

## EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL

### CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR SMALL GRANTS

#### NOTES

**12<sup>th</sup> November 2013, Members Training Room 9.30am**

**Attendance:** Councillors Jackson, Campbell, Taylor, Cross and Jones.

Sally Shaw, Head of Corporate Development, Engagement and Communications.

Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser.

#### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded that any interest should be declared. Members were advised that should they have an interest in any of the applications being considered, this would be a prejudicial interest.

Councillor Jackson declared a personal interest in the North Shore Methodist Church and Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in the Bridge project. The Panel did not consider applications from those organisations but it was noted that they had applied for a small grant.

#### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT**

Mrs Shaw advised that there was a total of £29,611 funding available to be allocated for the award of small grants to voluntary, community and faith groups in Blackpool.

Mrs Shaw explained that small grants were awarded twice a year and so there was a nominal figure of £19,952 to allocate in this round of funding. The first funding round had opened in June 2013 and funding had been awarded to six organisations. The second round had opened in August and 27 applications had been received. A large number of the application forms that were received had been incomplete, not signed or for projects deemed to be ineligible for funding due to the criteria.

Members were advised that application forms had been accompanied by full guidance notes to explain how the application form was to be completed. The Panel was also advised that two comprehensively advertised events had taken place in the summer that had provided an opportunity for organisations to receive help and feedback on completing application forms, but that the events had been very poorly attended.

Mrs Shaw advised that organisations had been contacted regarding incomplete applications where possible. This was if minor omissions were obvious, i.e. if there was a clear misunderstanding of enclosures. This would give organisations the opportunity to provide the missing information.

Previous panels considering small grants had set a precedent that incomplete or late applications would not be considered. The Panel noted the organisations that had applied for a small grant but would not be considered due to incomplete application forms.

### **3. CONSIDERATION OF SMALL GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Panel considered all complete applications individually, noting the amount of funding that had been applied for, what the funding would provide, from where remaining funds would be obtained, and the financial statements of applicants.

Members of the Panel raised queries regarding whether the organisations were already receiving funding from the Council through another source, such as Ward Budget or Area Forum funding.

#### **Vitalise**

Mrs Shaw reported that the organisation had applied for £1,360 towards providing breaks with care for people with disabilities and carers. It was reported that the application had stated that Blackpool residents received, on average, 16 weeks of respite care with Vitalise each year.

The Panel noted that the organisation's nearest centre was in Southport but that three Blackpool residents would benefit from the funding should the application be approved.

The Panel raised questions regarding the ability of national organisations being able to access numerous funding avenues. Mrs Shaw advised that the applications process for small grants was open to all organisations.

The Panel considered the financial information that had been provided by Vitalise, in particular the high level of the organisation's cash balances. On consideration and in Members' opinion, the organisation could use some of its unallocated reserves towards the funding of the proposed project.

Members also noted that respite care was already offered through services commissioned by Adult Services.

**The Panel recommended that Vitalise not be awarded funding for the reasons identified above.**

#### **Helping Hand**

It was reported to the Panel that the organisation had applied for £2,499.48 of funding towards salary costs (£1,997.84) and towards the running costs of the 'Befriending Bus' (£501.64).

Mrs Shaw advised that salary costs were not included in the eligibility criteria for small grants applications.

Members considered that the application contributed to the Council's priority to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable. However, it was considered that the Panel would only be able to support the application for the total amount minus the salary costs and it was questioned

whether the organisation would still be able to undertake the project when receiving less funding than had been applied for. Members supported the project highlighted in the application form, but considered that funding should only be approved provided the project was still able to be undertaken with funding not being provided for the salary costs.

**The Panel recommended that Helping Hand be awarded funding for £501.64 provided the organisation was still able to undertake the project, for the reasons identified above.**

#### **East Lancashire Women's Centre**

The Panel was advised that the organisation had applied for £1,200, which would pay for three laptop computers for the organisation's Blackpool centre, on Edward Street. It was noted that the organisation helped vulnerable women from across Blackpool.

Mrs Shaw explained that the organisation did not currently have a Service Level Agreement with Blackpool Council, but had received small grants for specific projects in previous years, when the organisation had had a different name.

The Panel noted that the organisation contributed to achieving a number of Council priorities, including 'improve health and wellbeing for the most disadvantaged', 'create safer communities and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour' and 'deliver quality services through a professional, well-rewarded and motivated workforce'.

**The Panel recommended that East Lancashire Women's Centre be awarded funding for £1,200, for the reasons identified above.**

#### **Blackpool Environmental Action Team Limited**

Mrs Shaw reported that the application had been received for £1,150 to contribute towards renewing and repairing sections of a perimeter wooden fence and to tidy up the general environment at the South Shore sheltered housing site, for the benefit of all tenants.

The Panel noted that approximately 100 tenants lived at the Molyneux Drive site and that a breakdown for the costs of the work had been provided.

Mrs Shaw advised the Panel that the organisation did receive a Service Level Agreement but that was in relation to specific work at its North Shore site.

The Panel considered that Blackpool Coastal Housing should be responsible for this work but that it would be a low priority. However, it was considered that by approving the application, it would improve the area for residents.

**The Panel recommended that Blackpool Environmental Action Team Limited be awarded funding for £1,150, for the reasons identified above.**

#### **Streetlife**

The Panel was advised that the organisation had applied for £2,300 to contribute to towards training a Streetlife worker in a Basic Expedition Leadership Award, in order to facilitate outdoor activities for service users.

The Panel noted how the funding would help to support the Council's priorities and that it was anticipated that at least 40 people from Blackpool would benefit from the small grant.

**The Panel recommended that Streetlife be awarded funding for £2,300, for the reasons identified above.**

#### **Great Places Housing Group**

Mrs Shaw explained to the Panel that the organisation had applied for a small grant of £2,800 to run a programme for residents who are starting to be involved in, or were at risk of, offending behaviour. It was reported that the aim of the programme was to provide early intervention through building confidence and self esteem and building relationships with the Police and local communities. It was noted that those residents completing the course would have the opportunity to gain credits towards qualifications.

The Panel considered that, similar to Vitalise, the organisation had access to various funding opportunities on a national level and, relative to smaller organisations applying for funding, had high levels of income and working balances.

**The Panel recommended that Great Places Housing Group not be awarded funding for the reasons identified above.**

#### **Further Available Funding**

The Panel considered that, following the above recommendations for approval, there remained £14,800.36 available for allocation.

The Panel considered that a number of the initial rejections of applications had been as a result of organisations being small and therefore, not necessarily maintaining detailed accounts to the level required for the grant eligibility criteria. The Panel recommended that those organisations that had applied for this round of small grant funding, but had been initially rejected for not submitting adequate financial information in their initial application, be allowed another opportunity to submit a completed application form.

The Panel considered that those organisations that had been initially rejected due to not fulfilling other eligibility criteria, such as being for religious activity, salary costs or not for this financial year, should not be afforded a further opportunity to submit another application form.

The meeting ended at 10.50am.