

# **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP**

**19 June 2012**

Present: Councillor Aron (Chair)  
Councillors Brandon, Greenslade, Johnson, Joynes and Martins

Officer: Head of Community Services  
Culture and Community Section Head  
Commissioning Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

## **6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Crout, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services.

## **7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2012 were submitted and signed.

## **8. REVIEW OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Following the previous meeting the Task Group was provided with the following background documents which had been requested –

- Cabinet report (Review of three year grant funding programme to achieve savings) and relevant extract of the minutes from the meeting held on 5 December 2011
- Support for the Voluntary Sector Task Group's final report
- Details of the matters to be addressed by the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) at the Support for the Voluntary Sector Task Group
- Grant Funding application form 2010-2013 and guidance notes
- Service Level Agreement template
- Service Specification template
- Voluntary Sector Funding Budget Table 2012/13

### Cabinet – 5 December 2011

The Head of Community Services explained the Cabinet report and confirmed that the Mayor's Fund had been amalgamated with the Annual Fund and now called The Small Grants Fund. If residents or groups approached the Mayor for a grant they were referred to Community Services and then advised to make an application to the Small Grants Fund. It was confirmed that this information was available on the Council's website and the CVS's website.

### Support for the Voluntary Sector Task Group's Recommendations

The Head of Community Services updated the Task Group on the progress

since the recommendations had been presented to Cabinet.

### 3.1 – Joint funding with Three Rivers District Council for cross boundary organisations

The Head of Community Services explained that officers had discussed this matter with officers at Three Rivers. It had been decided that if there were any groups affected they would be discussed by the two authorities. Following a question about other local authorities, the Head of Community Services explained that generally the groups tended to be Watford and Three Rivers focussed where they covered residents across the boundaries. She advised that the Council did not fund the parts which were not related to Watford. Organisations were advised to contact other authorities for funding. For example if the client base comprised 80% Watford residents, the Council would not fund 100% of the bid.

### 3.2 – Grant funded organisations encouraged to share resources

The Head of Community Services informed the Task Group that organisations were actively encouraged to share resources. There were examples of collaborative work.

Councillor Brandon said that he would want to ensure that any specialist skills were not lost.

Following a number of questions and comments about the Commissioning Framework, the Head of Community Services stated that clear priorities were proposed and set out and that the resources were limited. Consultation would provide feedback on the proposals and summarised for Cabinet. There were five key emerging priorities. Officers would consider which organisations would be best placed to deliver the required service having followed the Commissioning process outlined in the framework. Applicants would need to show value for money and that they were cost effective.

The Head of Community Services advised that the County Council had a wider remit than Watford and it took a similar approach to commissioning. It was becoming more common practice.

The Head of Community Services said that organisations could apply to as many funding streams as they could access.

The Head of Community Services provided a brief comment on each of the other recommendations.

### Service Level Agreement

The Head of Community Services informed the Task Group that the example provided in the pack referred to the current three-year funding programme. A more refined version would be introduced for the new process and it would be more effective for monitoring purposes.

Following a question about the previous Task Group's recommendation of a

rolling grant programme, the Head of Community Services responded that successful groups would be awarded funding for the length of time it was felt appropriate to deliver the required service.

Councillor Greenslade referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and her concerns about accessibility for disabled people. She suggested that a monthly session could be held at the Town Hall.

The Head of Community Services advised that if the organisation was awarded funding it could be specified that it provided a service which was accessible and culturally sensitive

## 9. **COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION**

The Task Group was provided with the latest version of the draft Commissioning Framework. Members were asked to forward their comments to officers by Thursday 21 June. The key points for Members' consideration were sections 8.0 and 9.0. The draft document would be circulated to stakeholder organisations and Council partners; it would be placed on the Council's website and the CVS' website. The consultation would take place between 25 June and 10 September. Drop-in session would be arranged. Organisations would be asked to forward the letter and details about the draft Framework to other interested parties.

Following a question from Councillor Brandon about stakeholders the Head of Community Services agreed to circulate the list once it had been compiled.

**ACTION: Community Services**

The Head of Community Services informed the Task Group that officers would gather the responses and would be presented to the Task Group at its September meeting. This would provide sufficient time to feed comments into the report for Cabinet.

Councillor Brandon suggested that the framework should include reference to those organisations which were currently funded by the Council.

The Head of Community Services replied that it had been felt it might be confusing if this information was contained in the body of the report. Officers would ensure that the accompanying letter was clear and firmly state that the document was in draft format.

The Head of Community Services advised that officers had deliberately not set funding rates in the document, as availability of funding was dependent on the annual budget settlement. The funding available would be continually reviewed.

There were questions about the Palace Theatre. The Head of Community Services explained that as part of the Council's funding the theatre would be specifically required to demonstrate that they undertook work with the community and young people..

Councillor Brandon noted section 8.0 and commented that it appeared that officers had already made a decision.

The Head of Community Services proposed that it was made clear throughout the document that it was a draft and part of the consultation. She asked Members to email the Culture and Community Section Head their suggestions. She added that officers would decide on the final version to be published for consultation.

Councillor Johnson asked whether it was necessary to include the phrase 'and associated Big Society initiative.' on page 11 of the document.

The Head of Community Services confirmed that this phrase would be removed.

ACTION: Community Services

## 10. **PREPARATION FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Councillor Martins requested that the Chief Executive of the CVS be asked to bring a representative of an organisation with him.

The Head of Community Services circulated a list of proposed questions for the Chief Executive from the CVS. She advised that she would add the points Members had made about cross boundary issues and to bring a representative from a non-funded organisation with him.

The Task Groups agreed the following dates and subjects for the meetings –

- Monday 16 July at 6.00 pm – Meeting with Chief Executive from the CVS
- Monday 13 August at 6.00 pm – Representatives from Property Services and Finance
- Wednesday 5 September at 6.00 pm – Consultation feedback

Chair  
Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework  
Task Group

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.  
and finished at 7.45 p.m.