

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND LEISURE:
WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2018
COMMUNITY REVENUE GRANT
REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY PLANNING MANAGER
(Contact: Dene Robson, Tel: (01993) 861481)

(The decisions on this matter will be resolutions.)

1. PURPOSE

To approve a Community Revenue Grant award for 2018/19 under the authority given to the Cabinet Member for Health and Leisure by Cabinet on 18 April 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed Community Revenue Grant (2018/19) award of £26,000 to Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire be approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Council's Community Revenue Grant application process was introduced following a review of revenue grants management and Cabinet's recent (January 2018) consideration of proposals for the future management of this voluntary and community sector funding. The Council's new grant scheme guidance incorporates criteria that govern eligibility for funding and the further assessment of grant applications.
- 3.2. As summarised in the grant application for guidance, the key assessment criteria are:
 - Evidence of need
 - Relevance to meeting the Council's priority aims
 - The extent of the community benefit and impact that the project/ activity will deliver
 - How the applicant organisation will monitor and evaluate the activity supported
 - The assessment of risks (financial and other) associated with the project/ activity
 - The application demonstrating a financial need for grant support
 - Whether the grant represents value for money
- 3.3. The current grant application has been assessed against the qualifying and assessment criteria for funding support as summarised above. The application has been assessed through a Grants Panel and the recommended funding is brought forward in this report for Cabinet Member approval.
- 3.4. For 2018-19, Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire (CAWO) has already received a grant of £66,000 for the first six months of the financial year (April to September). This grant has covered core service provision, the rural advice project and premises rent costs.
- 3.5. Following the Council's recent commissioning process, Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire has been awarded a contract for 18 months (from 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019) to deliver specified services under contract (Cabinet: 19 September 2018). The contract covers Employment Advice Services; Housing Advice; Welfare Benefits Advice; and Debt and Money Management Advice. The contracted activity will be closely monitored through quarterly meetings.
- 3.6. CAWO has submitted the current grant application to provide finance support that complements the contract award and enables the continuation of the core services that

it provides. The grant application notes that CAWO provides a holistic advice and information service to the people of West Oxfordshire.

- 3.7. The funding application notes that “Problems are often complex and interrelated, and whilst many of them fall into the main categories of Benefit, Debt, Housing and Employment, other issues may also require advice.” It is noted that the availability of Legal Aid is limited and as a consequence CAWO is often the only advice service that can help people understand their rights and responsibilities – with queries stemming from numerous circumstances, for example - family breakdown, domestic abuse, and consumer issues.
- 3.8. The application for grant funding is made so that CAWO can meet its central costs and continue to provide its core services. The grant finance will assist in meeting premises rental costs and staff supervision costs as well as the continued support of a home visiting service. The funding application notes that attracting finance to cover a core service is increasingly difficult and that without support CAWO would have to restrict the availability of services to the public.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 4.1. The current report sets out the funding recommendation that results from the Grant Panel’s assessment of the Community Revenue Grant application. The approval of the grant award would endorse the evaluation process and allow the grant award to proceed as advised.
- 4.2. An alternative option would be to not accept the report’s recommendation and reject the application for funding.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended grant award in this report can be financed from the Council’s Community Revenue Grants budget. The total grant payment when added to the contract financing give a combined annual total that is within the historic level of the annual grant award to CAWO for previous financial years.

6. RISKS

Any risks associated with the funded activity are considered as part of the funding application and evaluation process. Where relevant, appropriate mitigation measures are considered. In this case, the activity is long standing and risks are deemed to be limited with appropriate measures already in place to manage practical risks.

7. REASONS

The award of revenue grants and the support of voluntary and community activity provides an effective way for the Council to support the achievement of Council Plan priorities. The purpose of the grant application is to ensure the continuation of a holistic service across the District in an approach that draws together paid staff and volunteer time in the delivery of a high quality service that is deemed value for money. CAWO co-ordinates significant volunteer activity (the grant application notes that 500 hours per month are donated by volunteers). CAWO’s work enables the provision of a free, accessible service across the District.

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Background Papers:

None