

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	SMT	Date:
	Constitutional and Electoral Working Group	
Subject:	Future of the Grants and Community Services Forum	
Report Of:	Martin Shields, Corporate Director Services and Neighbourhoods	
Wards Affected:	All	
Key Decision:	Yes	Budget/Policy Framework: No
Contact Officer:	Gareth Hooper, Senior Partnership and Engagement Officer	
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Appendices:	1.	

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline options for changes to the Grants and Community Services Forum to ensure that there is appropriate engagement in place with the voluntary and community sector.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 SMT is asked to **RECOMMEND** that the

- (1) The Grants and Community Services Forum is disbanded and replaced with a new group, centred on our commitment to Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) with terms and reference agreed between the council and the voluntary and community sector. This new group should report directly into the Gloucester Partnership. This would better reflect our commitment to support communities through strengths and supports than traditional grants and outcomes.

- 2.2 Constitutional and Electoral Working Group is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- (2) The Grants and Community Services Forum is disbanded and replaced with a new group, centred on our commitment to Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) with terms and reference agreed between the council and the voluntary and community sector. This new group should report directly into the Gloucester Partnership. This would better reflect our commitment to support communities through strengths and supports than traditional grants and outcomes.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.13 At the Grants and Community Services Forum meeting held on 3 July 2014, it was noted that the forum was not working in its current format but that regular dialogue is required. The city council structure has changed, as has the voluntary sector landscape. The formality of the forum can discourage people from attending and it was felt that informal round table discussions would be more useful and better attended.
- 3.14 It is proposed that the Grants and Community Services Forum is disbanded and the constitution updated to reflect this change but still include a commitment from the council to ensure the continuation of engagement and two way communication between itself and the voluntary and community sector. A different form of the group will be set up with terms of reference agreed between the city council and the voluntary and community sector.
- 3.15 A recent launch of the pilot of the Social Prescribing project between the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Gloucester City Council illustrates the greater reliance on the voluntary and community sector to achieve outcomes. The
- 3.16 A reduction in grants to the VCS means that a forum almost wholly about grants is superfluous to requirement. However, future partnerships with the VCS on more mainstream projects, such as Community Building, mean that they should be represented on a more strategic level, the Gloucester Partnership for example.
- 3.17 The Grants and Community Services Forum meets too infrequently for it to be relevant to projects, such as Social Prescribing. Therefore it meets only to collect the views of some of the VCS twice annually.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The alternative options is to continue with the Grants and Community Services Forum in its current form. However, this forum has been poorly attended in recent months and doesn't engage sufficiently with the VCS organisations in Gloucester as a result.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The VCS holds a valuable amount of knowledge and skills that can benefit the wider community. However, to be able to work effectively with the VCS and even commission their services, representatives of the VCS would be better represented in a forum with commissioners, such as the Gloucester Partnership.
- 5.2 Following a conversation with GAVCA, it was agreed that a more appropriate meeting for communication should be developed with an emphasis on function rather than form.
- 5.3 Following the principles of ABCD, support from institutions is not simply about providing funds, but about allowing ideas from communities to be supported. By seeking to align this forum around ABCD it will bring a more positive emphasis to supporting our communities in an asset-based manner.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 A simple but effective tool for determining whether grants or the commissioning of the VCS are both effective and value for money. This could be done with established models such as Social Return On Investment (SROI).

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 9.1

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, there a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 11.1 Working with the VCS presents queries around safeguarding. Many community groups operate on an informal level, that is not to say without due regard to safeguarding. But may not hold the level of policies the City Council and other organisations are used to.

The VCS Alliance is developing a 'kite mark' scheme for community groups and this may be a useful balance.

Sustainability

- 11.2 Commissioning voluntary and community groups does have issues around sustainability. It is difficult to expect the same level of business continuity from a community group than it is from a more corporate institution. However, the VCS Alliance is seeking to support this to mitigate the risk and ensure that the value of the VCS is not lost in some of the risk.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 11.3 Not applicable