

Grants to voluntary organisations 2015 to 2019

Consultation Feedback



Introduction

The current three year grant funding cycle will end in March 2016 and the council is reviewing its grant funding from April 2016 onwards. Southampton City Council recognises the contribution of the voluntary and community organisations to the city and is committed to working in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to ensure the council's grants to voluntary organisations schemes are designed to meet both the council's priorities and the needs of the sector.

The consultation began in November 2014 with an initial 12 weeks phase looking at the general principles for the council's grant funding from April 2016. The consultation was available on the council website and in other formats on request.

The consultation also sought feedback on two opportunities to co-fund projects with other areas of the council to maximise the return on the funding.

This initial phase of the consultation did not attract much feedback. Only 12 responses were received, including face to face meetings with two organisations directly affected by the proposals. The low response rate was not unexpected as overall the proposals were good news for local voluntary and community organisations. While improvements to the process have been proposed they will not substantially change the process for applicants, providing stability in the application process. Additionally the budget is proposed to remain at 2015/16 levels.

Consultation results

1. The consultation was split into three sections. In each section respondents were asked if they agreed, disagreed or were not sure about the council's proposals and given an opportunity to comment. The majority of respondents were supportive of the council's approach although some concerns were raised.

Section 1 – Three year funding / Community Chest

2. All respondents agreed that providing another three year funding cycle would support the local voluntary and community sector. It was felt that the current three year funding has worked well, enabling organisations to plan ahead and make more efficient use of resources. It was also felt that it is important that organisations can demonstrate outcomes, but that it takes time to generate outcomes and the three year funding enables this. One respondent would prefer to see rolling three year agreements.
3. The majority of respondents supported the proposal to give formal notice to existing three year funding recipients. However, one commented that it would be destabilising for organisations that employ staff and another commented that it could limit the effectiveness/value for money of services if they have to wind down due to uncertainty about funding.
4. The majority of respondents agreed with the minor amendments proposed for the application process; one with the caveat that they agreed providing the amendments did not lead to a reduction in budget. The proposed amendments are aimed at improving the application process for both the applicants and the council, while providing stability in the application process.
5. The proposal to maintain the overall budget at 2015/16 levels for a further three years split the respondents. Some acknowledged the council's current financial position and felt that continuing the budget at this level was a positive move. Others felt the council needs to increase the grants budget in recognition of increasing demand for voluntary sector services in the city and increasing costs.

Section 2 – Support for people experiencing domestic and sexual violence and abuse

6. The council has been reviewing support for people experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV). The new Southampton Against Violence Plan (the Plan) outlines the development of a PIPPA service model (Prevention, Intervention, Public protection and Alliance). The Plan draws together all support services in the city, including the council, other statutory agencies and externally provided services. Currently, some of these externally provided services are funded through the three

year grants. It is proposed to jointly commission these services through the Integrated Commissioning Unit from April 2016.

7. There was a mixed response to commissioning some services within the PIPPA model instead of providing grants for them. Half of the respondents were either unsure or felt unable to respond as this proposal would not directly affect them. Those that did respond were generally supportive, though concerns were raised about small organisations bidding against and possibly losing out to larger organisations.
8. The proposal to allocate part of the grants budget to a commissioning model also received a mixed response, with most respondents unsure about the proposal. One respondent showed clear support for the proposal, while another was clearly against the transfer of any funds out of the grants budget.

Section 3 – Southampton Nuffield Theatre Trust and the Arts Complex

9. Southampton Nuffield Theatre Trust has provisionally been chosen as the operating company for the new Arts Complex. The council has been asked to consider combining both the Arts Complex funding and the Nuffield's current activity grant funding into one funding arrangement from April 2015. As with section 2, many respondents were not sure or felt unable to respond to the proposals in section 3 as the proposals would not directly affect them.
10. Of the responses received, the majority agreed with ending the Nuffield's grant a year early and the council entering into a new 4 year funding arrangement from April 2015, covering both their current activities and the Arts Complex.
11. The proposal to fund this new arrangement partly through the corporate grants to voluntary organisations budget also received a mixed response. While some respondents supported the proposal, others pointed out that all voluntary organisations need stability in funding and not just during the start-up phase. It was also suggested that reducing the funding could be considered after the first two years, if efficiency savings from combining the Nuffield's current activities and Arts Complex activities should come into effect.

Reviewing the grants processes

12. All respondents agreed the proposal to review the three year funding process, jointly commissioning DASV services and jointly funding Southampton Nuffield Theatre Trust in 2017/18, before the end of the 2016/19 funding cycle.

How the consultation information was used

13. The Cabinet Member for Resources was briefed about the consultation feedback which has been used to develop the grants process, including how and when we communicate with applicants. The Council acknowledges that uncertainty over

funding can be destabilising for any organisation and is committed to informing applicants as early as possible of their grant recommendation to reduce this.

14. While increasing the grants to voluntary organisations budget is difficult given the Council's ongoing financial position, the Council will continue to work with partners to explore new ways to support local voluntary and community groups to successfully apply to other funding sources, including advertising potential funding and training in application writing.

15. Several respondents provided feedback on the Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIAs) and they has been updated accordingly. The comments include:

- Reference to the impact of reduced operating hours or closure of drop in services, which can negatively impact people who struggle with time-keeping (such as the homeless, substance misusers).
- Specific reference to vulnerable children and young people

Please see Appendix 2 for the full ESIs.

Methodology

16. The grants consultation documents and feedback form were available on the Council's website for 12 weeks, between 11 November 2014 and 3 February 2015, in line with the Southampton Compact. They were also available by email or in paper format on request.

17. The consultation was publicised the following ways:

Date	How	Who
11 November 2014	Email	General email to 36 current grant aided organisations
11 November 2014	Email	Individual emails to organisations named in the consultation (sections 2 & 3)
11 November 2014	Twitter – Southampton Funding @SouthamptonFund	Over 500 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (November 2014)
14 November 2014	Twitter – Southampton's Communities @Southamptoncom	Over 5,000 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (November 2014)
14 November 2014	Funding mailing list	Over 1,000 organisations and individuals, mainly local though a few regional and national as well. (November 2014)
19 November 2014	Facebook – Southampton Communities	Over 200 'Friends', mainly local individuals and organisations, though a few regional and national

		as well. (November 2014)
21 November 2014	Communities newsletter email	5,862 subscribers (November 2014)
25 November 2014	Twitter – Southampton Funding @SouthamptonFund	Over 500 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (November 2014)
27 November 2014	Twitter – Southampton’s Communities @Southamptonscom	Over 5,000 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (November 2014)
9 December 2014	Twitter – Southampton Funding @SouthamptonFund	Over 500 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (November 2014)
15 December 2014	Email	Reminder to 36 current grant aided organisations
15 December 2014	Facebook – Southampton Communities	Over 200 ‘Friends’, mainly local individuals and organisations, though a few regional and national as well. (November 2014)
15 January 2015	Facebook – Southampton Communities	Over 200 ‘Friends’, mainly local individuals and organisations, though a few regional and national as well. (November 2014)
19 January 2015	Face to face meetings	Current grant recipients affected by proposals in section 2
2 February 2015	Twitter – Southampton Funding @SouthamptonFund	Over 550 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (January 2015)
2 February 2015	Twitter – Southampton’s Communities @Southamptonscom	Over 5,500 local, regional and national organisations and individuals (January 2015)
2 February 2015	Email	Reminder to 36 current grant aided organisations