

Lewes District Voluntary Sector Support Policy Review Consultation

The council invited local voluntary and community groups to give their views on the way in which the council awards grants. The consultation ran for 12 weeks, with respondents asked to rank four options in order of preference (1 being the most preferred), to which 43 responses were submitted. Respondents also had the opportunity to comment further, with an additional 51 comments received.

The options and subsequent rankings were:

- a) **Maintain the status quo** - *Second*
- b) **A combination of core grants and small grants** - *First*
- c) **Award all grants annually** - *Fourth*
- d) **Award all grants tri-annually** – *Third*

Responses were received from:

- Kempton House Day Centre x 2
- Movingsounds
- Lewes Fundraisers For Cancer Research
- Citizens Advice x 22
- MNF - Older people football group
- C.A.T.S CLUB
- Ringmer Village Hall
- Lewes Priory Trust x 2
- SPIN (Single Parent Information Network)
- Seahaven Responders
- The Nebula - Free Mental Health Support
- PATINA
- Newhaven & Seaford Sea Cadets TS Defiance
- Telscombe Residents Association
- Go Local cic
- Friends of Lewes
- Lewes District Churches HOMELINK
- 3VA
- A council tax payer
- Refused to answer

Primary themes

- Mostly responses rejected the option of awarding grants annually, generally agreeing that this offered no stability for local organisations, preventing projects from embedding as a resource.
- Several responses want to see different organisations given the opportunity to apply for funding.
- Many comments indicate support of 'ongoing' funding but do not specify if this should be subject to a competitive bidding process.

- Although option d) award all grants tri-annually ranked third out of the four, many comments indicate that funding should be opened up to more groups on a longer term basis.
- Many comments argue for ongoing support to Citizens Advice and do not address the topic of funding over all. It may be worth noting that over 20 responses were submitted on behalf of Citizens Advice.

Some key points

- Current recipients need the stability of a core grant particularly in current circumstances.
- Constant change does not allow services to develop or become established.
- Many responses voiced support and concern for Citizens Advice, stating that access to free advice was more important than ever as people's incomes have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Competitive bidding can lead organisations to over-promise.
- Some support for a core/ small grant split, with core award being non-competitive and the small grants awarded annually and subject to application.
- Two comments questioning the funding of a religious organisation, although some support explicitly expressed for Homelink.
- Not currently awarded on the basis of need; some organisations could manage on reserves.
- Advice services are needed now more than ever.