



To: Executive Councillor for Housing:
Cllr Catherine Smart

Report by: Director of Community Services

Relevant scrutiny
committee: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th
January
2011

Housing General Fund Grants to Voluntary Organisations for 2011/12 Key Decision

1. Executive summary

This report reviews the grants that were awarded by Community Services Scrutiny Committee from the Housing General Fund for this year in the context of the corporate policy and makes recommendations to continue to grant fund the organisations during 2011/12.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To agree, subject to the budget setting process and formal adoption by Council of the 2011/12 budget, the funding to the voluntary sector organisations as detailed in this report.

3. Background

3.1 Housing General Fund (HGF) grants and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for 2010/11 were awarded by Community Services Scrutiny Committee as follows:

Grant Offered	Grant / SLA / Contract	Amount
Provision of independent specialist housing advice services through CAB.	SLA	£28,410
Supporting Women's Aid to provide accommodation for Women and children fleeing domestic violence.	SLA	£25,130
To cover shortfall in funding received by Cambridge Women's Aid from Supporting People for the provision of support services to victims of domestic violence	Grant	£14,140
Supporting SOFA to provide furniture to those affected by poverty and disadvantage.	SLA	£7,410
Supporting Cyrenians to provide services to homeless people in need of support.	SLA	£10,760
Supporting Cambridge Women and Homeless Group to provide services to homeless people in need of support.	SLA	£5,070
The Learning & Development Service provided by Wintercomfort (see 3.5 below)	Contract	£55,720
Total amount to cover shortfall in discretionary business rate relief for Cyrenians, CWA, SOFA and Wintercomfort.	Grants	£7,060
Total		£153,700

3.2 The voluntary sector provides key services to homeless people, including services, which enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations. Housing grants use the voluntary sector to provide services to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and, through the provision of specialist housing and support services, improve clients' quality of life, help tackle social exclusion and prevent repeat homelessness. The grants make a significant contribution to the Council's Medium Term Objective to ensure that Cambridge is: *A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds – close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities*

3.3 The HGF grants budget was fully allocated for 2010/11 and services are being provided as planned. The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) was brought in at short notice last year to fill the gap left by the Cambridge Law Centre. The CAB service has been closely monitored on a quarterly basis and is delivering some effective homelessness prevention services. The Council, therefore, proposes to extend the SLA with the CAB for a further year up until 31st March 2012 and an exemption from contract procedure rules is being applied for on the basis that the specialist money, debt and housing advice service offers a unique and bespoke service to the City Council.

3.4 HGF grants and SLA's proposed for 2011/12 (including a 3.2% inflationary uplift):

Grant Proposed	Grant / SLA	Amount (Maximum)
Provision of independent specialist housing advice services through CAB.	SLA	£29,320
Supporting Women's Aid to provide accommodation for Women and children fleeing domestic violence.	SLA	£41,020
Supporting SOFA to provide furniture to those affected by poverty and disadvantage.	SLA	£7,650

Supporting Cyrenians to provide services to homeless people in need of support.	SLA	£11,100
The Learning & Development Service provided by Wintercomfort	Contract	£57,500
Total amount to cover shortfall in discretionary business rate relief for Cyrenians, CWA, SOFA and Wintercomfort.	Grants	£7,290
Total		£153, 880

3.5 As shown in 3.1 of this report Cambridge Women's Aid received two separate grants from the Council last year with only one being governed by a SLA. It is proposed that these grants are rolled into one and are managed through a single SLA. The SLA will contribute to Cambridge Women's Aid's outreach service and to local women's refuges.

3.6 It is recommended that the grant offered to Cambridge Women and Homelessness Group (CWHG) in 2010-11 is discontinued in 2011-12. The grant has been offered for a number of years to support a small voluntary sector organisation to deliver services to homeless women. CWHG will still deliver these services but now operate under the umbrella of a large Registered Social Landlord, CHS Group (formerly Cambridge Housing Society). The grant has served its purpose over a number of years and the organisation now has a stronger infrastructure from which to operate.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications:

The grants detailed above can be contained within existing budgets and represent a continuation of the awards policy of the previous year with the exception of the change highlighted in 3.6 above.

(b) Staffing Implications:

There are no new staffing implications

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications:

These grants support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. All agencies funded operate equal opportunity policies and work actively to promote equal opportunities awareness through the services they provide.

(d) Environmental Implications:

Funding of furniture recycling by SOFA helps to prevent landfill. Wintercomfort is developing a social enterprise, part of which involves the production of eco-coffins.

(e) Community Safety Implications:

Work by Wintercomfort, Cyrenians and other groups help to reduce rough sleeping and thus impacts on community safety (e.g. by reducing aggressive begging). Cambridge Women's Aid provides refuge and support for victims of domestic violence and makes a significant contribution to community safety in so doing.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

SLAs & Contracts with service providers

6. Appendices

None

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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