terms on which these grants are offered.
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Background

7. The Council recognises and highly values the significant contributions that the community and voluntary sector play in delivering services to our residents. Partnership working is a key priority for Lewes District, and the Council is committed to working with voluntary and community organisations through the giving of community grants. This helps support a thriving voluntary sector in Lewes District. In addition, the giving of funding to such groups can also provide a cost effective way of delivering the Council's objectives.
8. For many years the Council has provided funding to a small number of voluntary and community organisations on a recurring basis, these being: the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), 3VA, Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) and Sompriti. These particular organisations have been funded because of the core role they play in enabling and supporting other parts of the community and voluntary sector (3VA and AiRS) or because of the unique advisory role they provide to those experiencing hardship or disadvantage (CAB and Sompriti).

Proposed Grants Policy

9. The Council's approach to providing grants to voluntary organisations has remained similar over many years. In this report the opportunity is being taken to make that approach explicit within the following policy statement;
 - a) The policy is to offer grant funding to a small number of organisations which provide essential services to our residents, particularly those experiencing hardship or disadvantage, or which play a key role providing infrastructure services to enable and support a thriving community and voluntary sector in the District.
 - b) The Council only offers grants to organisations which are well embedded in the Lewes District and are able to deliver services which build on strong links with local communities.
 - c) Organisations funded must be fully inclusive, and in a position to deliver services across the whole geographical area.
 - d) Grants will only be given to organisations which have a need for grant funding; which have sound governance arrangements and financial management; which can demonstrate good value for money and a significant use of volunteers in the delivery of their services; and which have clear policies on safeguarding where appropriate and on equality and inclusion covering service users, volunteers and staff and encompassing, as a minimum, all those groups protected under the Equality Act 2010.
 - e) Given current constraints on all Council budgets, the Council will not make any allowance for inflation.

Grants

10. In February 2015, the Council agreed to award grants for a three year period to CAB, 3VA, AiRS and Sompriti. It is proposed that grant be awarded in 2018/19 to these same organisations and to Lewes District Churches Together Homelink to continue providing the service already funded through a housing grant.
11. It is proposed that grant be allocated for the following three years, 2019/20 to 2021/22 subject to compliance with the terms of a grant agreement, satisfactory delivery of the services supported by the grant and the availability of funds. This is in line with the agreement in 2015 to award three year funding, thereby providing financial certainty enabling these organisations to plan ahead and ensure consistent delivery of service. Having the security of a three year grant from the Council can also assist voluntary organisations in levering in further funding from other sources.
12. The grant agreement will continue to provide a mechanism for the Council to monitor the organisations' performance and delivery closely. The agreements specify the amount of funding, what activities the grant can be used for, minimum legal and service requirements, monitoring and evaluation processes. It should be noted, however, that all grant agreements will contain clauses enabling review, termination and/or renegotiation of terms should the need for the service change or to address any performance issues encountered.

Performance in 2016/17 and 2017/18

13. Regular quarterly monitoring meetings have been held with those organisations which receive larger grants (Lewes District CAB, 3VA and Sompriti) and annual meetings with those receiving smaller grants (AiRS).
14. In addition, at the request of the Scrutiny Committee, presentations were given to Members on 9 November 2017 by the four organisations receiving grants in the current year. These presentations provided Members with information about the services provided by those organisations and some examples of particular achievements and successes over the past year.

Lewes District CAB

15. The CAB helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice. LDC currently provides around 84% of their core funding with the Town Councils across the district providing the remaining 16%. The CAB is currently awaiting the outcome of discussions with the Town Councils about grant for 2018/19, but it is anticipated that the proportion of funding borne respectively by LDC and the Town Councils will be the same as in the current financial year.
16. In the past year the CAB has continued to provide advice services for a range of clients across the district. Most recent data indicates that the CAB is seeing around 4000 clients at the Bureau's various locations each year. The most recently quarterly figures showed that Benefits/ Tax Credits accounted for 42% of cases, Debt accounted for 13%, Housing accounted for 10%, Relationship / Family issues accounted for 8%, and Employment issues for 6%.

17. One of the key measures used to determine the success of the Bureau is the financial outcomes for clients (in terms of income gain, debts written off or repayments rescheduled) resulting from the help provided through CAB advice. This is expressed as an 'annualised value'. The total value for the second quarter of 2017/18 was £438,124, similar to levels achieved in previous quarters. When presenting to Members in November, the CAB stated that in 2016/17 they had been successful in securing £1,388,473 in benefits for their clients.
18. The Bureau is reaching clients from across the district with the largest numbers coming from Peacehaven (23%), Seaford, (22%), Newhaven (18%), and Lewes (16%).
19. In recognition of the geographical spread of demand on their service, together with the socio-economic make-up of the district the council has been working with the CAB to move their main office from Lewes to Newhaven. The council approved a capital investment of up to £175,000 in September 2016 to refurbish premises to help enable this. The refurbishment works have taken place during the latter part of 2017. The Bureau will also retain a presence in Lewes through use of shared space in Southover House reception for 3 days each week. At the time of writing the CAB is in the process of making those moves and a formal opening of the new premises in Newhaven is likely to take place in March 2018.

3VA

20. As a Council for Voluntary Service, 3VA provides support for voluntary and community organisations across the Eastbourne, Lewes District and Wealden areas of East Sussex. They provide a range of practical support to charities and community groups including start-up support, funding advice, help with governance and training. Their services help to inform, sustain and develop the voluntary and community sector in the area.
21. In the past year 3VA has continued to provide valuable up-to-date information to local groups through its weekly digital newsletter. In the first half of 2017/18 3VA supported thirty Lewes-based organisations with one to one help and advice as well as five county-wide groups. 3VA continued to support the local Dementia Action Alliances in Lewes and the Havens. Both Alliances are now meeting on a regular basis and 3VA will continue to support them in future years as part of their core service.
22. A significant development in the past year has been the successful establishment of two community networks, one covering Lewes and the Havens, the other covering Seaford. This work has been supported by funding from East Sussex County Council and closely linked with the health and social care programme, Better Together. The networks are proving invaluable allowing groups to share experience, information and resources and 3VA to develop a greater understanding the needs and aspirations of voluntary and community groups.

AiRS

23. AiRS is the Rural Community Council for Sussex. The organisation's purpose is to provide practical help and support to rural communities across both East and West Sussex enabling them to be vibrant, living and working places. The funding provided by the Council is specifically to support the organisation's work with village halls and community buildings in the Lewes district.
24. In the past year AiRS have continued to produce a monthly newsletter with information and advice which is sent to village hall management committees in the district. They have delivered training and provided one-to-one advice and assistance to individual village halls as needed. Ditchling, Ringmer, Barcombe and Wivelsfield Village Halls have benefited from this assistance in the past year.

Sompriti

25. Sompriti supports black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and individuals across East Sussex. They work with individuals from a range of different backgrounds and heritage, organising community events, and providing bilingual support to residents in a variety of community languages.
26. In 2016/17 they supported twelve families to improve their mental wellbeing; supported Syrian refugee families to make connections with local services and communities; supported small BME business and trained fourteen local businesses in Food Hygiene; ran Tour of Lewes walks; and organised four local events attended by 125 local BME residents. They also recruited 22 volunteers to work for them.
27. The grant awarded to Sompriti has assisted the Council in fulfilling its duties under the Equality Act 2010, by improving access to Council services for BME communities and advancing equality of opportunity.

Lewes District Churches Together Homelink

28. LDC Housing has also granted Lewes District Churches Together Homelink £11,800 towards their work providing housing deposits and rent in advance to homeless households and those at risk of homelessness referred to them by the Council's housing needs officers. The grant will be supplemented by a grant of £15,600 from East Sussex County Council towards this work. This service is a key part of the Council's work to prevent and relieve homelessness. Officers refer those households who are not covered by the Council's own statutory duties for rehousing, such as those who do not have a priority need for rehousing under the terms of the Housing Act 1996. Under the terms of the grant agreement, this funding may only be used for essential costs, such as rent deposits.
29. Between January 2017 and end of September 2017, Homelink made loans totalling £103,723 for housing deposits and rent in advance to 81 households.

Funding for 2018/19 to 2021/22

30. It is proposed that core funding for CAB, 3VA, AiRS, Sompriti and Homelink be granted in 2018/19 at the same level as for 2017/18 with two exceptions.

31. Funds have previously been allocated to the CAB from HRA specifically for Specialist Money and Benefits Advice for LDC housing tenants who are experiencing rent or council tax arrears. This grant has contributed to 52 hours of Specialist Advice services for tenants and has helped those experiencing debt problems to help them manage their repayments and at the same time importantly helped to reduce the Council's court/eviction costs.
32. The Specialist Advice Services are provided by salaried, highly experienced and trained specialists, unlike other aspects of the service which are delivered mainly by volunteers. To ensure appropriate staff can be recruited and retained, and that service levels and quality can be sustained through the likely period of high demand (due to Universal Credit) it is proposed that funding from the HRA for Specialist Services is increased by around £4k for each specialist service.
33. At its meeting on 6th December, Council resolved to allocate £30,000 to award as grant to a voluntary organisation to help mitigate the impact of the rollout of Universal Credit Full Service scheduled to begin in September 2018. It is proposed that a specification for a service be drawn up and bids be invited from suitably qualified voluntary organisations to undertake this work.

2018/19 Funding Schedule

34. The funding proposed for 2018/19 is detailed in the below table. Funding for the second, third and fourth years of the grant period will be brought to Cabinet for consideration in future years.

Org	£ funded (17/18)	Proposed Funding £ (18/19)
CAB	Core Grant 140, 340 (HRA benefits advice) 13,400 (HRA money advice) <u>13,465</u> <u>167,205</u>	Core Grant 140, 340 (HRA benefits advice) 17,500 (HRA money advice) <u>17,500</u> <u>175,340</u>
3VA	28,000	28,000
AiRS	3,500	3,500
Sompriti	10,000	10,000
Homelink	11,800	11,800
To be allocated		30,000 One year only – to mitigate impact to Universal Credit full service. Bids to be invited from suitably qualified

Org	£ funded (17/18)	Proposed Funding £ (18/19) organisations

Financial Appraisal

35. The core elements of funding for 2018/19 to 2021/22 proposed in this report can be met from base budgets. Allowance for the increased funding from the Housing Revenue Account will be included in the draft HRA budget for 2018/19, which is presented elsewhere on this Agenda.

Legal Implications

36. Since the allocation of council funds recommended at paragraphs 8 and 9 above constitutes public funding, regard must be had to EU rules on State Aid. The purpose of the State Aid regime is to prevent public authorities (including local government) from giving financial advantages to organisations in a way which could distort competition between Member States.

Public funding of any organisation up to a maximum of 200,000 euros over a rolling period of 3 years is classed as “de minimis aid” (subject to certain other qualifying criteria). The EU considers that an amount of aid below this threshold has a negligible impact on competition and trade, and does not need notification or approval by the EU Commission. The level of proposed funding to 3VA, AiRS, Sompriti and Homelink is likely to fall within the scope of de minimis, and therefore legitimate, state aid.

The proposed funding to CAB exceeds the de minimis aid threshold. However, the nature of CAB’s activities means that local public support measures (such as local authority funding) can be granted without prior Commission approval. Guidance issued by the Commission in April 2015 indicates that public support to purely local operations do not involve state aid within the meaning of EU rules, because they are unlikely to have a significant effect on trade between Member States.

CAB’s advice is aimed only at the local population, competition for which only exists at local level. Further, language issues, and features of the local health, benefits and debt systems (the principal topics dealt with by CAB) make cross-border competition unlikely.

Accordingly, it is considered lawful to proceed with the funding as proposed, without the need for prior EU Commission notification or approval under State Aid rules.

Lawyer consulted 04.01.18. Legal ref: 005822-LDC-OD

Risk Management Implications

37. If Cabinet agrees the recommendations in this report the following risks need to be addressed:

- a) There is a risk that public funding does not deliver the outcomes expected. This risk will be mitigated by close monitoring of the organisations funded through quarterly monitoring reports and meetings. In the event of poor performance or non-compliance with the conditions of funding, the grant agreements allow for grant to be withheld.
38. A number of risks have been identified in the event that the recommendations in this report are not approved:
- a) there would be a reduction in the level of services available to Lewes District residents arising from the lack of funding for provision of these. This would be particularly acute in the case of advice services which are experiencing high demand at present.
 - b) there would also be risks to the Council's reputation if it fails to support key voluntary sector and BME communities in the district.

Equality and Fairness Analysis

37 An Equality and Fairness Analysis is attached at Appendix A.

Background Papers

38 The performance monitoring reports relating to each of the organisations funded are held by the Business Strategy and Performance Team.

STRONGER together



Lewes District Council



Working in partnership with Eastbourne Homes

Equality and Fairness Analysis Findings report – Voluntary Sector Support

Policy = the full range of our policies, practices, activities, projects, procurement and decisions, whether it is formally written down or whether it is informal custom and practice. This includes all existing policies and any new policies under development.

Person responsible for analysis	Pat Taylor	
Person responsible for policy development	Pat Taylor	
Policy area (or function)	Business Planning and Performance	
Service area responsible for implementing the policy	Business Planning and Performance	
Originator (if not the Council)	n/a	
Is the policy proposed (new) or existing?	Proposed	
Is it an LDC/EBC policy or a partnership initiative?	LDC only	
Key people involved in the policy development and its implementation	Voluntary Sector partners currently in receipt of funding	
Decision making bodies the policy will be referred to	LDC Cabinet	
Who is the responsible Director/Assistant Director?	Nazeya Hussain	
Date of first equality quality check (internal)		
Date of external equality stakeholder group		

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The public sector equality duty is made up of a ‘general equality duty’ which in turn is supported by ‘specific duties’. The general equality duty is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and came into force on 5th April 2011. The general equality duty sets out what is required of public authorities and the specific duties help public authorities comply with the statutory obligations.

As a summary, we must, in the exercise of our functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not share it;
3. Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not share it.

These are commonly referred to as the three aims of the general duty.

The second aim (advancing equality of opportunity) involves, in particular, having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people because of their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Equality Act further states that the steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different to the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of a disabled persons’ impairment.

It describes the third aim (fostering good relations) as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

It explains that compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as long as this is within the law.

The duty also covers a ‘person’ who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions. We retain the responsibility for the ‘person’ having due regard to the three aims when delivering a service on our behalf. This should be written into their contract with us.

By thoroughly assessing what we do against the general duty we are able to make better decisions about what we do, leading to better outcomes for people who work for us and for people who access our services and facilities.

Context and Scope

<p>What is the purpose of the policy and why is it needed?</p> <p>The Council has historically funded a small number of strategic voluntary sector organisations which provide a range of essential services to our residents which address key Council priorities. The proposed policy is designed to make explicit the reasons for funding these organisations and the terms on which these grants are offered. The Cabinet Report asks Council Members to approve the allocation of grants to these organisations in 2018/19.</p>
<p>In what context will it operate and who is it intended to benefit?</p> <p>The Council recognises the key strategic value of the services offered by the organisations applying for grants. Grants are designed to ensure residents have access to essential services and local voluntary and community organisations have the support they need to thrive.</p>
<p>What are the expected outcomes/longer term benefits of the policy?</p> <p>The policy proposed makes it clear that the Council offers grants to organisations which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide essential services to our residents, particularly those experiencing hardship or disadvantage,• are well embedded in the Lewes District and able to deliver services which build on strong links with local communities,• are fully inclusive, and in a position to deliver services across the whole geographical area, and which• have clear policies on equality and inclusion covering service users, volunteers and staff, encompassing, as a minimum, all those groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. <p>In addition, the funding is tailored to meet specific needs and address barriers, namely those faced by BAME communities, rural communities and residents who face difficulties relating to their socio-economic status.</p> <p>Specific intended outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice services offered by CAB across the district to enable people to secure the benefits and pay to which they are entitled, and meet their living costs.• Sompriti work with BAME people to ensure they have access to the services they need to secure employment, develop their own businesses and build links with people in their own and other communities.• 3VA provides information, advice, guidance, support, training and other services to voluntary and community groups within the district working to improve the lives of a wide range of the Council's residents.• Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) provide key support to committees running local village halls to ensure they have the practical information, advice and help they

need to work effectively.

- Lewes District Churches Together Homelink provide financial support to enable homeless households which the Council does not have a duty to rehouse – to enable them to secure housing.

Information and Research

List all sources of information and relevant data that was obtained and considered in the assessment and include the groups you consulted with?

Equality Act 2010

Equality and Fairness Policy – Lewes District Council

East Sussex in Figures

Monitoring data from grant recipients

Were any gaps identified in this information and if so, what are these and what actions are being taken to address them?

There is no data on sexual orientation or gender re-assignment. This was previously included in data collection surveys and the Census, but was dropped in 2011 because of its sensitive nature and the perceived intrusiveness of questions on this.

The Council aims to ensure data collection complies with good practice and is in line with national data collection.

Monitoring data is agreed with individual organisations in receipt of LDC grants and includes different levels of customer profiling according to the type of service offered. The CAB provides comprehensive equality data. 3VA and AiRS provide data on groups rather than statistical data on use and Sompriti provide reports on the number of activities and participants rather than detailed profiling of participants.

The Council does not currently hold copies of the Equality policies of the organisations supported, so needs to obtain these prior to signing new grant agreements.

Analysis and Assessment

What are the main findings, trends and themes arising out of the research and information you have gathered and any consultation you have carried out?

10,894 Lewes District residents (11.1%) are estimated to be affected by income deprivation. Ensuring the continued delivery of comprehensive advice services and increasing the funding available to provide Specialist Benefits and Debt advice will help meet the needs of these residents and is a key priority for the Council.

CAB statistics show slight differences in the profile of users compared with the population of the district as a whole. The ages of people using their services are broadly in line with general population profiles, although with a sharper reduction in use by groups past retirement age. The proportion of service users who identified their ethnic origin as White British / Irish / other was slightly higher than in the wider population.

The main difference was in the proportion of women using the service (62%) compared with men (38%), and with the proportion of residents who are female (51.4%).

Almost a quarter of people in the Lewes District (22,329) living in rural areas, compared with 75,173 in the urban areas. Whilst residents in rural areas do not have access in their immediate neighbourhood to face to face advice services (and this would not be financially viable), they are able to access advice services through the Advice Line telephone service and on-line sources.

Funding for Lewes District Churches Together Homelink is specifically targeted at people who are homeless or at immediate risk of becoming homeless.

The grant to 3VA supports their work with a wide range of organisations, including BAME groups, and the funding for AiRS contributes to the efforts of Parish Councils and rural communities to provide activities and services through their local village halls.

Similarly, the funding to Sompriti supports their efforts to engage with BAME people to increase their engagement in local activities and access to services.

Between them, the grants awarded to these organisations go some way to overcoming the barriers that residents may face.

<p>Which protected groups will it affect/benefit the most? <i>Considering who the policy is intending to benefit and what the</i></p>	Age	M	E
	Disability	M	E
	Gender reassignment	M	E
	Marriage and civil partnership	M	E

<i>expected outcomes are, assess each characteristic and indicate whether the policy has 'M' more, 'L' less, or 'E' equal relevance. Highlight the finding.</i>	Maternity and pregnancy	M	E
	Race	M	E
	Religion or beliefs	M	E
	Sex	M	E
	Sexual orientation	M	E
Which parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty are most relevant to the policy?	1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	M	E
	2. Advance equality of opportunity	M	E
	3. Foster good relations	M	E

Please explain your reasons for the above assessments and how you have given consideration to the different needs of people and taken steps to minimise potential disadvantages and maximise equality of opportunity

The grants awarded fund services which are available to all protected groups. Some, such as the grants to Sompriti and to AiRS are designed to overcome specific barriers faced by communities in the district.

Based on your findings is there a need to balance conflicting views or counter resentment and inaccurate perceptions, if so what will you do?

No

Action Planning

If you have identified specific areas that require action to promote equality, what steps are you going to take to ensure this work is carried out and completed?					
Issue Identified	Action Required	Lead Officer	Required Resources	Target Date	Measure of Success
Council does not currently hold Equality policies of funded groups	Obtain policies prior to signing grant agreements	Strategy and Partnerships Lead – Thriving Communities	None	31 st March 2018	Policies on file

Outcome

Considering all the evidence and the potential or actual effect of the policy on equality, it is concluded that:

***1. No major changes are needed** – the policy is robust and evidence shows no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups has been taken.

Quality Assurance

How will you implement any recommendations made through quality checking?	Strategy and Partnerships Lead will consider recommendations and present any proposals for consideration by Cabinet portfolio holder and Head of Business Planning and Performance
How will the issues covered in the action plan be monitored and reviewed and who will do this?	Strategy and Partnerships Lead will request policies as part of negotiations on grant agreements
Who will sign off the action plan once all actions are completed?	Head of Business Planning and Performance
How will you share the results with stakeholders?	In report to Stakeholder Group

Approval

Report Author	Pat Taylor
Signed	Pat Taylor
Dated	8 December 2017

Director/Assistant Director	
Signed	
Dated	