

POLICY COMMITTEE

3rd December 2013

Present – The Chairman (Councillor Knowles-Fitton) and Councillors, Barrett, Beck, Paul English, Foster, Lis, Harbron, Heseltine, Ireton, Myers, Place, Sutcliffe, Turner and Wheeler.

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Corporate Head of Financial Management, Strategic Manager for Legal and Democratic Services, Communications Manager and Committee Administrator.

Also in Attendance: Councillor Kerwin-Davey.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barrington.

Start: 6.34pm

Finish:7:20pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 19th November 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes for Report

POL.561

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Milton Pearson, Chief Executive of Craven Community and Voluntary Services addressed the Committee and thanked the Council for supporting the voluntary sector by way of grant funding. Whilst appreciating the financial savings that the Council had to make, he urged the Committee to support option 2 of the recommendations contained in the community grants review which essentially preserved small and medium community grants and extended for two years the core funding enabling organisations to find alternative sources of funding.

Mr Trevor Graveson, from Settle Area Swimming Pool Committee, which was a registered charity, stated that the grant they received from the Council was very important and helped the pool deliver a real community benefit. Not only had 400 children learned to swim in 2012, the pool provided specialist physio and rehabilitation sessions. He acknowledged that the Council had been very generous for many years and in accepting the Council's financial pressures he implored Members to support option 2.

POL.562

LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX – PARISH GRANT 2014-15

The Chairman advised Members that the Government's Autumn Statement would be made on 5th December 2013 and this would probably contain information about what local authorities could expect by way of the formula grant. This would affect potentially affect the grant funding to parishes in 2014/2015. It was, therefore

Resolved - That, consideration of this item is deferred until the Government Autumn Statement is made and that the matter is referred to Council for a decision.

POL.563

COMMUNITY GRANTS REVIEW 2013

Further to a review of the Council's community grants scheme, the Director of Services submitted a report asking Members to make a decision regarding its future operation and associated funding.

Whilst recognising the importance and major contribution made to the community by local voluntary organisations, the Council was mindful of its own financial challenges to save at least £1.1m during the years 2014 to 2017 as a result of a sustained programme of Government funding cuts.

Community grants were discretionary unlike statutory services which the Council had to provide and it was becoming increasingly difficult to continue to support non-statutory services. Over the last three years the Council had awarded £487k which had been match funded by £3.9m from various other grants, fundraising and community donations.

Four options for the delivery of community grant schemes had been considered and the Director of Services' report recommended that the preferred option was to retain the small and medium community grants scheme and extend the core funding scheme for a further period of two years using the New Homes Bonus Localism Reserve instead of the revenue budget. This option would generate a revenue budget saving of 10% or £80,820.

The Council would assist the voluntary and community organisations implement efficiency savings or new income streams to ensure their future viability without reliance on Council funding. Another opportunity to ensure sustainability would be for the Council to commission services from them. The administration of the community grants scheme was such a service whereby the Council could pay the organisation to deliver the service instead of a grant, possibly at less cost, giving the Council an efficiency saving.

During the course of the ensuing discussion Members drew attention to the vitally important work undertaken throughout the District by the voluntary and community sector and many volunteers such as those working for the Citizens' Advice Bureau offered their services free of charge. In addition grant funding often enabled the voluntary groups to secure additional funding from other sources.

Resolved – (1) That, the Council's small and medium term community grants scheme for awards of between £100 and £1,000 are continued and that a budget of £16,000 is included in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 revenue budget setting process.

(2) That a core grant funding budget of £72,738 for 2014/15 and £65,464 for 2015/16 funded from the Council's Localism Reserve is approved and applicants requesting funding are required to demonstrate a willingness to work with the Council to ensure the organisations' sustainability for 2015/16 and beyond.

(3) That the Community Grants Sub-Committee is tasked with agreeing the criteria for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 core grant funding scheme.

(4) That the Director of Services is authorised to seek expressions of interest from organisations to administer the small and medium community grants scheme from 2015/16.

(Councillor Heseltine declared an Appendix B interest in the above item as he was a trustee of the Citizens' Advice Bureau.)

(Councillor Paul English declared an Appendix B interest in the above item as he was a trustee of the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Craven Recycling Centre.)

Minutes for Decision

- None -

Chairman

