



Report to Leader (Communities & Public Health portfolio)

Decision Date:	1 April 2021
Reference number:	CP02.21
Title:	Grants Review- Extension of Grant Agreements
Relevant councillor(s):	Councillor Gareth Williams
Author and/or contact officer:	Nick Graham Nick.Graham@buckinghamshire.gov.uk Kerry Rackstraw kerry.rackstraw@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	To extend grant agreements that provide essential funding to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations, who deliver fundamental services to local residents, from March 2021 to March 2022.
Reason for decision:	To allow the Council to carry out a full grants review, whilst also providing the Voluntary and Community Sector who rely on this core funding, time to transition into new models of financial assistance.

1. Content of report

1.1 In February 2020, the Shadow Executive for Buckinghamshire Council approved the continuation of the predecessor Councils' multiyear funding arrangements for VCSOs as part of the MTFP, with £1,771,680 of funding committed in 2020/21, £1,359,990 in 2021/22 and £86,695 committed into 2022/23.

1.2 Members recognised that the establishment of the new council presented an opportunity to review the Council's future approach to working in partnership with and providing financial assistance to VCSOs, aligned to a new VCS strategy and the Corporate Plan. However, given the significance of these grants to individual organisations, it was acknowledged that time would be needed to either transition services to a new funding model or to provide lead-in time for some to replace grant funding with other sources of external funding.

1.3 It was also recognised that there was a need for a thorough review of the council’s support to the VCS to develop a planned and sustainable approach to the future relationship.

1.4 VCSOs with pre-existing / continued funding agreements currently in place have a long history of applying for core funding from the council and many have previously been familiar with a year-on-year application process and programme. The grants form an important part of funding the services of key local partner VCSOs, which, in some cases, may close if the grants ceased.

1.5 To provide both the council and local VCSOs with lead in time to transition in to new models of funding following the Council’s grant review, it is proposed that VCSOs whose grant agreements end in March 2021 are considered to receive an extension of funding for a further year (2021/2022). These VCSOs have been highlighted in appendix A and based on the principle that core funding is provided to deliver fundamental services and following a robust annual monitoring and assessment process, would be contacted to express an interest in receiving an additional year of funding.

1.6 As per table 1 below, the maximum value of grant agreements to be considered for extension into 2021/2022 is £226,941. This is in addition to pre-existing grant commitments in 2021/2022 of £1,359,990, which were approved by the Formal Shadow Executive in February 2020.

1.7 Table 1: Grant Commitments- Pre-Existing and Extensions to be Considered

Financial Year	Pre-Existing Commitments	Extensions to be Considered	Total
2020/2021	£1,771,680		£1,771,680
2021/2022	£1,359,990	£226,941	£1,586,931
2022/2023	£86,695	No extensions to be considered	£86,695

2. Other options considered

2.1 The Council have the option to not extend grant agreements that end in March 2021 and signpost VCSOs to Community Board or external funding opportunities. The implications of not providing a further year of funding and subsequent transition time whilst a full grants review is carried out have been explored below.

2.2 Grant agreements that are to be considered for extension vary in value with funding supporting the core and project costs of services such mental health support, domestic violence and abuse and community centres. These services reduce the demand for council services and consequent cost pressures.

- 2.3 These organisations also support some of Buckinghamshire’s most vulnerable residents and the withdrawal of funding with ahead of the grant review, may give rise to equalities impacts.
- 2.4 The Council continues to work together with the local VCS to develop a better understanding of the county’s ongoing priorities to shape it’s future strategic approach to supporting communities, including funding to VCOS. This is reflected within the Council’s Voluntary Sector Strategy and engagement with the Voluntary Sector Partnership and Recovery Boards. With this partnership approach in mind, there is a risk that by not providing an additional year of funding whilst the grants review takes place, presents conflicting messages to the VCS.
- 2.5 Covid-19 has presented unprecedented challenges for VCOS with regards to both the delivery of services and enhanced funding pressures. Whilst proposing to provide an additional year of funding to VCOS it will also provide time for the Council to better understand these challenges going forwards, which can be captured within the grant review.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 As per appendix A, a maximum additional commitment value of £226,941 has been identified to provide a further year of funding to VCOS (following robust annual monitoring, assessment and an expression of interest).
- 3.2 Total Budget for Grants in 2021-22 is the same as 2020-21, £1,729,423, in 2020-21 commitments, £42,257 across directorates was higher than budget and addressed through one off underspend in year.

Table 2: Grant Budget Summary per Directorate

Directorate Summary 2021-22	Total Grant Budget	Pre Existing Commitments	Additional Commitments	Total Commitments	Remaining Funds
DCE	£ 1,020,535	£ 724,489	£ 188,910	£ 913,399	£ 107,136.00
Communities	£ 492,388	£ 437,101	£ 38,031	£ 475,132	£ 17,256.00
PGS	£ 203,500	£ 185,400		£ 185,400	£ 18,100.00
HWTC	£ 13,000	£ 13,000		£ 13,000	£ -
TOTAL	£ 1,729,423	£ 1,359,990	£ 226,941	£ 1,586,931	£ 142,492.00

- 3.3 VCOS granted an additional year of funding would be provided with a grant or service level agreement extension.

4. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

- 4.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health has been consulted and is supportive of the extension of grant agreements which come to a close in March 2021. Property

5. Next steps and review

- 5.1 Following a decision, each of the VCSOs currently in receipt of grant funding whereby the agreements end in March 2021 will be contacted and invited to put forward an expression of interest for a further year of funding to end in March 2022.
- Background papers

6. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 6.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.