



GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 19TH DECEMBER 2019 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor R. Gough – Chair (Presiding)

Councillors:

Mrs C. Andrews, M. Davies, A. Farina-Childs, J. Roberts, R. Saralis and A. Whitcombe.

Together with:

S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), V. Doyle (Policy Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ms A. Gair, D. Haradacre, A. Higgs, L. Jeremiah, Mrs G.D. Oliver (Chair), D.W.R. Preece and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 24TH JULY 2019

The minutes of the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel held on 24th July 2019 (minute nos. 1 – 6) were received and approved as a correct record.

4. APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The report informed the Panel of the applications for financial assistance received between 1st June 2019 and 30th September 2019.

The report advised the Panel of the budget allocations for both the Voluntary Sector budget and the Welsh Church Acts Fund and provided details of applications received between 1st June and 30th September 2019.

Members noted the budget available for 2019-20 is £141,159.38, which included the estimated reduction for Discretionary Rate Relief (£171,430.61) and budget carried forward from 2018-2019 (£128,952.99). The Panel noted that the available balance for schemes is £133,699.38, which includes the carry forward balances.

It was noted that since the last meeting, a total of 17 new applications were received totalling £2,790.00. These applications were awarded to applicants by the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers.

The Panel were asked to reconsider an application, which was presented at the last meeting from Cambrian Educational Foundation for Deaf Children, with a grant amount being unspecified and further information was to be sought. Since the last meeting, the applicant has responded and outlined that in previous years an award was granted for £200 and there had been no applicants from Caerphilly County Borough, however, in June 2019 an award of £499 for a laptop for an individual residing in Caerphilly was awarded. Following consideration and discussion, the Panel unanimously agreed to award £200 to Cambrian Educational Foundation for Deaf Children.

The Panel were asked to consider 1 application received between 1st June and 30th September 2019, which does not meet the General Criteria, as outlined at Appendix 1 of the report, and make appropriate recommendations to the Head of Corporate Finance for approval.

The Panel discussed the merits of the application as set out in 5.1.6 of the report, which had not met the criteria as set out in Appendix 1 of the report:

(a) Cefn Hengoed Ladies Choir £5,000

The Panel discussed the application from Cefn Hengoed Ladies Choir which would support the applicants to sing in the Carnegie Hall in New York in June 2020. The Panel noted that the application requested support of £5,000. Members discussed the application at length and agreed that, as this was an exceptional achievement on behalf of the choir, and subject to securing additional funding from elsewhere, the Panel would award £1,500 to the Choir. This was it was unanimously agreed.

As previously agreed by the Panel, grants awarded during the 2019-20 financial year that exceed the budget allocation will be funded from the brought forward balances.

The Panel were referred to paragraph 5.2 within the report, referring to the Welsh Church Act Fund and it was noted that the budget available totals £173,163.61 including the annual allocation from Monmouthshire County Council (£64,751), underspends from previous years (£108,232.86) and amounts re-absorbed back into the funding pot from completed projects where the amount spent is less than originally allocated (£179.75).

However, between 1st June 2019 and 30st September 2019, a total of 5 applications were received totalling £26,427.99, which were approved by the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers and reported to the Panel for information, as outlined in 5.2.2 of the report.

The Panel were asked to note that the award to the Aber Valley Communities Partnership for £10,000 was granted as a result of the application being originally submitted in the 2018/19 financial year when the upper limit for grants was £10,000. Members noted that had the award been limited to the current maximum grant this would have been detrimental to the organisation.

Members were asked to note that, since the publication of the report it was noted that Appendix 2 contained some personal information of the applicant and as such the report has been removed from the website and relevant steps are being undertaken to comply with Data Protection and Data Breach, and a process has been put in place to ensure future reports presented to the Panel of this nature are made exempt to protect personal information of applicants.

The Panel considered the application which was received between 1st June and 31st October 2019 from an individual to provide funding for a desk top computer and relevant computer software and clothing to take part in completion of university study and work placements as

part of the training.

The Panel discussed the report and application at length and in taking all information into account, the Panel felt that the application did not meet the criteria previously agreed for 'the advancement of education' and therefore were not able to support the application.

Following consideration and discussion, the Panel agreed that the application did not meet the relevant criteria and it was moved and seconded that the grant be rejected. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report:-

- i) that Panel recommended that the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers approve the requests for Financial Assistance that do not meet the General Criteria, with the amounts agreed at the meeting;
- ii) that applications received that meet the criteria for Financial Assistance and the Welsh Church Acts Fund be noted, which have already been approved by the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers, and which are reported to the Panel for information;
- iii) that a recommendation for rejection be made to the Head of Corporate Finance, for approval under delegated powers, in relation to a request from an individual under the Welsh Church Acts Fund.

5. REVIEW OF CRITERIA GRANTS

The report provided the Panel Members with the opportunity to review the agreed amounts for General Criteria Grant Awards according to the set categories.

The report also requested Members to consider the submission from a local resident and make recommendations as to whether to take account of any suggestions in the revision of the General Criteria.

The Panel were asked to note that at the last meeting of the Panel on 24th July 2019, a discussion took place in relation to the need to review the General Criteria amounts to be awarded for applications submitted by individuals and organisations via the Grants to the Voluntary Sector budget. The last time any amendments were made to the amounts awarded under the different categories was in July 2015.

The Panel were provided with details of the set amounts that can be awarded against the individual categories in a table in 5.2 of the report, and the Panel were requested to make recommendations as to whether the all the General Criteria categories should be maintained moving forward and whether the grant amounts should be increased given that they have remained at the same level since 2015. The recommendations will be reported to Cabinet for approval, with a view to implementing the changes from 1st April 2020. The Panel discussed the criteria at length and in noting that, should any applications be presented that do not comply with the Criteria, these be considered by the Panel. In discussing the amount awarded, the Panel were of a mind to provide a 10% inflationary increase to the designated amounts, which will be reviewed on an annual basis, commencing 1st April 2020.

The Panel were also asked to consider a submission from a local resident which was raised on 26th September 2019 at the meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee and requested that the content be brought to the next meeting of the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel. Members noted that the information outlines where the funding for the Grants to the Voluntary Sector budget comes from, who can apply for it, where the money is spent, conclusions and a number of recommendations and the information is provided via Freedom

of Information requests. The Panel were asked to consider the submission from the resident and make recommendations or otherwise for suggested changes, which will be included in the report to Cabinet.

The Panel considered each point of the submitted recommendations:

Improving Publicity for the scheme – The Panel noted that discussions have taken place with Communications to publicise the work and awards of the Grants and unanimously recommended that every opportunity be taken for achievements, as a result of the Grant Awards, to be presented at Council.

Simplifying the application process by making the form easier to fill in and making it available as a word document online – Officers explained that a Word document is available upon request electronically or hard copies, however, it was felt that in order to conduct due diligence and make clear grant criteria, it was not felt appropriate to provide the application form online. Members did however discuss the simplification of the form and it was unanimously agreed that Officers consider streamlining the form to ask only for essential information.

Reducing the number of categories of recipient from the current 27 to 8 – The Panel, having considered this request, felt that it would not be appropriate to reduce the categories at this time.

Reviewing the levels of awards in each category- The Panel, having discussed the allocation amounts, unanimously agreed to increase the awards by 10% and review annually in line with inflation.

Introducing an automatic grant scheme with an annual declaration or changing the scheme to a two-yearly one – The Panel discussed this at length and Officers highlighted that it is imperative that appropriate checks and balances are conducted year on year to ensure that organisations are still in existence and awards are relevant.

Transferring grants to individuals to the Council's 'Sport Caerphilly' section – The recommendation was considered at length, however the Panel felt that this would create unnecessary bureaucracy and additional pressures on services as well as creating additional checks and balances for categories of sport.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be agreed. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report:

- i) it be recommended that all the General Criteria grant categories be maintained moving forward and a 10% increase be applied to the amounts, which is to be reviewed annually and awarded from 1 April 2020;
- ii) that, as a result of the submission from a local resident, publicity be improved for the scheme and Officers review and streamline the form to remove any unnecessary information requested in the application process;
- iii) Mr Evans be provided with feedback following consideration of his submission by the Committee.

The meeting closed at 5.46 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2020, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR