

Management Committee

18 April 2017

Council support to Local Partnerships and Volunteering in the Borough

For Decision

Briefholder

Cllr Christine James

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

S Hill, Strategic Director

Report Author:

Jane Nicklen, Community Planning & Development Manager

Statutory Authority

The Localism Act, 2011, Section 137 of Local; Government Act, 1972 and any other relevant statutory powers as applicable to specific grant provision

Purpose of Report

- 1 To agree the level of member and officer support to local partnerships and a process for awarding small grants to support volunteering in the Borough for the financial year 2017-18

Recommendations

To agree:

2.
 - (a) The review of the council's Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy and reporting through Policy Development Committee.
 - (b) The appropriate level of member and officer support for local partnerships listed in this report.
 - (c) The creation of a community and voluntary organisation grant fund for 2017-18 from Council reserves subject to the review of the use of balances by the S151 officer and the Finance Working Group.
 - (d) The grant process proposed in this report and the prioritisation of areas of funding as listed in paragraph 7 of this report.
 - (e) A launch event for the community and voluntary sector grant fund.

Reason for Decision

- 3 To enable the council to decide on the level of council financial resources committed to local partnerships, to recognise the value of volunteering in

the Borough and to promote this through a one year grant fund with awards based on agreed local priorities.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

This report covers three inter-related issues. This covers the need to review:

- (i) the council's existing Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy
- (ii) the council's relationship with and support to partnership groups
- (iii) council support for Borough community and voluntary organisations.

4. Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy

4.1 The council's existing Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy was introduced in 2012 following extensive research undertaken by a Member Working Party.

The key aspects of the policy are as follows:

- Management Committee are responsible for reviewing all grants, loans on subsidies on an annual basis and a full report is required for Committee once a year for decision.
- Group leaders are asked to respond about each grant.
- All grants over £1,000 must be considered by Management Committee
- Where recurring grants or loans are covered by an SLA (up to four years), a report only needs to be taken to Management Committee once before the start of the agreement; not annually.
- All applications for a grant or loan totalling less than £1,000 will be at the Service Manager's discretion, but will be assessed retrospectively by Management Committee once a year.

The following point applies to subsidies which occur when the council supports an organisation by subsidising its use of council facilities such as a berth in the harbour or a reduction their rent:

- All applications for a subsidy will be assessed at the Service Manager's discretion, but will be reviewed retrospectively by the Management Committee once a year.

4.2 Working practice has indicated a need to review aspects of the policy to make it more efficient. It is proposed that officers work with briefholders and group leaders to develop a revised policy for consideration at June Policy Development Committee.

5. Local Partnerships Operating in Weymouth and Portland

5.1 The council currently provides officer input to a number of local partnership groups which have evolved through the community planning process. There is also briefholder involvement in some of these groups; the details of these are listed at Appendix 1.

- (a) **Weymouth and Portland Partnership** is the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough and was set up in 2003 to develop a Community Strategy in line with the council's statutory duty under The Local Government Act,

2000. The legal duty was removed in 2015 but there is still a Government expectation of partnership and community-based working. The council no longer supports the partnership financially but provides officer input into 4 meetings a year.

The Partnership is an independent body and is currently being run by Weymouth Area Development Trust which is now registered as a community interest company – (see sub paragraph h over). It has a number of themed sub-groups which it services. These are listed from b – d below.)

- (b) **Business Leaders' Economy Group of Weymouth and Portland Partnership** A collaborative group of local businesses including Weymouth BID, Chamber of Commerce and Weymouth College. The group membership also formed **The Coastal Communities Team for Weymouth** which prepared the Weymouth Economic Plan in 2015 funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Economic Development Briefholder sits on this group but it has not met recently. Managed by Weymouth Area Development Trust.
- (c) **Natural Weymouth and Portland Partnership** A self supporting group chaired by Dorset Wildlife Trust this group includes some key players in the environmental field including the Crown Estate, National Trust and Natural England. Initiatives have included the GP led Natural Choices programme of exercise in the natural environment. There is currently no regular officer or Member involvement on this group.
- (d) **Communities Theme Group of Weymouth and Portland Partnership** Chaired by the Social Inclusion Briefholder, this group has led the Working with You initiative targeting collaborative work to address the areas of multiple deprivation in the Borough. Its membership covers the community and voluntary sector and public sector partners. Its work is wholly supported by the council's Community Planning and Development team.
- (e) **Portland Community Partnership** was formed in 2001 to carry on the work of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The SRB on Portland was successful because it was made up and delivered by a wide variety of partners including statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as members of the public. This ethos has been carried on by the PCP. The Partnership works with other organisations and charities to deliver Portland projects and ideas. It plays a key role in strategic planning and ensures that all issues and ideas are discussed at its open meetings. Membership is open to all Portland residents and WPBC member representation is on an ad hoc basis.
- (f) **The Portland Economic Vision Board**
The remit of this group is to support the business-led Portland Economic Vision Board (the Board) sub-group of the Portland Community Partnership Board with a remit to help formulate, advise and support the implementation of the Economic Vision and Plan for Portland.

The role of this group is to support business led activity aimed at sustaining and increase business activity on Portland, support

development of community economic development, report on barriers and issues faced by business back to the LA and support grant funding applications and business investment for priorities agreed in their economic plan. See:

<http://www.portlandcommunitypartnership.co.uk/future-portland-economic-vision>

- (g) **Weymouth Area Tourism Partnership** Newly revitalised, this group is chaired by FirstBus and supported by the Leisure and Tourism team and includes representation from the key tourism sectors - council, accommodation, attractions, transport, harbour, Pavilion, activities.

The Tourism Partnership is aware of the LEP- commissioned destination management plan and the role of the Dorset tourism association and the LEP funded study on tourism in Weymouth and Portland and will aim to work with these in mind

- (h) **Weymouth Area Development Trust (WADT)** Work on the creation of a trust started when the council withdrew its financial support for Weymouth and Portland Partnership. The reason for this was that the Partnership needed to be financially self-supporting and have the potential to attract funding into the Borough for local projects. Many current funding providers do not allow applications from public sector providers.

WADT was registered as a Community Interest Company in March 2017. This means it has the same legal status as Weymouth Pavilion and can employ staff and income generate. It will have the capacity to attract external funding into the Borough to deliver community projects and programmes. It is not directly supported by any council staff. Councillor Lucy Hamilton is one of its trustees.

- (i) **Team Around Melcombe Regis** The multi-agency team was created by Weymouth Area Development Trust to deliver the Our Place Plan for Melcombe Regis which was funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government prior to the establishment of the Melcombe Regis Board. It has themes similar to the Melcombe Regis Board and outcome-focused targets. Operational staff from a variety of agencies such the Police, NHS, Dorset County Council plus community representatives contribute to the work of this group. The council provides staff input from Housing, Community Protection and Community Development and it is attended on an ad hoc basis by Melcombe Regis Ward Members and the Economic Development Briefholder.

- (j) **Melcombe Regis Board** This board of strategic partners addresses the key issues facing Melcombe Regis. Members are the council, Dorset County Council, Dorset Police, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Public Health and Weymouth Locality Clinical Commissioning Group. Chaired by the Chief Executive, the membership also includes the Briefholder for Housing, Councillor James as the Chair of Weymouth and Portland Partnership, Communities Theme Group and staff from Housing, Community Protection and Planning (Community and Policy Development).

5.2 This section of the report covers the level to which the council wishes to engage with the partnerships listed in paragraph 5.1 above and raises the following questions:

- (i) The degree to which Briefholders wish to align partnership group activities with the current Management Committee Action Plan? and;
- (ii) whether Briefholders wish to review the level of WPBC Briefholder and officer support in future partnership group activities using Appendix 1 as a starting point?

5.3 It is proposed that a meeting is convened so Briefholders discuss these questions with officers so a considered view about the level and nature of council involvement in partnership groups can be brought back to a future committee meeting. Recommendation (b) refers.

6. The Community and Voluntary Sector in Weymouth and Portland

6.1 The community and voluntary sector in the Borough of Weymouth and Portland supports a wide range of differing groups and organisations that bring skills, energy and enthusiasm to local activities and projects. The sector covers numerous areas of interest including:

- Economy and tourism
- Health and wellbeing and social support
- Community safety
- Environmental work
- Sports
- Arts and culture
- "Friends of" groups
- Uniformed groups
- Church-run community groups and organisations such as food banks
- Veterans
- Child and Youth groups

6.2 Various council services work with the community and voluntary sector on a regular basis. This includes Community Protection, Leisure and Commissioning, Community Planning and Development, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services, Economic Regeneration and Democratic and Elections. An internal survey has revealed that staff are aware of a total of nearly 200 community and voluntary groups that are based in the Borough. This does not include organisations that have a wider geographical coverage and also operate in Weymouth and Portland.

6.3 The council's finances have not permitted an ongoing grants scheme for the community and voluntary sector in the Borough although certain organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau receive annual support and rent subsidies are provided to organisations such as MV Freedom, Portland Museum, The Islanders (Youth) Club, Weymouth Angling Club and Weymouth Pavilion. The latter also received a capital grant for roof repairs at March 2017 Management Committee.

- 6.4 The opportunity now exists to consider the creation of a new, short-term grants fund with awards made on the basis of a revised Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy and within the framework of an agreed set of evidence-based local priorities.

7. The Proposed Grant Scheme and how it might operate

- 7.1 The council recognises the contribution these groups make for the good of the Borough and the potential they have to offer in the future. Officers have been asked to explore the creation of a one year small grants scheme funded from council reserves and put forward proposals for Member approval.
- 7.2 It is proposed that the scheme will be open to all Weymouth and Portland-based community and voluntary groups by formal application. The scheme could be advertised through the local press, by officers and through existing community networks such as the Dorset Community Action mailing list. It is suggested that applications be invited for themed categories that are linked to local priorities and will be assessed on the outcomes their funded activity or project delivers against these priorities.

Officers successfully used a similar scheme for two rounds of Working with You funding allocated from Narrowing the Gap reserves in 2013-14. This went to groups operating in the four priority areas of the Borough, Littlemoor, Melcombe Regis, Underhill and Westham.

- 7.3 Officers have used the following sources to develop a set of proposed priorities for Member decision:

- Census, 2011
- Weymouth and Portland Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Weymouth and Portland Community Strategy
- State of Dorset September 2015
- Index of Multiple Deprivation, England, September 2015
- Dorset and GeoWessex datasets and community profiles on Dorsetforyou
- Dorset County Council, Working Together for a Strong and Successful Dorset, Outcomes Framework
- Weymouth and Portland Health Profile, September 2016

These provide a sound evidence base for the allocation of funding based on clearly evidenced local priorities.

- 7.4 Evidence from the above sources tells us the following issues are core to our area and its communities:

- Economic wellbeing - specifically support for sections of the community suffering from low income.
- Reducing deprivation - specifically support for areas of the Borough that feature high in the domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, September 2015.
- Strong, safe and sustainable communities - specifically actions to address crime, community safety and community development.

- Skills and learning – specifically actions relating to pathways to learning, training, reskilling and work readiness.
- Improved health and wellbeing and reduced health inequalities – specifically actions and programmes to address physical activity, mental and physical health awareness.
- Safeguarding the natural environment – specifically addressing and protecting wildlife, landscape, the coastline and addressing environmental issues such as climate change.

It is suggested that applications are assessed on the basis of their contributions towards these priorities.

- 7.5 The proposal is that the council holds a launch event for the grant fund in the Council Chamber. This will present an opportunity to introduce the fund and the application process, allow groups to network and Briefholders and officers to discuss their funding needs. It will also, and most importantly, raise the profile and importance of volunteering locally.

Implications

8. Corporate Plan

This report has implications for all priorities in the Corporate Plan.

9. Financial

The allocation of a short-term seed fund has financial implications for the council and, if over a certain level, will need to be referred to Full Council for decision.

10. Equalities

The allocation of funding proposed provides the potential for positive impact in relation to local people with protected characteristics under The Equality Act, 2010.

11. Environmental

The allocation of funding proposed provides the potential for positive impact in relation to environmental projects in the Borough...

12. Economic Development

The allocation of funding proposed provides the potential for positive impact in relation to economic development.

13. Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

The management of the proposed grant fund requires all recipients to sign an agreement and agree to supply a monitoring report relating to their grant. This minimises risks to the council.

14. Human Resources

Work relating to this report will be undertaken within existing staff resources.

Consultation and Engagement

15. The proposals in this report, particularly in relation to the grants scheme will increase council engagement with, and understanding of the community and voluntary sector.

Appendices

16. Appendix 1 – List of community planning partnerships

Background Papers

17 WPBC Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy
Information sources listed at paragraph 8 of this report

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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