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OFFICER DECISION MAKING

Tuesday, 27th September, 2011 at 9.30 am

OFFICE OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

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Decision Maker

Interim Director of Environment – Frances Martin

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1   2012/13 GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Report of the Communities Team Manager seeking determination, following
consultation, on whether to proceed with proposals set out by Cabinet on 11th August
2011, attached.

Wednesday, 19 October 2011   Head of Legal and Democratic Services

DECISION-MAKER:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT
SUBJECT:	2012/13 GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
DATE OF DECISION:	27 OCTOBER 2011
REPORT OF:	DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (GRANTS AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT), COMMUNITIES TEAM, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
Not applicable	

BRIEF SUMMARY

On 1st August 2011 Cabinet approved in principle a 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations budget of £1,907,300 (the same level as the 2011/12 budget) and authorised the Interim Director of Environment to carry out consultation on the following proposals:

- suspending the current grant application process for awarding grants from the corporate grants budget for 2012/13

- renewing 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year until 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring

Cabinet also delegated authority to the Interim Director of Environment following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to determine whether or not to proceed with these proposals and, within approved budgets, to take any other decisions necessary or expedient to determine the award of all grants for the 2012/13 financial year. This report summarises the outcome of the consultation and makes recommendations in respect of the 2012/13 grant process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

     (i)   To approve the proposal to

- suspend the current grant application process for awarding grants from the corporate grants budget for 2012/13 and

- renew 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year until 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   To determine the process for awarding grants to voluntary organisations in 2012/13.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2.
- The option of not consulting was rejected as the proposal constitutes a significant change to an established procedure and therefore requires consultation with stakeholders.

- The option of continuing the current open, competitive grant application process for awarding grants in 2012/13 was considered and rejected as it perpetuates the current annual short term decision making when the council needs to be making long term strategic decisions about its grant making process (see detail below).

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3. On 1st August 2011 Cabinet approved in principle a 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations budget of £1,907,300 (the same level as the 2011/12 budget) and authorised the Interim Director of Environment to carry out consultation on the following proposals:

    - suspending the current grant application process for awarding grants from the corporate grants budget for 2012/13
    - renewing 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year until 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring

    Cabinet also delegated authority to the Interim Director of Environment following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to determine whether or not to proceed with these proposals and, within approved budgets, to take any other decisions necessary or expedient to determine the award of all grants for the 2012/13 financial year.

4. The reasons for these proposals can be found in the 2012/13 Grants to Voluntary Organisations report to Cabinet on 1st August 2011 but can be summarised as follows:

    - to avoid wasting voluntary sector and council resources on an open competitive application process that is likely, once again, to result in disappointment for new applicants as impact assessments undertaken during the 2011/12 grants round indicated that the impact of reducing existing grants outweighed the impact of not awarding grants to new applicants,
    - to allow sufficient time to complete the following reviews approved by Cabinet on 14th March 2011
        - o whether it would be more appropriate to move towards commissioning and purchasing some of the services that are currently grant aided and
        - o the cross service review of advice services in the city
    - to give consideration to bringing forward the application timetable in future years.

5. That report also explained that in the current stringent national economic circumstances in which all local authorities must make significant financial savings to achieve a balanced budget, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to maintain the corporate grants budget at current levels beyond 2012/13 and that subject to consultation and the assessment of impact, consideration will therefore have to be given to reducing some grants over the medium term.

6. As the proposals in 3 above constitute a significant change to an established procedure it was necessary to consult with stakeholders. Time constraints and the overriding need to provide certainty to applicants resulted in a consultation period of 8 weeks (11th August to 6th October) rather than the 12 weeks recommended in the Compact.

7. Appendix 1 details how that consultation was undertaken and the responses received. It also highlights under Learning points (p.10) some of the difficulties encountered in analysing responses and in particular the skewing effect of a number of individuals from the same organisation responding separately. This problem will be "designed out" of any future consultation.

Brief summary of consultation responses to proposal to suspend 2012/13 application process and renew 2011/12 grants for a further year

8.
- As expected, most currently funded organisations (24 out of 25) supported the proposal to renew their 2011/12 grant for another year to give them stability.

- Also as expected, most organisations not currently funded (31 out of 33) did not support the proposal and felt it was unfair not to give them the opportunity to apply for funding in 2012/13.

- There was a misconception amongst some organisations not currently funded that the council continues to fund the same organisations because it is too difficult to reduce or end their grants. They were not aware that some groups have been funded for many years because they continue to meet council priorities and provide key services. With sufficient notice and assessment of impact grants can and have been reduced or discontinued.

- Some organisations did not seem clear about the reasons behind the proposal to renew 2011/12 grants for another year.

- There was a misconception amongst some organisations that the council should fund any organisations that work in the city, irrespective of whether their work meets the council's priorities.

Brief summary of responses to other areas of consultation

9.
- Most respondents agreed that the grants decision should be brought forward, with the majority choosing a January decision date.

- Most respondents agreed that an 8 week application period allows enough time to write applications.

- Most respondents agreed that the current grants and funding web pages are providing useful information and some helpful suggestions for further improvements were made.

Advantages of suspending the 2012/13 application process and renewing existing grants

10. In the short term a decision to suspend the 2012/13 application process and renew existing grants would provide a year of stability for existing grant recipients at a time of reduced funding both locally and nationally. This would be particularly welcome to groups whose council grants were reduced in 2011/12 with notice periods resulting in the full impact coming into effect in 2012/13.

11.   It would also avoid wasting voluntary sector and council resources on an open competitive application process that is likely, once again, to result in disappointment for new applicants as impact assessments undertaken during the 2011/12 grants round indicated that the impact of reducing existing grants outweighed the impact of not awarding grants to new applicants.

12.   Recent Best Value Statutory Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) states that local authorities should give at least 3 months notice when reducing or ending funding to voluntary and community organisations, that the authority should actively engage with the organisations and service users as early as possible before making a decision and that organisations, service users and the wider community should have the opportunity to put forward options to reshape the service or project. To do this properly requires time and staff resources.

13.   Furthermore the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) recently published a report on the impact of public sector spending cuts on voluntary organisations.

      "Counting the Cuts: The impact of spending cuts on the UK voluntary and community sector", David Kane and James Allen, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, August 2011 http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/counting_the_cuts.pdf

      The report highlighted the importance of local authorities making long-term strategic decisions in partnership with the local VCS "but some are not and this is causing real damage to the sector and local communities".

14.   The review of "whether it would be more appropriate to move towards commissioning and purchasing some of the services that are currently grant aided" will help to inform the council's long-term strategic decision making in respect of support for the voluntary and community sector in Southampton whether currently funded or unfunded.

15.   In the longer term a decision to suspend the 2012/13 application process and renew existing grants would allow sufficient time to develop and consult on future options and give notice of and implement any changes in 2013/14.

Disadvantages of suspending the 2012/13 application process and renewing existing grants

16.   The main disadvantage of a decision to suspend the 2012/13 application process and renew existing grants is that it may be considered unfair to new applicants unable to apply for council grants in 2012/13. It may also be considered unfair to currently funded organisations wishing to apply for increased grants or additional grants for new projects. Furthermore it raises the question of whether the council is achieving best value by temporarily suspending competition for grants.

Recommendation

17.   Having considered the responses to the consultation it is recommended that approval is given to the proposal to

      • suspend the current grant application process for awarding grants from the corporate grants budget for 2012/13 and

- renew 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year until 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring.

18.   This recommendation is made on the basis that on balance the long term advantages as detailed in paragraphs 10-15 above outweigh the short term disadvantages detailed in paragraph 16. In making the recommendation the council acknowledges the disadvantage to potential new applicants in 2012/13. However, it is a short term disadvantage that will enable the council to give proper consideration to its longer term grant making process and support for the voluntary and community sector in Southampton whether currently funded or unfunded.

Responsibility for grant allocation in the new council structure

19.   Following this decision, as a result of reorganisation within the council responsibility for the allocation of grants to voluntary organisations budget will transfer to the Director of Economic Development.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

20.   A number of organisations were awarded reduced grants in 2011/12 which included a one-off paid notice period with the full impact of the reduction coming into effect in any grant awarded in 2012/13. The £1,907,300 grants to voluntary organisations budget approved for 2012/13 is calculated on the basis of the full effect of those reductions.

Property/Other

21.   There are no property implications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

22.   The legal powers under which grants are made are included in reports to Cabinet seeking approval for grants.

Other Legal Implications:

23.   The council is mindful of the case law established through the judicial reviews of Haringey Council in 2000, Leicester City Council in 2004, Ealing Borough Council in 2008, London Councils in February 2011 and Birmingham City Council in 2011. Accordingly, the council follows four main principles when considering the allocation of grants, namely timely and meaningful consultation with voluntary organisations with a clear explanation of proposals and an open, transparent, corporate, co-ordinated approach. Decision makers must be satisfied that consultation with affected organisations has been adequately carried out and that where appropriate any notice period given before the implementation of any reduction in grant is adequate and reasonable.

24.   The Council recognises its equalities duties and in making its decision will pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and to the outcome of the impact assessments conducted during the 2011/12 grants round. No equalities issues were raised by respondents during the consultation.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

25.   Grant recommendations relate to the relevant policy framework plans and the services provided by the grant aided organisations will assist the Council in meeting the overall aims of its policy framework including the objectives set out in the City of Southampton Strategy (Community Strategy).

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KEY DECISION?	Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1.	Consultation on 2012/13 Grants to Voluntary Organisations
2.	Survey Questions

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None

Integrated Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to be carried out.	Conducted during the 2011/12 grants round

Other Background Documents

Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	2012/13 Grants to Voluntary Organisations Report to Cabinet on 1st August 2011	
2.	2011/12 Grants to Voluntary Organisations Report to Cabinet on 14th March 2011	

Southampton City Council
Consultation on 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations

Contents

Introduction

In 2009 the council conducted a Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations which resulted in two new grants schemes, the Running Costs Fund and New Projects Fund, and began to open up the grants to applicants who had not previously received funding. However, the first full year of these new schemes, 2011/12, coincided with the current economic downturn and reductions in public sector funding and a consequent reduction in the grants budget. Impact assessments of affected organisations indicated the impact of reducing funding to organisations with existing grants (where they met criteria and priorities and provide key services) outweighed the impact of not awarding grants to new applicants. Therefore, Cabinet decided not to award grants to new applicants in 2011/12.

Despite the on-going need to reduce spending, on 1st August 2011 Cabinet agreed to set the overall grants to voluntary organisations budget for 2012/13 at the same level as 2011/12, £1,907,300 and authorised the Interim Director for Environment to carry out consultation on the following proposals:

- suspending the current grant application process for awarding grants from the corporate grants budget for 2012/13
- renewing 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice[1], for a further year until 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring
- reviewing and potentially bringing forward the timing of the grant application process in future years

Cabinet also delegated authority to the Interim Director of Environment following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to determine whether or not to proceed with the proposals set out above and, within approved budgets, to take any other decisions necessary or expedient to determine the award of all grants for the 2012/13 financial year.

The consultation was conducted via an online survey between 11th August and 6th October 2011 to help inform this delegated decision. The opportunity was also taken to consult on changing the grants timetable and to gather some general feedback on the council's grants and funding web pages. This report details the responses to the consultation.

The council would like to thank the 88 respondents who took part in the consultation. Where a particular query raised during the consultation requires an individual response these will be published after the delegated decision has been made.

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[1] The council is mindful of case law established through the judicial reviews of Haringey Council in 2000, Leicester City Council in 2004, Ealing Borough council in 2008 and London Councils in February 2011. Accordingly appropriate notice is given before any reduction in grant is implemented. This is a one-off payment.

Key Findings

- As expected, most currently funded organisations (24 out of 25) supported the proposal to renew their 2011/12 grant for another year to give them stability.

- Also as expected, most organisations not currently funded (31 out of 33) did not support the proposal and felt it was unfair not to give them the opportunity to apply for funding in 2012/13.

- There was a misconception amongst some organisations not currently funded that the council continues to fund the same organisations because it is too difficult to reduce or end their grants. They were not aware that some groups have been funded for many years because they continue to meet council priorities and provide key services. With sufficient notice and assessment of impact grants can and have been reduced or discontinued.

- Some organisations did not seem clear about the reasons behind the proposal to renew 2011/12 grants for another year.

- There was a misconception amongst some organisations that the council should fund any organisations that work in the city, irrespective of whether their work meets the council's priorities.[2]

- Most respondents agreed that the grants decision should be brought forward, with 53% choosing a January decision date, instead of the current March decision date.

- Most respondents, 75%, agreed that an 8 week application period allows enough time to write applications. Those that disagreed did so mainly because if the decision is brought forward the application period will be during the summer school holidays.

- Most respondents agreed that the current grants and funding web pages are providing useful information and some helpful suggestions for further improvements were made.

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[2] The current council priorities, as updated July 2011, are:
1 – More jobs for local people
2 – More local people who are well educated and skilled
3 – A better and safer place in which to live and invest
4 – Better protection for children and young people
5 – Support for the most vulnerable people and families
6 – Reducing health inequalities

Findings in detail

The survey format allowed for organisations, service users and any interested members of the public to submit a response. The council received a good response, with many voluntary organisations both currently and not currently funded taking part. A number of helpful suggestions were made relevant to both this consultation and future models for funding.

It is clear (based on the names given) that some organisations have sent in a single, co-ordinated response whereas other organisations have submitted individual responses from members of staff or service users. Consequently it is not possible to analyse the survey results on a 'one person, one vote' basis. This is a fault in the design of the survey and it has been included as a learning point for future consultations. Instead the results have been grouped into categories based on whether the voluntary organisations are currently funded or not. Responses from individuals and other types of organisation have been grouped together separately. This will allow us to present a clear picture of how the proposals are viewed without giving one group more weight than another.

Section one – Options for 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations

Responses from currently funded voluntary organisations
As expected, currently funded voluntary organisations were predominantly in favour of option 1 (renewing the 2011/12 grants for another year to 31st March 2013). Of 25 currently funded respondents only 1 was in favour of option 2 (an open, competitive grant scheme for 2012/13).
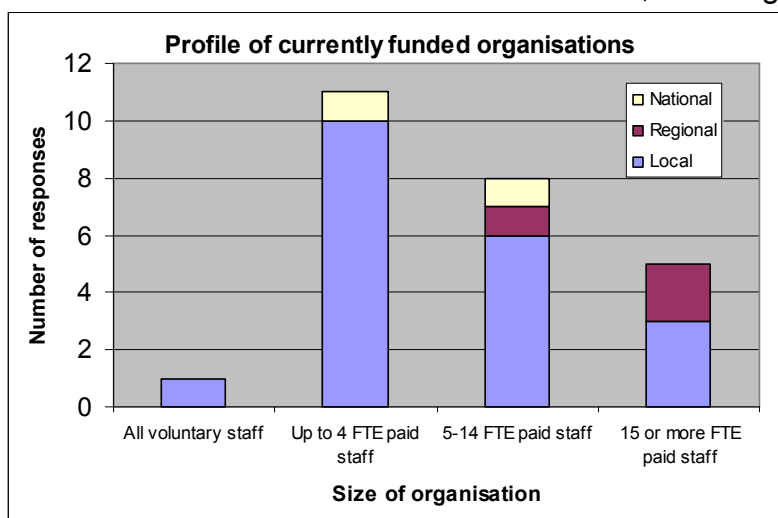
Of the 39 organisations funded in 2011/12, 23 received reduced grants from the previous year. Impact assessments showed that while they could reshape their service to cope with the reduced grants for 2011/12 further reductions would cause significant problems for them, possibly leading to the closure of services in some cases. As option 1 guarantees them funding for another year, although at a standstill level, it is unsurprising that most currently funded organisations would choose this.

Summary of comments
- Option 1 gives groups stability while they are coping with the reduced grants they received in 2011/12.
- Option 1 will give groups early notice of their grant allowing them to budget for the next financial year.
- Option 1 gives stability in the face of the increased costs they already know they are facing (from both increased running costs and higher demand for services).
- There should be an open, competitive process, but the council needs time to properly assess how to manage the reduced budget before making reductions.
- Option 1 is the best short term plan given the budget reduction from 2010/11.
- Lack of certainty of funding is the biggest issue.
- Option 1 will give groups stability allowing them to plan for the future.
- Option 1 will send a clear and positive message to other funders, reducing the risk of them withdrawing funding, securing inward investment to the city.

Profile of currently funded organisations

From the profile below it can be seen that the majority of responses from organisations that are currently funded were submitted on behalf of medium sized, local organisations.

Profile of currently funded organisations

Responses from voluntary organisations not currently funded

Also as expected, voluntary organisations not currently funded were predominantly in favour of option 2. Of 33 respondents not currently funded only 2 were in favour of option 1.
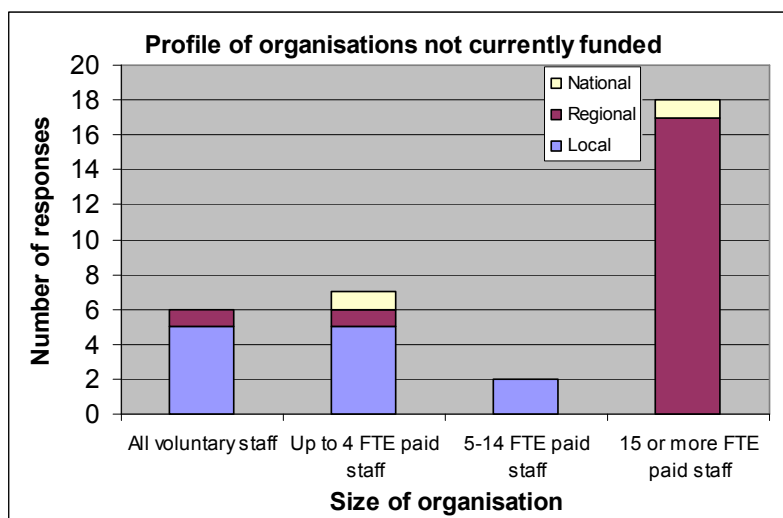
Summary of comments

- All organisations should be entitled to apply for grants.
- It's not fair to close off the grants and give them to only some organisations.
- Everyone is struggling for funding, not just those organisations the council already funds. It's frustrating the council will not consider new applications when funding is limited everywhere.
- Funding should be given to organisations that can provide evidence of the work they're doing.
- Option 1 is discriminating against those delivering work in the city and not currently receiving funding.
- Option 1 means Cabinet is only aware of the currently funded groups and remains unaware of other high quality services being delivered in the city.
- Option 2 is the only way the council will get best value for money.
- It's hard to get new projects off the ground when funding is not available.

Profile of organisations not currently funded

From the profile below it can be seen that the majority of responses from organisations that are not currently funded were submitted on behalf of large regional organisations. Recently published research by the Charities Aid Foundation Charity Trends shows that larger charities have felt the effects of the recession more than smaller ones.[3] This may be a reason why larger organisations in the area were concerned that there may not be an opportunity to apply for council funding for 2012/13.

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[3] Charities Aid Foundation, 30th August 2011. https://www.cafonline.org/media-office/press-releases/2011/august-2011/larger-charities-worst-hit.aspx

Individuals and other types of organisation

The majority of people who responded as an individual or on behalf of another type of organisation (other than voluntary) were largely in support of option 1. Of 30 individual/other respondents only 5 were in favour of option 2.

Summary of comments
- Option 1 gives stability for some organisations in a difficult time.
- Option 1 should be a temporary solution with an open, competitive process the following year.
- With the current funding challenges the public sector are facing option 1 seems like the best short term solution. The council is in a difficult position.
- Pleased to see the council is not cutting the overall budget, especially in the light of the Big Society agenda.
- Organisations need time to consolidate their services after the grant reductions made in 2011/12.
- Preventing new applications will stall new initiatives.
- Grants should be made a maximum of three years in a row. This would give organisations time to find other funding and would allow more organisations to be funded.

Other types of organisation were not asked for their size and geographic reach (i.e. local, regional, national) therefore there is no profile information for them.

Overall

Overall the responses were as expected, with currently funded organisations largely in support of suspending the grants process and renewing the 2011/12 grants for another year and organisations not currently funded largely in support of a fully open, competitive grants round. Individuals and other types of organisations were also broadly in support of the proposal to renew 2011/12 grants with the caveat that it should be a temporary arrangement.

The responses to this section of the survey will be considered by the Interim Director of Environment who has delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make the decision on whether to renew the 2011/12 grants for another year or hold an open competitive scheme.

The 2011/12 Grants to Voluntary Organisations Cabinet report (14th March 2011) approved delegated authority to "conduct a review of whether it would be more appropriate to move towards commissioning and purchasing some of the services that are currently grant aided." Many comments from this section of the survey made suggestions for the long term future of grants. These will help shape consultation into potential new funding models for voluntary organisations that will take place as part of this review.

Section two - Future application process for open, competitive grant schemes

A long standing criticism of the grants process is that decisions are made in March each year (after budget setting in February) leaving organisations very little time to plan and budget for the new financial year. Changing the timetable needs to be planned well in advance, and the potential changes being consulted on would be introduced for the 2013/14 grants year at the earliest.

The following issues in respect of bringing forward the grants decisions were identified and consulted on:
- Do the majority of organisations want the grant decision earlier and if so, how much earlier?
- Bringing the decision forward would mean the grant application period being partially in the school holidays, would this cause a problem?
- Would organisations have all the financial information about the following year they need at this earlier time?
- The application period is currently quite long; can it be shortened to 8 weeks?

An additional issue is that organisations may not have their formal accounts signed off by the closing date as they have up to 10 months from the end of their financial year to prepare them. As this cannot be overcome it was not consulted on. The council accepts that some organisations would need to submit their accounts after the closing date.

Responses from currently funded voluntary organisations
The currently funded organisations generally supported the idea of bringing forward the grants decision date but were split over whether it should be December or January, with a small majority choosing December. However, when asked if they would have a problem with most of the application period being over the summer school holidays a third agreed they would or were not sure and 40% could not be sure they would have all the financial information they needed to make an application in time for an earlier closing date. The organisations for whom this would cause the most problems are those whose financial year does not run April-March.

The proposal to shorten the grant application period from 12 weeks to 8 weeks also produced a mixed response. The majority of 60% of currently funded organisations either agreed with the proposal or had no preference. The main argument against shortening the application period was that allowances need to be made because of the summer school holidays.

Responses from voluntary organisations not currently funded
Responses from voluntary organisations that are not currently funded by the council were broadly similar to those that are currently funded. They also supported an earlier grants decision date, but the majority preferred January. A small number of organisations would

find it difficult to complete an application during the summer school holidays and around 20% felt they would not have all the financial information they needed to make an application in time for an earlier closing date.

Organisations not currently funded were more in favour of shortening the grant application, with 90% of them agreeing with an 8 week period. The main objections were that 8 weeks does not allow time to develop a new project and that organisations need advance notice of when schemes will be open for applications in order to plan their time.

Individuals and other types of organisation
There were a larger number of 'no preference' and 'not sure' responses from this group, compared with the voluntary organisations. These responses were most likely from individuals who are not currently affiliated with a voluntary organisation and therefore this section of the survey is not as relevant for them. There was no option for 'not applicable' and this has been included as a learning point for future consultations.

Individuals and other types of organisation were also in support of bringing forward the grants timetable, with a small majority preferring January. No significant problems were raised about the application period being during the summer school holidays or about having all the necessary financial information in time. The majority were also broadly in support of shortening the grant application period to 8 weeks, though as with the currently funded organisations the main objection was because of it clashing with the summer school holidays.

Overall
While there was overall support indicated from all types of respondents for bringing the grants decision forward, around one third may have problems if the grant application period was too early and clashed with the summer school holidays. Also a majority of respondents agreed or did not have an opinion on shortening the grant application period, however, those that disagreed with the proposal made strong arguments against it. It is clear a balance needs to be found between a suitable application period and an early decision date.

The results from this section of the survey will help shape the consultation into potential new funding models for voluntary organisations that will take place as part of the review of whether it would be more appropriate to move towards commissioning and purchasing some of the services that are currently grant aided.

Section three - Grants and funding web pages
(http://www.southampton.gov.uk/grants)

With decreasing resources available for support for voluntary organisations the internet and social media gives the council an opportunity to provide online support and information. Social media use within the voluntary sector is growing. Locally even the smallest community groups are setting up websites to promote their work.

The survey asked respondents if they had visited the council's grants and funding web pages and if they had, what they thought of the features on offer. They were also given an opportunity to suggest other features that they would find helpful. Overall the results were very positive. The vast majority of respondents were aware of the grants and funding web pages, though not all had visited them. Respondents made some helpful suggestions for features they would find useful. The results from this section of the survey will now be

looked at in detail by staff from the Communities and Regeneration teams (who share responsibility for these web pages) and used along with data from Google Analytics to plan the next phase of the grants and funding web pages development.

Methodology

This consultation was conducted between 11th August and 6th October 2011 via an online survey. Both the national Compact and the Southampton Compact recommend a 12 week consultation period. However, if the council had allowed 12 weeks and the final decision is to continue with the current open competitive grant application process there would be insufficient time to assess applications properly. It was therefore decided that, on balance, it would be preferable to have a shorter 8 week consultation timeframe and be able to run an open competitive application process properly.

The survey was placed on the council's website, with links to it from both the grants and funding page and the council's consultation page. Paper versions of the survey were available on request, though none were requested. Two members of the Communities Team (the Communities Team Manager and the Development Officer Grants and Voluntary Sector Support) were also available by phone to answer any queries. Though this offer was not taken up by any individual organisations, Southampton Voluntary Services raised some queries by email in their capacity as the umbrella organisation, which informed a voluntary sector meeting about the consultation (see table below for details).

The survey was promoted directly to all organisations that had applied to the Running Costs Fund or New Projects Fund for 2011/12. It was also promoted indirectly through a number of routes. The ways the survey was promoted are listed below.

How	Who	When
Email (direct)	To every organisation who applied for a 2011/12 Running Costs Fund or New Projects Fund grant (both successful and unsuccessful)	11th August 2011 7th September 2011 22nd September 2011 30th September 2011
Email (indirect)	Information given to all SCC grant appraisers to pass on to their own networks via email and word of mouth	11th August 2011
	Communities weekly e-bulletin	12th August 2011 19th September 2011
	Funding e-bulletin	17th August 2011 7th September 2011
	Funding and Development Forum mailing list	15th August 2011
Website	On grants homepage and link from consultation homepage	11th August to 6th October 2011
Newsletters	Southampton Voluntary Services newsletter (online and hard copy)	Distributed from 7th September 2011

Social media	Southampton Funding twitter (@SouthamptonFund)	11th August 2011 18th August 2011 31st August 2011 15th September 2011 29th September 2011
	Southampton Communities facebook and twitter	Twitter: 11th August 2011 15th September 2011 Facebook: 12th August 2011 15th September 2011
Meetings	Southampton Voluntary Services in its capacity as the umbrella organisation hosted a consultation event at their offices to provide an opportunity for organisations to feedback on the council's consultation.	27th September 2011

Learning points

An online survey was chosen as the method for this consultation as it is quick and easy both to administer and for consultees to complete. However, the responses received raise the question of whether it was the best method to use for this particular consultation. The following learning points and actions have been identified for future consultation on grants issues.

Problem	Possible actions for future consultations
Consultees not understanding reasons for proposals It appears from the comments received that some organisations did not fully understand the reasons behind the proposal for a roll forward year. It is probable that they did not read the accompanying Cabinet report.	• Provide a clear, plain English outline of the proposals and the reasons for them. • State clearly on the survey or feedback form that consultees should read the outline before completing the survey/form. • Request a 'critical friend' to review the consultation before publication.
Multiple responses from the same organisation skewing results The online survey deliberately allowed both organisations and service users to submit a response. In retrospect, this was not the best way to do this. It appears that a number of responses from individual staff members and service users may have been submitted on behalf of one or two organisations (which they were entitled to do), whereas other organisations only submitted one joint response. This has made it more difficult to analyse responses to fairly represent the views of consultees.	• Only allow one response per organisation, on behalf of both the organisation and their service users. • Use a feedback form rather than an online survey, which can be downloaded and passed around within an organisation making it easier for them to submit a joint response • Organisations such as SVS would be allowed to submit responses in their capacity as umbrella bodies for the local voluntary sector in addition to a response on behalf of their own organisations. • See also actions for anonymous responses below

Anonymous responses The survey allowed consultees to submit anonymous responses as not everyone feels comfortable leaving their name, particularly if they are giving a critical response. However, this contributed to the difficulty in analysing the responses when it was not clear who they came from.	• Do not allow anonymous responses from organisations • Have a separate feedback form for individuals who wish to remain anonymous, but make it clear these responses will be analysed separately as responses from individual members of the public and will not be included with the organisation's responses
Responses from individuals Most questions on the survey were compulsory. As they were all aimed at voluntary organisations it was difficult for individuals to answer some questions and led to a higher number of 'not sure' answers from this group.	There are three potential solutions: • Ask the question about type of respondent at the beginning of the survey. It is then possible to route individuals to different questions or to skip questions that are only relevant to organisations. • Have a 'not applicable' option • Make questions that are not applicable to everyone non-compulsory.

Data Tables
(% are based on overall number of respondents, unless otherwise stated)

1. How should the 2012/13 Running Costs Fund and New Projects Fund be run?
Option 1 - renew 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year to 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring.
Option 2 - open, competitive grants scheme

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Option 1	51	57.3%	24	27.0%	2	2.2%	25	28.1%
Option 2	37	41.6%	1	1.1%	31	34.8%	5	5.6%

2. Do you have any additional comments on these options for the 2012/13 Running Costs and New Projects Funds?
Of the 88 responses received, 36 did not leave a comment in question 2. The other 52 comments are listed below in the order they were received.

- All organisations should have access to the fund - just because you have always had a grant should not mean that you should rely on it - all charities are struggling and should be given an equal chance to gain support for the work they do in the city.
- This gives the sector the stability it needs at a time we are having to cope operationally with the reductions following the notice period and the reduced 2011/2012 award. We welcome this move from the council as we said at the cabinet and scrutiny meetings.
- The funding should be spread across the board and given to those who can provide clear evidence of the work they have done/doing. Emphasis on the word – evidence.
- Given the current economic climate option 1 offers organisations some stability.
- As a project which was seeking funding for the first time this year in a time when funding is limited it was frustrating that the council would not accept or even consider new applications. I understand the limited funding available but feel it is only fair to have an open playing field and allow new projects to compete as I feel especially our project is important for the future of homeless adults in Southampton.
- by choosing option 1 the council could be seen to be discriminating against organisations who are delivering work within the city and not currently receiving a running costs grant and therefore would be totally precluded from the process.
- Preventing new applications will stall new initiatives needed now more than ever.
- Option 2 is the fairest way to ensure that all voluntary sector organisations delivering work to the people of Southampton have a fair chance to receive funding to support delivery of services. Option 1 will only serve to ensure that the Cabinet remains unaware of some high quality services being delivered across the city.
- Option 2 will give all a fair chance to gain funds not a select few.
- Option 2 is the most fair of the options for all local voluntary sector groups.
- It only seems fair that all voluntary organisations should be entitled to go for funding, especially in the current climate.
- Option 2 is the only way that all voluntary sector organisations will have a fair opportunity to achieve funding. It is also the option that ensures that SCC get value for money - just because an organisation already holds a grant, does not mean they automatically offer a better quality or better value for money service than an organisation that does not!

- I believe an open, competitive grants scheme to be the fairest option, especially for all local voluntary sector groups in Southampton.
- Option two would enable a fairer option for local and voluntary groups in Southampton.
- Surely it is fairer for any groups to be able to bid for money.
- Option 2 provides the fairest system for all voluntary groups in Southampton and ensures that funding is directed to those projects that offer best value for money to rate payers as well as encouraging innovative projects which address current issues.
- If there's no extra money for new applicants there doesn't seem any point wasting people's time with applications.
- The grants should be open to all voluntary sectors not just organisations already eligible!!
- Getting a new project off the ground is the hardest time. To close all funding to new applicants would restrict creative / responsive work being created.
- I believe that option two makes it fairer for a wider range of voluntary groups within Southampton.
- I believe option 2 to be a far fairer way to run the grant scheme.
- Excluding voluntary sector groups because they did not receive a grant last year does not seem fair.
- Option 1 - As long as it's only a temporary solution.
- Option 2 is the fairest option for all organisations and local voluntary sector groups in Southampton. How is restricting the funding to those who have already benefitted, any kind of fair solution at all? It gives the impression that there is political favouritism towards certain groups or some kind of unofficial agreements happening?!
- Option 1 means that new projects have no opportunity to apply for funding. However, Option 1 is easier to administer and probably cheaper.
- Option 1 may produce stability for those organisations already in receipt of funding, but wouldn't encourage innovation or now options. Would a % approach i.e. 60% continuity, the rest up for application, be a better alternative.
- I feel grants should have to be applied for annually by ALL applicants on the understanding that grants will only be available for a maximum of 3 years to any one Applicant. That gives everyone time to find other ways of funding their applications. No one should be able to run year after year on council grants and gives many more applications the opportunity to get up and running. That will benefit so many more people in Southampton.
- With the challenges facing the Public Sector and the impact of grant funding reductions across the 3rd sector, I believe Option 1 offers the best solution and maintains continuity for projects that have been successful in the past 12 months.
- We already have been told of a 50% increase in the cost of hall hire at our venue Taunton's College, so at least with stable funding we can budget.
- There should be an open process for all grants however there is also a need to give stability to agencies and to allow time for appropriate scrutiny by SCC at a time of reducing resource. One option might therefore be to have a staggered programme of 2 or 3 year offers (subject to monitoring. This could reduce work load at SCC, allow for monitoring, give stability but still allow new applications.
- Obviously the main catalyst for my opinion here is that we are an existing recipient of a grant, however, given the budgetary restrictions in place I feel this is the best short term plan whether we benefit or otherwise.
- The option of renewing the 2011/12 grants levels is a positive step as in the current financial it has become increasing difficult to secure funding from elsewhere, therefore many valuable projects are threatened with closure.

- As an expanding charity we are responding to the constantly growing needs within the city and therefore our funding requirements are also increasing. However we understand that there has to be a balance between the admin of the grants and a fair distribution of funds.

- Lack of certainty about funding is the biggest issue. While the main income for [name removed] is "earned income" from charges to users, grant aid forms an important part of the whole picture. As our users are also suffering from cuts we are seeing "earned income" drop too. We need to ensure a core level of funding to maintain service provision. This is one reason it is important to [name removed] that we have stable grant funding.

- If option 1 is successful then this allows room for longer term development in the project and sufficient time for planning project contents.

- I'm not clear about the difference between running costs and project funds.

- I think that the council is in a difficult position with limited funds, so have thought about the options for a while. I'm not part of a group but know people running community groups and projects - some are funded by the council and would welcome this breathing space; others are not and are unhappy at not being given the chance to bid.

- I am aware that other councils have cut their grants budgets for voluntary organisations so am pleased to hear that the council has managed not to do this in these difficult times, particularly in the light of the Big Society agenda.

- As long as this means that there will be an open process the following year so new groups can apply that will be fine.

- Option 1 seems to have more pros than Option 2 which is why I have chosen this one.

- I'm thinking of starting a group, so although option 1 seems the best one, information about other sources of funding from the council or elsewhere would be helpful.

- During a recession and difficult times it seems to make sense to continue to offer support to groups previously supported by the council, particularly as this consultation seems to imply that the following year will be an open process.

- I'm not involved in a group but I know people who are and have been funded by the council in the past. I know that they are worried about security of funding so option 1 seems the best one to me.

- Given that there is no increased funding and so the chances of new applicants being funded aren't very strong, the disadvantage of no new applicants having the possibility that they might get funding is I think strongly outweighed by the stability that the decision to renew existing grants will give to the funded organisations. It increases their output and efficiency, as completing competitive grant funding applications is extremely time consuming. So given the financial climate I think that this is the best decision. I can see this from several organisations perspective, where the weight off staff, volunteers and committee's shoulders in seeing some stability in these difficult times is huge.

- Following consultation with our members [name removed] has a number of recommendations it wishes to make and will make these direct to officer as part of next round consultations as they are too complex to outline in this format.

- Funding stability for charities is vital to keep existing projects running.

- Vital for charities - ongoing funding is essential to keep them going.

- In the short term this is the best solution as too many groups are facing major difficulties after the reductions to funding made last round. They need an opportunity to consolidate and deliver on objectives.

- In difficult times, there needs to be a level of continuity of funding in order for vol orgs to develop any kind of medium term/survival strategy. Last year's review was very detailed and comprehensive - to repeat this full procedure again would be a waste of scarce resources and would also cause further anxieties within the sector.

- While some key organisations receive grants, and should continue, there are other equally key organisations that do not currently. It is essential to have a good assessment process.

- My comments are not additional but I do strongly favour option 1. Although this is a difficult decision I believe that early clarity of the situation for grant recipients and those who are not can only be beneficial. Clear and early understanding will help all organisations to prepare for the forthcoming year and beyond and will reduce the amount of time used in making the full application. An early decision to continue support of currently funded organisations enables clear and positive messages to be sent to other funders thus reducing the potential for other's to withdraw funding and helps to secure this inward investment to the City.

- Agree with option 1 for running costs grant but would like to see some funds ring fenced to encourage and support innovation and new projects. What is the review process which will enable already funded 'new projects' to continue to receive funding? In particular it may be useful to look at sustainability and viability of new projects and indeed organisations receiving running costs grant. Can and will some of these organisations move toward viability without grant funding and are new projects able to continue longer term? An important aspect of this will be ability of organisations to lever in other external funding which benefits city's residents.

Free form responses (by email)

We live in a quickly changing world, and I'd ask you to be open to the changes that are happening and not to presume that money granted to organisations, should be a 'fait accompli' year on year. I'd hate to see organisations becoming complacent because they know they will get a substantial grant. I know I'm biased but I'd also encourage you to work with smaller grass roots organisations as I feel they are often better value for money. We were funded through Migration Impact Fund for (in practice) 3 years but that has now dried up and our future will be in doubt during 2012-13. I know this might be time consuming, but I think it's worth **seeing** organisations at work rather than just going by their applications! I know you all have difficult decisions and lots of pressures.

3. Should we move the grant decisions to an earlier date (subject to final Budget setting in mid-February)?

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Bring forward to December	24	27.0%	12	13.5%	3	3.4%	9	10.1%
Bring forward to January	47	52.8%	10	11.2%	24	27.0%	13	14.6%
Keep in March	2	2.2%	0	0.0%	2	2.2%	0	0.0%
No preference	15	16.9%	3	3.4%	4	4.5%	8	9.0%

4. Would it cause your organisation problems if most of the grant application period was during the summer school holidays? (please note - we would always ensure the actual closing date is not during the school holidays)

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
No	60	67.4%	18	20.2%	29	32.6%	13	14.6%
Yes	12	13.5%	4	4.5%	4	4.5%	4	4.5%
Not sure	16	18.0%	3	3.4%	0	0.0%	13	14.6%

5. Do you feel your organisation would have enough information by the application period (July to September) in order to fully complete financial questions about the following year? i.e. if we asked you to complete a form right now for 2012/13, would you have all the information you need (excluding signed off accounts)

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Yes	54	60.7%	14	15.7%	27	30.3%	13	14.6%
No	5	5.6%	3	3.4%	1	1.1%	1	1.1%
Not sure	29	32.6%	8	9.0%	5	5.6%	16	18.0%

6. Should we shorten the application period (the time from when the application packs become available until the closing date) to 8 weeks?

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Yes	67	75.3%	15	16.9%	30	33.7%	22	24.7%
No	21	23.6%	10	11.2%	3	3.4%	8	9.0%

7. Do you have any additional comments on the proposed changes for open, competitive schemes?

Of the 88 responses received, 63 did not leave a comment in question 7. The other 25 comments are listed below in the order they were received.

- Could it be beneficial to groups who have previously received funding and who re-apply for funds to be considered the following year, to receive staggered reductions in funding over a period of a year or two years? This would be in order to accommodate new applications, but not to deny continued support to those already receiving financial support, therefore offering some stability?

- Yes- please see my answer to question 2

- Shortening the time will only restrict the opportunities for applications. Human nature means applications will always be submitted in the last moments no matter what is the application period. The only reason I see to shorten the period would be if there is a significant reduction in costs for the council.
- If this is going to be 'open and competitive' then surely it should be open to all organisations. Also for funding to be given in March for work to start in April allows no set up time for the organisation
- I think a competitive scheme will bring forward innovative ways of addressing current issues and ensure that grant funding is directed to those projects which provide best value for money. This in turn will encourage groups to consider alternative ways of working in order to develop projects that will be of lasting benefit to the City of Southampton.
- Early notice of requirements, and planned timings are always helpful
- 8 weeks is an adequate timeframe
- Our financial year runs from Sept 9th to the following Sept 8th, and our AGM is in December
- Few other than given in answer to question 2. [name removed] has a minor issue that our financial year and delivery year is August to July. Full data is therefore not always available for a process that uses April to March. [name removed] is part of [name removed] and the National Association and accounts are all rolled into a national set
- I actually have no preference with regard to question 6.
- The most important aspect for the charity is certainty of funding support going forward, therefore we would welcome a funding option to cover 2 - 3 years. This would save us both considerable time invested in the annual grant application processes.
- We run our summer playschemes during the school holidays and would find this a really difficult time to have figures ready as well as doing an application process.
- However need to give advance information of the opening date for grant schemes, so that organisations may plan for the shorter timeframe.
- Developing new projects takes time, so a 12 week lead in time is needed for the above funding rounds.
- I'm a member of the general public and some of the questions are aimed at just groups so have had to tick not sure rather than not applicable
- The council has a role to play in making sure groups are aware of all available sources of funding so they can redirect unsuccessful applicants to other sources
- No
- No, seems sensible to me
- Seems to make sense to shorten the application process if most people submit their applications in the last week anyway.
- If the application process is moved forward to the summer, then it is important to keep the 12 weeks time as people will need to work round when they fill in the form, with their summer holiday. People do 'thinking' about the form before they actually fill it in, and need a bit of space for this. Getting an application form arriving mid July to be back by very early September could be really difficult for some organisations, but if the form arrives mid June then they do have choice about when to fill it in / consult etc.
- these questions relate to the administrative process rather than the principles around an open and / or competitive scheme
- No

- Categories, sums available, criteria outline, deadlines
- Again difficult questions. Earlier notice of any grant could only be helpful though some application detail may be less developed if the application deadline is brought forward significantly. As a general rule I would say that the key point is that organisations know what the closing date will be. They must then plan to deliver to that deadline. From my own perspective, and I'm sure many other voluntary organisations, there is no quiet time! The grant application process does draw considerably on resources however, so I would not favour reducing the period for applications. Although people submit close to the closing date this does not necessarily indicate that they are not working on the application during the entire period.
- Suggest consideration be given to 3 yr rolling programme of grants to avoid stop start nature of some annual funding rounds. Where annual grants are awarded can consideration be given to organisations being able to submit supplementary information as programmes and final business plans for following financial year are completed in autumn/winter of preceding yr - it depends on level of detail SCC require. Most organisations should be able to set out a provisional programme of activities in late summer/early autumn for following year but may only have % of this confirmed.

8. Have you visited the grants and funding pages on the council's website?

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Yes	55	61.8%	23	25.8%	22	24.7%	10	11.2%
No	31	34.8%	2	2.2%	10	11.2%	19	21.3%
Not aware of the website	2	2.2%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	1	1.1%

9. Which part of the grants and funding pages have you used and how useful did you find it? (please tick all that apply)

	Very useful		Useful		Not useful		Haven't used	
Council grants information	22	24.7%	27	30.3%	3	3.4%	1	1.1%
Council grants application forms	19	21.3%	22	24.7%	6	6.7%	3	3.4%
Latest news and information from around the country	8	9.0%	17	19.1%	17	19.1%	18	20.2%
Funding bulletins	18	20.2%	28	31.5%	3	3.4%	4	4.5%
Funding databases information	16	18.0%	19	21.3%	2	2.2%	13	14.6%
Southampton Funding on Twitter	2	2.2%	3	3.4%	3	3.4%	35	39.3%
Other, please state below	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	1	1.1%	12	13.5%

10. What information would you like to see on the grants and funding web pages?

Of the 88 responses received, 60 did not leave a comment in question 10. The other 28 comments are listed below in the order they were received.

- Updates on who got grants and the project being done

- maximum amounts funded, eligibility, dates, application and guidance
- Organisations the council already supports?
- People who could help with improving skills in applying for grants
- as per the funding bulletins
- Success stories. Key point to succeed in getting funding
- A forum page where groups can network and seek to work in partnership with each other in order to deliver projects that will benefit a wider audience.
- Clearer information about all grants available and their deadlines for application.
- The most useful thing is forthcoming grants and purpose/eligibility criteria
- I believe the current information is useful and offers direction and opportunities to organisations who must then optimise these funding streams presented to them to be self sustainable.
- Satisfied with what is there already
- I think I get everything I need from the application form and guidance available.
- It would be useful to see case studies from projects that have been successful in funding applications and how they have made an impact within the local community, groups and to individuals.
- Having just had a look on the website there is plenty of information there and [name removed] will be going back to it to look for funding opportunities.
- SCC grants & funding opportunities; details of grants & opps that are particularly relevant to Southampton & the local area; wider grant & funding opps info (perhaps highlighting different schemes each month in more detail); 'partners wanted' type notice board as in European funding - e.g. the Police might say that they are looking for a creative partner to deliver a strand of work they have money for targeting young offenders, or a creative organisation might post a brief description of the type of work they can deliver (workplace training, project management, etc)
- Any information on grants available for organisations which are relevant to this area
- Not sure as not looked at them
- As much information as possible about grants available to local groups and hints and tips on what makes a successful application.
- Clear information aimed at smaller groups applying for funds
- Information about what funds are currently available with clear description of what they will provide funding for and closing dates. Perhaps some sort of alert feature for funds whose closing dates are imminent?
- My general comment is that it feels like you have to click through a lot of pages before you get to the information you want. Is there some way of making this easier? Perhaps highlighting grants that are due to 'expire'?
- Not used this so couldn't say; but the list of information in the question above seems helpful and to cover all bases. Don't use Twitter so can't say how useful this would be.
- Information about grants relevant to Southampton organisations
- List of grants; grant criteria; timescales and deadlines; possibly also some links to other particularly relevant funders (e.g. local funds, or big national like Awards for All).
- Information on grants available and application forms
- Interestingly not much. It's a very good resource.
- This is a good resource. Perhaps local, though external to SCC, success stories and advice?

- Link to SCC's funding development forum and sharing of information on bids being developed/submitted in the city. I recognise that this is a problem in some parts of vol sector with organisations often reluctant to share info on funding sources for fear of increasing competition for grants they might be applying for. As a sector we have to overcome this as increasingly collaborative and consortia bids become the norm.

11. Are you responding to this survey on behalf of a voluntary/community group, as an individual member of the public or on behalf of any other type of organisation?

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded		Individuals and other types of org	
Voluntary/community group	58	65.2%	25	28.1%	33	37.1%	0	0.0%
Individual member of public	26	29.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	26	29.2%
Other type of organisation	4	4.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	4.5%

Percentages for 12, 13 and 14 are based on number of voluntary/community organisations who responded, not the overall number of respondents.

12. Did you receive a Running Costs Fund or New Projects Fund grant in 2011/12?

Yes	25	43.1%
No	33	56.9%

13. How big is your organisation? Based on the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) paid staff you have

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded	
All voluntary staff	7	12.1%	1	1.7%	6	10.3%
Up to 4 FTE paid staff	18	31.0%	11	19.0%	7	12.1%
5-14 FTE paid staff	10	17.2%	8	13.8%	2	3.4%
15 or more FTE paid staff	23	39.7%	5	8.6%	18	31.0%

14. Is your organisation...?

	Overall		Currently funded		Not currently funded	
Local	32	55.2%	20	34.5%	12	20.7%
Regional	22	37.9%	3	5.2%	19	32.8%
National	4	6.9%	2	3.4%	2	3.4%

Alphabetical list of respondents
Of the 88 responses received 39 were given anonymously and 8 gave individual names. The organisations that responded are listed below.

- 3rd Southampton Girls Brigade Company
- Art Asia
- Awaaz FM Community Radio
- Be Your Best Foundation
- Channel Isles TRA
- City Eye
- City Reach Youth Project
- CLEAR
- Communicare in Southampton
- Fairbridge Solent
- Groundwork Solent
- Hampshire Somali Community
- INTECH Science Centre and Planetarium
- Mount Pleasant Media Workshop
- No Limits
- Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Activities Centre (QE2 Activity Centre)
- Relate Solent
- SAFE - Southampton Action for Employment
- Saints Foundation
- SARC
- SCFT
- SCRATCH
- South Hampshire Branch Cruse Bereavement Care
- Southampton Centre for Independent Living
- Southampton Children's Play Association
- Southampton Citizens Advice Bureau
- Southampton Counselling Ltd
- Southampton Nuffield Theatre
- Southampton Sight
- Southampton Trampoline Club
- Southampton Voluntary Services
- Southampton Women's Aid
- The H2O Project (Salvation Army)
- The Prince's Trust
- The Warren Centre
- Turner Sims
- TWICS
- WEA Southampton
- Youth Options

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Southampton City Council
Consultation on 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations

Consultation dates: 11th August to 6th October 2011

This consultation is about proposed changes to the council's grants to voluntary organisations for 2012/13 and beyond as detailed in the 2012/13 Grants to Voluntary Organisations report to Cabinet on 1st August 2011. There are 4 sections:
-- Options for 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations
-- Future application process for open, competitive grant schemes
-- Grants website
-- Your organisation

The following questions do not apply to the council's small grants scheme, Community Chest (it is currently planned to continue allocating this in 2 rounds per year) or to grants awarded on two year funding agreements.

Options for 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations

Applications from voluntary organisations for council grants always far exceed the available budget. However, the need to make unprecedented budget savings in 2011/12 exacerbated this situation with applications totalling £3,535,443, nearly double the available budget of £1,907,300. Following impact assessments, some grants were discontinued or significantly reduced and no new grants were awarded.

On 1st August 2011, Cabinet agreed that the 2012/13 grants to voluntary organisations budget should remain at £1,907,300 and approved consultation on how the grants should be awarded. There are 2 options that we are now consulting on:

Option 1 - renew 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year to 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring
This means that existing grants would be renewed for 1 year, subject to recipients completing a simplified application form updating their targets and financial information, submitting their latest accounts and meeting all 2011/12 grant monitoring requirements.

Pros
- stable funding for another year for the work of existing grant recipients at a time of reduced funding both locally and nationally
- potential new applicants clear about the availability of funding
- both existing grant recipients and potential new applicants will know where they stand by the end of October and can plan for the 2012/13 financial year accordingly

Cons
- no new applications
- no possibility for existing recipients to receive increased grants

Option 2 - open, competitive grants scheme
This means a standard grants application process, open to any voluntary organisation that wishes to apply. An open, competitive scheme would open for applications in mid October 2011, with the grant awards being decided by the council's Cabinet in March 2012.

Pros
- open to all applicants

Cons
- no additional funding available
- creates instability for existing recipients as new grants could only be made by reducing existing grants
- decision on grant awards not made until March 2012

1. **How should the 2012/13 Running Costs Fund and New Projects Fund be run?**

   ☐ Option 1 - renew 2011/12 grants at current levels, excluding any paid notice, for a further year to 31st March 2013 subject to satisfactory monitoring

   ☐ Option 2 - open, competitive grants scheme

2. Do you have any additional comments on these options for the 2012/13 Running Costs and New Projects Funds?

Future application process for open, competitive grant schemes

A long standing criticism of the grants process is that decisions are made in March each year (after Budget setting in February) leaving organisations very little time to plan and budget for the new financial year. We are therefore taking the opportunity to consult on changing the time frame.

We are considering bringing forward the grants Cabinet decision date to either December or January. Grants would be provisional, subject to council Budget setting in February. This would mean the closing date for grants would be in early or mid September. Please note - we are aware organisations may not have their accounts signed off by September and accept that some will need to submit their accounts after the closing date.

3. Should we move the grant decisions to an earlier date (subject to final Budget setting in mid-February)?

☐ Bring forward to December

☐ Bring forward to January

☐ Keep in March

☐ No preference

4. Would it cause your organisation problems if most of the grant application period was during the summer school holidays? (please note - we would always ensure the actual closing date is not during the school holidays)

☐ No

☐ Yes

☐ Not sure

5. Do you feel your organisation would have enough information by the application period (July to September) in order to fully complete financial questions about the following year? i.e. if we asked you to complete a form right now for 2012/13, would you have all the information you need (excluding signed off accounts)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

Shortening the application period

We currently open the Running Costs and New Projects Funds for applications 12 weeks before the closing date. However, in the last three years only 4% of applications were submitted more than one month before the deadline and 82% were submitted in the last week. We are aware that applications may be written and checked by several people in an organisation and may need to be approved by management committees before being submitted, but we feel that the above statistics show we could shorten the application period while still allowing sufficient time for applicants to complete the forms.

6. **Should we shorten the application period (the time from when the application packs become available until the closing date) to 8 weeks?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. **Do you have any additional comments on the proposed changes for open, competitive schemes?**

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Grants and Funding website

The Communities Team and Regeneration Team publish information about council grants and other sources of funding on the council's website.

8. **Have you visited the grants and funding pages on the council's website?**

☐ Yes - go to question 9

☐ No - go to question 10

☐ We were not aware there are grants and funding pages on the council's website

9. **Which part of the grants and funding pages have you used and how useful did you find it?** (please tick all that apply)

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Haven't used
Council grants information	☐	☐	☐	☐
Council grants application forms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Latest news and information from around the country	☐	☐	☐	☐
Funding bulletins	☐	☐	☐	☐
Funding databases information	☐	☐	☐	☐
Southampton Funding on Twitter	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other, please state below	☐	☐	☐	☐

> [blank box]

10. What information would you like to see on the grants and funding web pages?

About You

11. Are you responding to this survey on behalf of a voluntary/community group, as an individual member of the public or on behalf of any other type of organisation?

- ☐ Voluntary/community group (go to question 12)
- ☐ Individual member of public (go to question 15)
- ☐ Other type of organisation (go to question 15)

12. Did you receive a Running Costs Fund or New Projects Fund grant in 2011/12?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. How big is your organisation? Based on the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) paid staff you have

- ☐ All voluntary staff
- ☐ Up to 4 FTE paid staff
- ☐ 5-14 FTE paid staff
- ☐ 15 or more FTE paid staff

14. Is your organisation...?

- ☐ Local (i.e within the city of Southampton boundaries)
- ☐ Regional
- ☐ National

15. Organisation name
It would be helpful if you could give us the name of your organisation so that we can see who has responded. However, if you would prefer to remain anonymous that's fine.

Thank you for completing this survey

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