

AT A MEETING
of the
**SPECIAL COMMUNITY
ORGANISATION, LEISURE AND
CULTURE SCRUTINY PANEL
MEETING RELATING TO
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
GRANT APPLICATION WORKSHOP**
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Friday 10 March 2006 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Towe (Chairman)
Councillor Arif
Councillor Ault
Councillor Beilby
Councillor Burley
Councillor Bott

ALSO PRESENT

Karen Adderley
John Pryce-Jones
Pat Warner

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Phillips and Councillor Beeley.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest identified at this meeting.

NOTES OF PREVIOUS WORKSHOP MEETING HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2005.

The notes of the previous workshop meeting held on 15 November 2005, were signed by the chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

DRAFT GRANT APPLICATION FORMS

The two draft application forms for consideration were submitted: -

(see annexed)

Item 6b

Councillor Towe advised members that at the previous discussion, members had felt that the application form used for grant applications in the past were a bit complicated and should be reviewed with the possibility of creating bandings for certain groups of applications.

Consideration was given to the smaller organisations requesting funding up to £1,000. It was felt that these organisations could be disadvantaged as a result of being lumped in with the larger organisations all trying to bid for funding from the same pot. The panel suggested that maybe a third application form should be created specifically for smaller organisations requesting funds up to £1,000. This third application form would need to be less restrictive than the two application forms submitted to this meeting.

Members suggested that the shorter application form submitted to this meeting could be used for requests for funds over £1,000 but up to £5,000 and that the longer version application form could be used for applications requesting funds over £5,000.

The panel suggested that the third application form to be created should be submitted to Internal Audit for their advice as to the types of questions that could be legitimately asked on this application form.

Members discussed whether specific funds should be allocated for each band previously discussed and ring-fenced for each band of applications.

Members were of the view that in order to make a decision as to how much money should be ring-fenced for each banding it would be necessary for consideration to be given to the criteria currently being used to make a decision about which organisation is allocated funds from the total grants allocated by cabinet.

In answer to a question raised, the panel were advised that the total amount allocated by cabinet for voluntary funding is £441,528. Karen advised the panel that cabinet had agreed to reduce the funding to existing organisations who had reapplied to allow more money to be available for new applications being received from smaller organisations.

Members were of the view that the criteria used by the council to make these decisions should be made available to scrutiny and consideration could be given to a criteria being set to ensure that those organisations which had been funded to over £5,000 could have their funding denied for one year.

Members were of the view that to enable any further discussions to take place in terms of the ring-fenced balances for each banding, it would be necessary for the criteria prepared and approved by cabinet to be submitted to this panel at its next meeting.

Discussions ensued around the criteria and members were advised that although the criteria was necessary it was possible that such criteria would not remain stable for future years and would need to be adjusted to fit the number of applications and types of applications received and the size of the grants budget.

Councillor Burley said the criteria were the crucial element in ensuring that there is transparency and fairness in respect of the applications being dealt with and also to avoid duplication of applications throughout the council.

Karen Adderley explained that checks are undertaken in different parts of the council to ensure that there is no duplication of applications from the same organisation for funds.

She continued that this function was being examined to ensure that future policy is put in place which would cover the council as a whole and to ensure that duplication is prevented; this would be better for the council and provide a more seamless service for local organisations.

Councillor Bott enquired whether the decision made by cabinet in respect of the large organisations such as CAB could be scrutinised.

Members were assured that this could be arranged.

Members agreed that a draft timetable could be prepared on the time line for the preparation of applications for 2007/08 through to approval of the completed applications at cabinet, ensuring that scrutiny is incorporated within this timetable.

Members also suggested that during consideration of the next round of applications, the portfolio holder and the Chief Executive of CAB could be invited to attend the meeting to enable the panel to gain a fuller picture of the work of the CAB and its funding arrangements and sources of funding outside the council.

The panel RESOLVED:

That the following actions should be taken in preparation for the next meeting to be held on the 5 April 2006, when this issue will be considered in detail:

1. Third application form to be prepared and the views of Internal Audit be sought on the types of questions which could be asked on this application form. The application form to be geared to applications up to £1,000.
2. That John Pryce-Jones be requested to ensure that this application form is prepared for submission to the next meeting.
3. That the report submitted to cabinet incorporating the criteria used for deciding on the organisations to be approved for funding be submitted to the next meeting of the panel for consideration.
4. That a draft timetable of the decision making process in respect of the applications be prepared and submitted by Karen Adderley to the next meeting of the panel.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.