

Minutes of a meeting of the SHIRE Community and SHIRE Environment Grants Scrutiny Review Panel held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 15 May 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. C. A. Smith CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. P. King CC

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs. M. E. Newton CC.

18. In Attendance.

Zafar Saleem – Head of Service, Communities, Policy & Resilience  
Noel Singh – Funding Manager  
Andy Hayes – Funding and Grants Officer  
Rosemary Whitelaw – Head of Democratic Services  
Damien Buckley – Democratic Services Officer  
Verity Graham – Charnwood Borough Council  
Tracy Gaskin – Blaby District Council  
Emma Trahearn – North West Leicestershire District Council  
Dave Cliffe – Voluntary Action LeicesterShire  
Gary Beharrell – Lloyds Bank Foundation  
Annette Kendrick – Active Together  
Oliver Savage – The National Lottery Community Fund (Via Microsoft Teams)

19. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2023.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

20. Declaration of Interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

21. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 and 10 of the Act and that, in all

circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information –

- Feedback from other grant funders, other partners and stakeholders.

22. Feedback from other grant funders, other partners and stakeholders.

The Panel considered written statements provided by BBC Children in Need and Locality, regarding the impact and value for money of grants programmes and investment into the local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Copies of these statements marked “Agenda Item 5” are filed with these minutes. The documents were not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1, 3 and 10 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman welcomed other grant funders, partners and stakeholders to the meeting and invited feedback regarding the impact and value for money of grants programmes and investment into the local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

In response to a question regarding the impact which grant funding had on supporting the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, the following points were made:

- i. The Lloyds Banking Foundation believed in unrestricted funding and did not necessarily focus on outcomes or outputs. Funding was often used by VCSE organisations to pay for running costs. Grant funding helped to keep organisations in operation and quite often VCSE organisations were unable to use funding from other funders to pay for such overheads. Members were advised that funding supported the most vulnerable in society through the delivery of support services which had not been offered by statutory bodies. Grant funding from local authorities had often helped VCSE organisations to secure funding from other sources.
- ii. North West Leicestershire Council agreed that grant funding helped to support those in the community who could not receive support from statutory services and also provided leverage for VCSE organisations sourcing alternative funding streams.
- iii. Charnwood Borough Council highlighted that VCSE organisations were often adaptable when providing support to communities during difficult circumstances, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and assisting with cost of living pressures. It was noted that considering outcomes had been important, but that it was often more appropriate to focus on case studies rather than quantitative data.
- iv. The National Lottery Community Fund focussed on what support could be delivered to VCSE organisations, and to their service users, and commented that the guidance and development opportunities provided to organisations was often invaluable.
- v. Voluntary Action LeicesterShire commented that local grants would be important against a climate where national grant schemes had generally been reduced.

In response to a question regarding whether organisations had used specific criteria when assessing applications or requests for repeat funding, the following points were made:

- i. Charnwood Borough Council allowed applications for repeat funding but had always signposted organisations to additional sources of funding beforehand. The authority offered repeat funding where it would be used to help a group continue in the absence of other funding streams.
- ii. Blaby District Council accepted applications for repeat funding. Only one grant per year was allowed and only one grant could be requested at a time.
- iii. North West Leicestershire District Council accepted applications for repeat funding but these would be accessed to understand the bigger picture before making a decision.
- iv. The National Lottery Community Fund had no process in place for repeat funding but instead focuses on the relationship with organisations and encourages diversifying their reliance on grant funds. Each application would be treated on merit and the organisations expectations and learning would be taken into consideration when assessing the application.
- v. Lloyds Bank Foundation provided repeat funding to secure the future needs of organisations and their service users.

In response to a question regarding how funding providers had monitored key outputs and outcomes achieved through grant funding, the following points were made:

- i. Grant funders provided members with an overview of the methods used to monitor and evaluate the progress of activity delivered as a result of grant funding. The majority of organisations had a robust application process which considered project aims and objectives. Some organisations had undertaken health checks and used monitoring forms to track project delivery as it progressed and some had conducted visits to witness the work being carried out in the community. The consensus amongst the grant funders in attendance was that monitoring information would only be gathered where necessary and that the collation of such information would always be proportionate the level of funding being provided.
- ii. Illustrating the outputs and outcomes of grant funding was often difficult to quantitatively demonstrate and members were advised that it was easier to consider case studies to determine the impact which grants had on organisations and individuals.

In response to a question regarding the level of grant funding available and the total grant fund budgeted for annually, the following points were made:

- i. Charnwood Borough Council offered various types of grants:
  - o Member Grant awarded grants of up to £500 and the annual budget was £26,000;
  - o Community Grant had an annual budget of £52,000 and provided up to £5,000 in grant funding;

- Community Facilities Grants scheme awarded funding of up to £20,000, to a maximum of 50% of the cost of a project and had a budget of around £50,000;
  - Strategic Partner Grants offered funding between £8,000 and £35,000 and had a budget of £300,000.
- ii. North West Leicestershire District Council had an annual budget of £16,000 to provide small grants. It also had a Strategic Grant Agreement in place with a £93,000 annual budget.
  - iii. Blaby District Council had three community grants schemes which offered £500 per grant application. It also had two larger grants which offered up to £4,000, with match funding.
  - iv. The National Lottery Community Fund allocated £20m annually for grant funding nationally. Its typical grant was £75,000-£100,000, awarded over a three year period (with an additional £30,000 to secure the organisations development). The fund had provided between £135,000 and £150,000 annually to projects in Leicester and Leicestershire.
  - v. The Lloyds Bank Foundation offered small grants of up to £10,000 and larger grants of on average £240,000 over a five year period.

Members noted that grant funding from local authorities had often provided VCSE organisations with the initial funding needed to get started and provided the leverage required to source match funding and funding from other sources. Having a track record of delivering successful projects, as a result of grant funding, would often also help VCSE organisations when applying for grant funding for new projects.

In response to a question regarding the sustainability of VCSE organisations outside of grant funding, members noted that VCSE organisations would generally always require grant funding and that only a small percentage would benefit from other types of fundraising, by relying on donations, or through operating commercial activities. Grant funders and organisations such as Voluntary Action LeicesterShire would offer support and advise to VCSE organisations which would help them to diversify and consider alternative funding streams as well as developing their Board of Trustees and adapting this business plans, although this was often not a mandatory condition attached to grant funding.

RESOLVED:

That the information presented by other grant funders, partners and stakeholders be noted.

23. Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 12 April 2023.

There were no matters arising.

24. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Review Panel would take place on Tuesday 30 May at 13:00.

10.00 - 11.22 am  
15 May 2023

CHAIRMAN