

**NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL
5 OCTOBER 2006**

**VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS – OPTIONS FOR FUTURE
DEVELOPMENT**

Summary

In 2006/07 the resources available for grants to community and voluntary groups is £441,528. This has previously been allocated to 28 separate organisations. It is proposed, in response to feedback from Scrutiny, to revise the method of distribution in 2007/08, subject to the available allocation remaining at the same level, by creating 3 categories of funding:

Large grants - Continued funding for Walsall Voluntary Action and Citizens Advice Bureau at the same level, with an agreement that runs until 31 March 2009.

Grants up to £15,000 - Continued funding for 7 borough-wide organisations for a 12 month transitional period during which links to the Local Area Agreement will be established.

Small grants - Establish a Community Cash scheme offering £2,500 for each LNP area for individual grants of up to £500, with administrative support from the Council.

Resource and Legal Considerations

At previous Scrutiny meetings in 2005/06 suggestions were made regarding the range and level of applications received. Subject to the Council's allocation remaining at £441,528 in 2007/08 the financial breakdown based on the above methodology would be as indicated in Table 1 below. Table 2 shows the funding breakdown in 2006/07 using the same categories as a comparison:

Large application	Citizens Advice Bureau	£287,290	
Large application	Walsall Voluntary Action	£68,795	
£5,000 - £16,000	7 Borough-wide schemes	£58,520	Continued funding
Up to £5,000	5 Borough-wide schemes	£17,603	One off in 2006/07
Up to £2,500	16 Local projects	£9,320	
	Total	£441,528	

Table 2 : Proposed allocation of resources in 2007/08			
Citizens Advice Bureau	2 year SLA	£287,290	Until 31 March 2009
Walsall Voluntary Action	2 year SLA	£68,795	Until 31 March 2009
7 Borough-wide schemes	Up to 15,000	£58,520	Until 31 March 2008
9 x LNPs @ £2,500 each	Up to £500	£22,500	Review March 2008
Contingency Fund		£4,693	To offer local flexibility
Total		£441,528	

The services that Walsall Voluntary Action and the Citizens Advice Bureau deliver will be aligned to the pillar groups of the Local Area Agreement to ensure consistency of approach with the Council's partners. This could result in a review of the amount of resource that needs to be made available by the Council. In parallel with this the council will review its contracting arrangements with these two organisations to better reflect the government's agenda with regard to procuring to the voluntary and community sector. At the present time both organisations receive funding via a service level agreement. The Council will compare this approach to that used by other service areas with the voluntary and community sector, and aim to apply a consistent approach.

The 7 borough-wide schemes which it is suggested should continue into 2007/08 such as ACSERG, Relate and Victim Support all provide valuable services to Walsall's communities. Their links to the Local Area Agreement pillars are shown and the Council will work with the pillar leads to look at the impact these services are having on LAA and other partners' targets. Assuming other resources are secured by March 2008, this could potentially increase the LNP Community Cash scheme by up to £58,000 in 2008/09. A full list of these projects is detailed in the appendix to this report.

The proposed LNP Community Cash scheme can be administered from within existing Council resources. This will create a pot of funding offering grants of up to £500 to constituted community and voluntary groups for projects and activities that the LNP agree are a priority for their area.

The contingency fund would allow some local flexibility, in much the same way that the delegated fund operated by the community development scheme does. Should a local organisation face some unforeseen circumstances this would ensure activities or projects could continue and there would be no adverse impact on the community or the organisation.

Citizen Impact

In total 12 borough wide schemes have benefited from voluntary sector grant funding in 2006/07. However, during the process of assessing applications

for funding in 2006/7 5 new borough wide applications were agreed on the basis of a one off grant with no guarantee or suggestion of continued funding. All organisations were made of aware of this when signing their service level agreements.

If the funding to the remaining 7 borough wide schemes did not continue, this would have a detrimental effect on a wide range of Walsall's communities such as people with disabilities, the African-Caribbean community, victims of crime and homeless people. A transitional year and alignment to the pillars of the Local Area Agreement will ensure this vital work is able to continue.

Research and best practice regionally and nationally shows that offering smaller grants of up to £500 is more likely to reach a wider range of community groups. In addition this approach has the potential to engage those groups currently not accessing funding such as this as a result of simplified paperwork and processes.

The existing process for deployment of voluntary sector grants does not currently reach all LNPs at the same level, as shown in the table below:

Local Neighbourhood Partnership	Number of Projects	Total Value of Grant
Aldridge South and Streetly	2	£765
Blakenall and Bloxwich	3	£1,910
Brownhills and Aldridge North	1	£365
Darlaston	1	£2,330
Palfrey and Pleck	2	£630
Pelsall and Rushall	1	£1,310
Pheasey and Paddock	1	£180
St Matthews, Birchills and Leamore	3	£720

Local Neighbourhood Partnership	Number of Projects	Total Value of Grant
Town Centre	2	£1110
Willenhall	0	0
Total Local Projects	16	£9,320

Introducing a Community Cash scheme and allocating £2,500 to each LNP would offer the opportunity for a wider range of community groups to benefit and become involved. Local groups would have the opportunity to work with their LNP to choose priorities against which this resource could be allocated. The LNPs would be asked to establish a grants panel consisting of LNP members and community groups with a call for applications in March 2007. Grants of up to £500 could be made available through a simplified application process which the LNPs would consider and assess against the priorities identified in their Neighbourhood Agreement. Support for grant payments and producing progress reports for the LNP would be provided by the Council.

One of the main outcomes from the review undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel in 2005/06 was the recommendation for there to be three different types of application forms. This will be incorporated into the refreshed forms that will be produced to reflect the suggested different categories of projects detailed in Table 2 above.

The different application forms for 2007/08 will be modelled along the lines previously discussed and agreed at Scrutiny. One for borough wide organisations receiving up to £15,000 and a much more simplified form for the LNP community cash scheme, for individual applications of up to £500. The paperwork for the larger grants awarded to CAB and WVA will reflect the Council's corporate approach to SLAs. Both organisations will be invited to a future Scrutiny meeting to explain their work and how the Council grant impacts on Walsall's communities.

Consultation

An initial letter has been sent to groups benefiting from grant this year explaining that changes are being considered by the Council for next year. Following consideration by Scrutiny it is proposed to write to a wider audience of community groups and also engage with LNPs. A final report will be taken to Cabinet in November which would allow sufficient time for LNPs to establish their grants panel and undertake local advertising.

Consultation with WBSP partners would commence in October/November regarding alignment to the LAA pillars, subject to agreement by Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Scrutiny members were previously advised of the current method of publicising information about the grants available from the Council for voluntary organisations:-

- Website
- Press releases
- Advert borough wide coverage
- Job watch

Based on feedback and comments from previous scrutiny meetings the following additional methods will be looked at to use for the 2007/08 grants:

- alternative local media, in particular for the Pheasey area
- New Deal Chatter
- Flyers placed in community locations

Author

Julie Ball
Head of Neighbourhood Partnerships and Programmes
☎ 654706
✉ BallJ@walsall.gov.uk

Allocation of resources in 2006/07

Organisation	2006/07 Grant £	Local Area Agreement Pillar	LNP
Walsall CAB	287,290		
Walsall Voluntary Action	68,795	Safer & stronger communities	
BOROUGH WIDE SCHEMES			
ACSERG	12,705	Safer & stronger communities Economic development & enterprise	
First Base Walsall	16,035	Safer & stronger communities & Economic development & enterprise	
Relate Walsall	15,475	Safer & stronger communities	
Shelter	270	Healthy Communities & Older People	
Walsall DIAL	8,185	Safer & stronger communities Healthy Communities & Older People	
Walsall Mediation Service	830	Safer & stronger communities	
Walsall Victim Support	3,490	Safer & stronger communities	
Witness Service Walsall/Aldridge Magistrates' Courts	1,800	Safer & stronger communities	
Total funding to Borough-wide schemes	£58,520		

Organisation	2006/07 Grant £	Local Area Agreement Pillar	LNP
BOROUGH WIDE SCHEMES – ONE-OFF			
Autism West Midlands	2,630		
Cosmopolitan Family Restoration Services	3,270	Children and Young People	
Home-Start Walsall	4,000		
Walsall Co-op Bereavement Group	3,130	Healthy Communities & Older People	
WPH Counselling & Education Services	4,303	Healthy Communities & Older People	
Total Borough-wide schemes – one-off	£17,603		
LOCAL PROJECTS			
425 (Aldridge) Squadron Air Training Corps	730		Aldridge South and Streetly Brownhills and Aldridge North
Aaina Asian Womens Group	600		St.Matthews, Birchills Leamore Palfrey & Pleck
Fairtrade Steering Group	330		St.Matthews, Birchills Leamore
Goscote Valley Community Resource Centre	1,640		Blakenall and Bloxwich
House on the Corner Community Project	2,330		Darlaston
Khushi Womens Group	330		Palfrey and Pleck

Organisation	2006/07 Grant £	Local Area Agreement Pillar	LNP
Pelsall Physically Handicapped Persons Organisation	1,310		Pelsall and Rushall
Pheasey Welfare & Handicapped Society	180		Pheasey and Paddock
Regimental Association The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales') Walsall & Bloxwich Branch	180		Blakenall and Bloxwich St.Matthews, Birchills Leamore
The Streetly Disabled & Senior Citizens Association	400		Aldridge South and Streetly
Unicorn Club Bloxwich	180		Blakenall and Bloxwich
Walsall Civic Society 2005	780		Town centre
Walsall Youth Arts	330		Town centre
Total LNP Projects	£9,320		
OVERALL TOTAL	£441,528		