



GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL - 13TH JULY 2009

SUBJECT: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – AMENDMENTS TO CRITERIA

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

At its meeting on 23rd March 2009, the Panel agreed that, as a result of the increase in discretionary rate relief and the fact that the budget for 2008/09 was likely to be exceeded, officers would report to the next meeting on a suggested range of revised criteria for dealing with applications for financial assistance including those from

- Non-Community First Partnerships.
- Individual applications from juniors and adults
- Organisations with and/or without their own premises.

All the above would be looked at within the context of what was affordable annually and within budget. Officers would also revise the application form asking applicants for details of financial assistance applied for and/or received from other funding sources.

2. CRITERIA

The current general criteria for awarding financial assistance are listed below:-

Annual Award	£
(a) OAP Association with own building	250
(b) OAP Association without own building	130
(c) Junior Sports Club	45 per number of members
(d) Individuals representing Wales at home	130
(e) Individuals representing Wales overseas	250
(f) Jazz Bands	70
(g) Choirs	70
(h) Scout/cubs/brownies/guides/boys brigade/crusaders	45 per number of members
(i) St John Ambulance:-	
Cadets	70 per number of members
Badgers	45 per number of members
(j) Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCA's with own premises	470
(k) Youth Associations without own premises	45 per number of members
(l) Brass and Silver Bands	500
(m) Allotment Associations	50

Applications under these headings are dealt with under delegated powers and reported to the Panel for information. All other applications are treated on their merits and reported to the Panel for decision.

3. OUTTURN 2008/2009

- 3.1 Appendix 1 shows an analysis of the grants awarded in 2008/09. The outturn showed an overspend of £8,592 compared with the original budget and was due to the increase in Discretionary Rate Relief.

4. BUDGET 2009/2010

- 4.1 The overall budget for 2009/2010 is £203,246. The estimated sum required for Discretionary Rate Relief for the current year is £175,195 and represents an increase on the sums awarded in 2008/09 of some 6.12% compared with the inflationary increase in the overall budget of 2.00%.

- 4.2 As a result, the available balance for the Panel/general awards is £30,051 compared with the budgeted figure for 2008/09 of £49,360, a reduction of £19,309 or some 39%

5. ALLOCATION OF 2009/2010 BUDGET

- 5.1 To achieve the necessary reduction in budget, whilst still being able to make awards, a number of options could be considered:

- A general reduction in the criteria of some 39%. Whilst achieving the target, assuming a similar level of applications as in 2008/09, this would reduce some of the smaller awards to potentially insignificant figures. This would contrast with Members' previous comments with regard to setting a minimum award level of £50.
- A review of specific awards which are of a generally higher value e.g.
 - Credit Union rate relief – Members previously awarded 50% rate relief to the three Credit Unions in the Borough. The estimated cost for 2009/10 for all three is some £5,810. It should be noted that Islwyn Community Credit Union has recently moved to a new building that has yet to be assessed for rating purposes. Within the estimate a sum of £400 has been assumed. Members may wish to consider whether the budget can continue to provide support at such levels or whether alternative sources of such funding should be investigated.
 - Non-CF Partnerships – The Panel has traditionally provided an initial pump-priming award of £2,500 to each of the Partnerships. All have now received such support apart from Newbridge. At the last meeting Members also discussed making a smaller annual award to each of the Partnerships, up to an approximate value of the £2,500 contributions – with twelve Partnerships this would amount to some £200 each. In the current budget situation it is unlikely that both the above initiatives can be pursued in 2009/10. With that in mind the introduction of the annual funding may need to be deferred, or alternative sources of such funding investigated.
 - Trophies – Members will be aware that for some years an allocation of £1,000 per annum has been paid to Leisure Services for the provision of trophies for presentation at appropriate Local Authority organised sporting competitions. It is arguable whether there is scope to continue this practice in the current budgetary environment and Leisure may need to identify alternative means of funding such expenditure.
 - Representing Wales – As previously reported to the Panel this has been a growing call on the budget. Compared to the spend of £15,210 (81 applications) in 2008/09, the spend in 2001/02 was £4,560 (28 applications). The growth has been continuous over the intervening period. At the last meeting, the panel expressed concern regarding the level of spend in this regard, particularly where it related to adults. Definitive

information is not available on the split of support between adults and juniors as that information is not collected currently. Assuming a basic 50:50 split, however, would mean some £8k being 'saved' if such support were restricted to juniors under the age of 18. Restricting support to the current 'basic' level of £130 for those who remained eligible could increase the 'saving' by a further £2 - £3k approximately. There are other options that could also be considered, including only funding overseas representation, for instance, or increasing the 'basic' support to somewhere between the current 'at home' and 'overseas' levels.

- Where awards are made on the basis of member/team numbers multiplied by a base figure, consideration could be given to a fixed sum award. If a basic £50 per application were awarded, for instance, this would reduce expenditure in this regard, based upon 2008/09, by some £3,700.
- A general reduction in those areas where the basic award is of a higher value e.g. Brass & Silver Bands, OAP Associations/Clubs with own premises. Reducing such support to a basic level of £50 for youth organisations and £130 for OAP associations, as well as £70 for Brass & Silver bands (in line with choirs and jazz bands) would save some £1,290 based on 2008/09 levels.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 It is unlikely that the current level of funding will increase over the next few years as the overall Council budget will itself be put under severe pressure and NNDR increases, and consequently discretionary rate relief, continue to outstrip inflationary growth applied to Council budgets. Consequently, the options available are limited and a balance needs to be struck which provides meaningful awards to the most deserving cases.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The financial implications are those set out in the foregoing report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Member views are sought regarding the standard criteria to be applied for 2009/2010.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Analysis of the Grants Awarded in 2008/09