

Management Committee

15 August 2017

Maximisation of External Grant income in the Borough of Weymouth & Portland

For Decision

Portfolio Holder(s)/ Briefholder

Councillor James Farquharson, Economic Development

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

S Hill, Strategic Director

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Statutory Authority

Section 111 Local Government Act, 1972 (the power to do anything to facilitate functions of the council.)

Purpose of Report

1. To propose a way to improve the Council's external funding practice that maximises the potential to bring in external funding to the council and the Borough.

Recommendations

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- (a) That an officer and member funding forum is established. This forum will advise on the co-ordination of grant applications by the Council and maximise external funding into the Borough.

Reason for Decision

- 3 To facilitate improved access to external funding by the Council and to improve management practices in relation to grant funding.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

- 4 External grant funding is essentially any money that the Council secures additional to its annual allocation from central Government and to the funds which can be raised from local taxes, fees and charges. External grants are normally subject to a competitive process which requires a strategic approach in order to maximise success. This report has been prepared in the context of diminishing revenue support grant from the Government.

5. In recent years the Council has considered a number of reports relating to external grant funding. These include:

The South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) report on Grant Monitoring of Projects, June 2010

This audit had four significant findings, that:

- (i) Officers are not fully aware of possible external funding available.
- (ii) There is a lack of a central grant monitoring function for the Council.
- (iii) There is a risk of failing to address effective grant monitoring
- (iv) The Finance Team are not kept fully informed of all projects undertaken by the Council.

Measures have been taken to address findings (i), (ii) and (iv):

- (i) the Council has access to the Grantfinder funding database and the spread of council services that now have access has recently been updated and corporate training was provided in June 2017. The licence is funded through the Community Planning and Development Team budget.
- (ii) An annual grant register is now compiled and reported.
- (iii) The Council's Financial Regulations, March 2013 require all officers to gain prior permission for external grant applications from a Strategic Director or the Chief Finance Officer and Heads of Service or Corporate Managers are responsible for overseeing this. This satisfies the third and last finding and, to a degree, the second.

The report of the Member Review Group on the Review into Internal and External Grant Applications for Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, February 2012

This review made three general recommendations relating to:

- management commitment to grants practice,
- formulation of a strategic plan to facilitate grant application for major projects, and,
- a review of grant awareness and information.

The review highlighted poor access to grant funding information and co-ordination. The information on grant funding has been addressed to a certain extent through improved access to GrantFinder. There is still, however, a need for strategic planning on external funding, communication and a corporate overview of funding opportunities and mechanisms for grant prioritisation, planning and management.

A report on grant funding which agreed the publication of an annual register of grants coming into the Borough and granted by the council, (approved June 2013)

The recommendations of this report were only partially implemented through the introduction of annual grants register, updating of officer access to a funding database and the provision of project management training to key staff. The recommendations of this report fill the other gaps in implementation.

The Review of Discretionary Grants, Loans and Subsidies Policy, (approved July 2017)

Management Committee approved a revised policy with key changes which tightened the governance of grants, loans and subsidies, provided officer delegation for smaller grants and introduced community as well as corporate priorities to aid decision-making.

6. The outcomes of these reports taken within the context of the current position of financial austerity need to inform and shape practice so the Council is more effectively able to:
- (i) maintain a comprehensive overview of grant opportunities, communicate this effectively within the organisation and use the information to inform a strategic approach to grant application,
 - (ii) maximise its ability to attract external grant funding for Council projects.

The formation of a corporate funding forum as included in the recommendation of this report would be a means of delivering a strategic and overarching approach to grant maximisation.

7. The Council has had some success in leveraging external grants into the Borough. It was the recipient of a number of grants totally over £5.3 million in relation to the 2012 Olympics which enabled various projects including car park improvements, CCTV enhancement and a new digital radio system.

The annual grants register has been published since 2014. The annual grant income has been recorded as follows:

Financial Year	Amount (£)	Services involved
2013-14	612,899	Engineering Infrastructure, Housing, Community Planning & Development, Tourism & Events, Electoral Services, Community Protection
2014-15	2,775,281	Engineering Infrastructure, Housing, Community Planning & Development, Tourism & Events, Harbour Management, Leisure Commissioning, Emergency Planning
2015-16	464,936	Engineering Projects, Business Licensing, Community Planning & Development, Tourism & Events
2016-17	795,165	Economic Regeneration, Community Planning & Development
TOTAL	4,648,281	

Grant income was enhanced by two Government grants, The Government Transformation Award in 2013-14 and in 2016-17 by the Community-led Housing Fund.

8. As the previous report to July 2017 Management Committee highlighted, it is particularly important during the current financial climate that the council maximises the grant income into the Borough. This could be achieved through improvement in the following areas:
- Improved awareness of external funding streams and sharing of information internally

- Developing a Dorset Councils Partnership strategic approach to accessing grant funding overseen by a senior officer with member and officer input.
- Improved bid readiness
- Improved co-ordination across services which will strengthen bids and remove the potential for duplication that can undermine success.

9. Implications

Corporate Plan

Grants awarded to the Council have the potential to support all the Corporate Priorities.

Financial

In the financial year 2016-17, the Council received or enabled grant income totalling £795,165. The income was boosted significantly by the successful award of £430,315 from the Community-led Housing Fund. Over four years the grant income into or enabled by the council totals £4,648,281.

Equalities

The ability to access external grants and effectively manage or enhance internal grants, loans and subsidies has a positive impact by tackling issues relating to communities with protected characteristics under The Equality Act, 2010.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

The continuing risks to the council are an inability to maximise external grant funding through increased competition for external funding, poor awareness of funding sources and lack of co-ordination and planning.

Human Resources

Officers from a number of council services are involved in external funding bids and this work is undertaken within mainstream work. The implementation of complex funding bids requires project management training and experience.

10. Consultation and Engagement

Consultation has taken place with officers from all services of the council, Members with grant experience and appropriate external stakeholders such as funders.

10. Appendices

None

11. Background Papers

Grant returns from WPBC services for the financial years 2013-17

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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