

Policy on Grants to Outside Bodies and Organisations

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for The Leader and Cabinet, elected members, the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, and other officers on the timescales and application processes for Grants to Outside Bodies and Organisations.

Overview

The Council sets an annual budget for Grants to Outside Bodies and Organisations under the Community Portfolio.

The budget currently comprises three elements:

- Community Grants, which are allocated in accordance with a two-tier application and assessment matrix process. The two-tiers referred to are targeted at grant requests (a) under £2,000, and (b) over £2,000
- Service Level Agreements with selected local voluntary and community groups.
- Village Hall Grants, which are now considered under a separate capital allocation.

Community Grants

The Council encourages applications for Community Grants from a wide variety of groups. The Grants application process, guidance and forms must be transparent and conducted in an objective way, fair to all concerned.

Application forms will be assessed using a scoring matrix that has been agreed by the Cabinet (June 2006).

Each application will be scored against the matrix by officers from the Community Services Team within the Regeneration Service. The matrix includes the following:

- Aims and Objectives
- Purpose of Grant Application
- Need for the activity or service
- Monitoring of activities and achievements
- Outcomes and Outputs
- Financial information
- Funding
- Reserves
- Compliance with equal opportunities and child protection legislation
- Organisational structure
- National and Local Legislation

In order to ensure a fairer distribution of available funds to more applicants, the following criteria will apply:

- The maximum that can be applied for is restricted to £15,000.
- A restriction of one application per group or organisation.
- When considering applications, one of the determining factors will be whether applications to other SBC funding sources have been made.
- Organisations with a service level agreement cannot apply for community grants.
- Applications for land and property improvements will not be considered.
- Applications for the creation of a grant distribution fund will not be eligible.

A spreadsheet outlining the scores and proposed allocation of Grants will be prepared by the Cabinet Member for Community, Executive Director Corporate Resources, and the Community Services Manager

In the event that requests for Community Grants exceed the budget available, the banding within the scoring system will be used to indicate the percentage grant awarded against the sum requested.

Proposed grant allocations will be open to scrutiny by the Community Scrutiny Committee. Final allocations will be agreed by the Cabinet.

Grants will be monitored using a reporting form, which will be sent out and administered by the Community Services Manager.

Service Level Agreements

Currently, there are four Service Level Agreements (SLAs):

- Stafford and Stone Citizens Advice Bureau
- Stafford District Voluntary Services
- Sport Stafford Borough
- Stafford District Arts Council

These three-year agreements are in place until 31 March 2009, at which time they will be reviewed. They include provision for annual increases in grant to provide protection against inflation.

The SLAs have been drafted in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Voluntary Sector Compact.

Additional SLAs will be considered from time to time, but it must be recognised that any sums awarded will come out of the overall annual budget, which will consequently reduce the budget available for Community Grants.

Village Hall Grants

There is currently an annual budget of £15,000 available for Grants to Village Halls and Community Centres.

Grants will not be made on a retrospective basis, i.e. work should not be commenced before a grant application is approved by the Council. The Council will accept applications at any time in the financial year. The decision of the Council is final.

All grants will be the subject of consideration by the Council

Only schemes relating to the following will qualify for consideration:

- The purchase of land for community benefit
- The initial provision of accommodation and facilities by purchase and/or construction
- Extensions of existing facilities
- Improvements to existing accommodation, including the provision of a new roof, a new floor or new heating where the need does not arise from neglect of maintenance
- The adaptation of existing buildings
- Equipment for new or adapted buildings

Any schemes costing less than £250 will not normally qualify for grant aid consideration. However, at the discretion of the Council, grants of UP TO £200 may be made in respect of schemes having a capital cost of between £250 and £1,000.

As a matter of general policy, but subject to final examination and approval of the details of the application by the Council, grants of UP TO a maximum of 20% of the estimated cost of the works may be made where the grant request exceeds £1000. The total grant aid payable being subject to a maximum of £5,000 (all payments will be exclusive of VAT).

Applicants cannot, generally, make more than one application in any 12 month period.

Organisations proposing to seek grant aid from the Council for any scheme are advised to inform the Council at the earliest possible date. This will assist in the programming of grant aid provision.

Grant applications are assessed by the Community Services Manager against the criteria above, with the decision on awards delegated to the Community Portfolio holder.