

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?

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council grants application forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Latest news and information from around the country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding bulletins	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding databases information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Southampton Funding on Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please state below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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