

ITEM 5

MINUTE EXTRACT
COMMUNITY REGENERATION COMMISSION
27 JANUARY 2004

82/03 Approval of Community Grants Budget – CGB – Grants to the Voluntary Sector 2004/05

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Policy detailing the proposed allocation of Community Grants Budget grants to voluntary sector organisations. Isabella Stone, Assistant Director – Community Policy, advised that the Community Grants Budget was managed in the Policy Directorate's budget. There had been 29 applications received for funding from the Community Grants Budget with a total of £1,270,017 requested for 2004/05.

The recommendation to Council Cabinet assumed a base rate budget of £800,000 plus a 3% inflationary increase totally £824,000. All applicant organisations had been appraised against the CGB criteria in relation to fitness for purpose. Most applicants were recommended to receive a 3% inflationary increase over and above their 2003/04 grant with some exceptions. This contained the 2004/05 grants to voluntary organisations within the assumed CGB budget of £824,000. For the first time, consideration had been given to three-year CGB funding agreements in line with Council policy. Part of the requirement for all funding would be that where applicable, organisations maintained the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark. This would be checked with the routine monitoring procedures. All three-year funding agreements would be subject to annual review and conditional upon budget provision being available.

Mark Scothern, Director Derby Council for Voluntary Service – CVS addressed the Commission and advised that the proposed three-year funding was welcomed and the idea of having a longer term funding programme was a positive move. He did comment however that the process should be more transparent. The 3% rise for inflation was a welcome increase. However, the timing if applicant organisations were not successful left little time to find funds from elsewhere.

Stuart Chadbourne, Director of the Derby Citizens' Advice Bureau – CAB - addressed the Commission, advising that he agreed with the issues on transparency and timing which were very relevant to his organisation. He advised that in 2001, an agreement was made between the CAB, the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau – NACAB - and the Council setting out a schedule of match funding on a tapered basis to increase the CAB grant by £36,000 over four financial years, including a clear commitment from the Council to an ongoing commitment from 2004/05.

The CAB's obligation under the agreement was to use the extra investment from the Council and NACAB to transform what was at the time a failing organisation to one that would deliver high quality services to the people of Derby and represent good value for money for its funders.

Councillor Berry, Council Cabinet Member addressed the Commission advising that the Council had never entered into a partnership agreement with the Citizens' Advice Bureau in relation to this additional funding. The document which Stuart Chadbourne referred to was in fact a copy of an internal bid to the Corporate Modernisation budget made by officers in October 2000 to secure Shadow Policy Executive approval for budget provision to support the CAB's request for additional funding. The CAB had approached the Cabinet Members at the time to seek funding on the basis of a three-year tapered grant, £9,000 in 2001/02, £18,000 in 2002/03, £27,000 in 2003/04 and then a permanent commitment from the Council of £36,000 a year thereafter. An application form had not at that stage been received for this funding. The Modernisation Budget bid was not approved by Shadow Policy Executive. Normally, internal bid documents would not be circulated to external partners and would not be regarded as funding agreements. The funding agreement entered into between the Council and CAB in 2001/2 only included a one-off additional amount of £9,000. In 2002/3 and 2003/4 the additional grant amounts for CAB were also treated as one-off payments, with no commitment to continued funding.

Councillor Crosby commented that as a member of the CAB management committee she knew that the Citizens' Advice Bureau worked for people who were socially excluded, if the services reduced this would cause some upset for people in the city.

Resolved to recommend that Council Cabinet grant the Derby Citizens' Advice Bureau the additional £36,000 and that an agreement be put in place that the additional £36,000 be included in the base figure for subsequent years.