



Communities Select Committee  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2014

**Grant Criteria and Funding Opportunities Guide**

**Purpose of the report:** Policy Development and Review

To share with the committee, the proposed 'Grant Criteria and Funding Opportunities Guide' and seek the views of the committee as part of the consultation process.

**Introduction:**

1. Following requests from both Children's, Schools and Families and Adult Social Care directorates, a review of the current grants guidance and processes was undertaken.
2. SCC spends approx. £20M with the VCFS sector, with grants and contracts ranging from the low hundreds up to over a million.
3. Due to increased engagement with this sector, plus the further dependency on how the VCFS sector needs to support the people of Surrey in collaboration with SCC, it was clear a more open and collaborative relationship would be of benefit to all parties. While a solid foundation of trust already exists through the Surrey Compact and current ongoing relationships. Building on this will only improve outcomes for all.
4. Through a review of other organisations such as the National Lottery and wider Local authority benchmarking, plus ongoing consultation with the sector and commissioners, guidance has been drafted on how best to award a grant or a contract.
5. The guidance will help members, officers, organisations and residents to have clear visibility of the reasons for how grants and contracts are awarded and the process all parties can follow.
6. The new Grants guidance (Annex A) allows officers to have a clear process to follow, ensuring that requirements and documentation are

appropriate to the value of the grants to be awarded. This guidance also sets out clear guidance for organisations wishing to receive grant funding.

## **New Guidance in brief**

### **Benefits**

7. The new guidance gives clear guidance to officers on whether a grant or contract approach is appropriate for the funding available.
8. The guidance sets out three separate levels of process which will relate to appropriate levels of documentation to ensure the submissions and information required are proportionate to the level of funding required. All of which is in line with current SCC commercial guidelines. This consolidates and aligns a number of processes across the Local Authority.
9. The process offers consistent direction for all directorates across SCC, as well as making it simple for Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) organisations to understand the grant decision process and how to interact with SCC in a consistent, single and simple manner.
10. The process will help SCC understand the reliance of some organisations and markets on grant funding from what the impact of changes to grant funding opportunities may be on them. Openness of this information and its outcomes will mean a more open and transparent relationship with SCC.
11. The output on this process will also give clear guidance on internal governance of how grants are awarded.
12. The guidance will help avoid a number of examples of poor practice, i.e. one organisation received 16 grants for a total of £5340, other organisations receive the majority of their total funding through grants from SCC and where ongoing grant funding has been used for services that would be more appropriate as contracts. All of the above have had consequences such as larger admin burden, heightened risk and also frustration for both parties. This process will ensure we can award all contracts only once, at the right level, with right outcomes and reduced risk.

### **Voluntary Community and Faith Sector and SCC engagement**

13. We initially approached a select number of key VCFS organisations (10) and also the Surrey Compact to discuss and explain what we were hoping to achieve and to get their input on the best approach to take. This approach linked to one of our key objectives of SCC's Confident in Our Future Corporate Strategy - "to work with our partners in the interest of Surrey" and the VCFS Framework to work with the VCFS in a fair equitable and transparent way.

14. We listened to their issues, thoughts and ideas. These included: what is a grant and what is a contract? How can we ensure decisions are fair? Can we define appropriate requirements depending on the value of a grant etc?
15. The guidance once drafted was shared with them and their views have been reviewed and where possible their input has been incorporated into the process. The general response has been positive to our approach and what we are trying to achieve, we are now seeking confirmation and input from the wider VCFS community.
16. Originally being at the request of Adults Social Care and Children's Social Care commissioners, both services have been fully involved in developing all guidance. This ensured commissioning outcomes are also achieved within the new proposal. Other departments to have input and sign off within SCC have included Legal, Procurement and Commissioning and CEO's Policy and Performance Team.
17. The approach we are following was also shared with our District and Borough colleagues at a number of Surrey Joint Commissioning Strategy Group.

### **Next Steps**

18. Further consultation is currently taking place with the wider VCFS community.
19. We are asking the committee for views on the process and give them the opportunity to understand the issues and proposed way forward.
20. Involve VCFS organisations in a review of the bid documents to ensure they are clear and as easy as possible to submit.
21. Create training presentations for internal staff and VCFS organisations to help them understand the new process and be able to make good submissions. These were areas that were highlighted from the EIA.

### **Conclusions:**

22. The proposed new guidance will create a fair, open, transparent and consistent process for SCC when deciding on awarding grants. This will help officers in driving consistency, have a clear basis for why a decision has been reached in a particular way and also make it clearer for organisations applying for grants.

### **Recommendations:**

23. We would like your views and support for this new guidance which we propose to take to Cabinet for approval following the consultation outcomes.

**Next steps:**

The open Consultation went live on 6th December 2013 and will close on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

Cabinet Report to be submitted by 19<sup>th</sup> February 2014

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**Sources/background papers:**

Annex A: Copy of the draft 'Grant Criteria Guide'

Annex B: Summary of Consultation so far

Annex C: Copy of Surrey Says Consultation questions

Annex D: List of Grant Funding in 2013-14