

### **Guiding Principles & Governance Arrangements**

The following Guiding Principles and Governance Arrangements are applicable to the Council's Main Stream Grants Programme and other third sector grant schemes.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

It is important that there are robust principles which underpin the structure, decision making and governance within the Council's third sector grants programmes. By building and adhering to these standards the Council will be able to clearly demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that grant funding to local organisations is designed to maximise the achievement of agreed corporate goals and meets Best Value requirements.

#### **Principle 1 (Application Assessment)**

Applications for grant will be assessed against a robust scoring framework designed to establish the overall quality and value for money of the proposal including the extent to which the proposed project or initiative will be able to contribute toward the achievement of specified Programme Outcomes.

#### ***Related Governance:***

- *Where assessed applications fall below the agreed quality threshold, these should not receive project funding for the delivery of activities or services in pursuit of agreed outcomes;*
- *Where a required 'kite mark' or accreditation is a 'genuine service requirement' applicants that do not meet the requirements will not be funded;*
- *All aspects of application assessment arrangements including the basic eligibility criterion, the scoring framework and the scoring protocol must be fully understood and signed-off by senior management and subsequently by the appropriate council committee, once approved the arrangements must be adhered to;*
- *Proposals which score highest within the assessment process will be prioritised for funding;*
- *Geographical & equality targeting together with value for money will be used as key criteria for the recommendation of proposals.*

#### **Principle 2 (Levels of Award)**

Levels of funding available to applicants must be clearly articulated within programme documentation giving where appropriate the minimum

and maximum grant amounts able to be bid for within the various programme themes or funding streams.

**Related Governance:**

- *As a good practice guide, either actual, average or minimum/maximum levels of grant – whichever is most appropriate - should be clearly indicated as part of the scheme publicity;*
- *Where a funding approach in terms of maximum available grants has been clarified, applications should be awarded appropriate levels of grant with reductions from the maximum level being made only for elements of the stated criteria which may not have been fully met;*
- *Where project ‘match funding’ is a requirement this must be clearly stated within the specification and where this requirement is not able to be met applicants will not be supported.*

**Principle 3 (Decision Making)**

The agreed decision making process should be open and transparent and must be strictly adhered to.

**Related Governance:**

- *A new ‘decision making body’(Grants Executive Board) should be established to replace the current Corporate Grants Programme Board in order that funding and other time-critical decisions can be made in a timely manner;*
- *Board meetings should be open to the public – in line with other council committees – so that interested parties are able to attend;*
- *The various stages of the decision making process will be made known to potential applicants as part of the published grant scheme information;*
- *Where there are pre-qualifying or pre-requisite requirements related to a grant programme, such stages within the assessment will be signed off by senior managers before the process progresses to the next stage;*
- *Officers will provide clear rationale for all of their recommendations regarding an applicant’s failure to meet pre-qualifying or pre-requisite requirements as well as to fund or not fund projects;*
- *An agreed percentage of officer recommendations will be ‘quality tested’ and signed off by Service Managers to ensure that they are consistent with agreed protocols;*
- *Where the final decision is in variance with the officer recommendation, the rationale for the change must be clearly articulated within the report.*

#### **Principle 4 (Project Monitoring)**

Systems and procedures for project monitoring and assurance must be rigorously implemented to ensure that all grant funded projects are delivering against targeted outcomes and that the awarded grant is being used only for the purpose for which it was agreed.

##### ***Related Governance:***

- *Projects and organisational monitoring standards and arrangements will be set out within the Council's Grant Officers Manual and must be adhered to by all staff involved in administering grants to Third Sector Organisations: some requirements of the Manual are outlined below:*
  - *Every organisation receiving grant funding must have a signed Grant Agreement setting out the terms & conditions of the grant, the targeted outputs and outcomes, the grant payment arrangements and the evidencing standards and requirements;*
  - *All grant funded projects must be subject to a specified monitoring and verification regime, this will be scalable depending on the level of grant: details will be set out within the Grant Officer's Manual;*
  - *Where projects consistently under-perform, the council will have the right to review the proposal with the ultimate sanction of having the ability to withdraw the offer of funding;*
  - *In addition to the specific monitoring of project outputs, outcomes, and expenditure etc. , for on-going service projects, funded organisations will also be expected undergo a thorough Organisational Health Check at least once during the project lifetime.*

#### **Principle 5 (Evaluation)**

Annual audits together with other evaluation arrangements will be put in place and undertaken in relation to all of the council's third sector grant programmes to ensure that they meet and maintain the required management standards and levels of assurance.

##### ***Related Governance:***

- *When grant programmes are launched, processes, procedures for evaluating their success must be clearly articulated, this will normally take the form of summary interim/periodic appraisals followed by detailed end of programmes evaluations;*
- *All grant programmes will be audited annually to assess their compliance with agreed management and control processes and procedures;*
- *An independent evaluation of the overall programme will be undertaken on completion of the programme period.*