

Subject:	Allocation of Rossendale Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants 2015/16 and 2016/17	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	11 th February 2015
Report of:	Director of Business	Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council and Communities and Partnerships
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: Yes	Attached:	Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: No	Attached:	No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Cabinet confirms the allocation of Rossendale Council Grants of £35,000 to Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and £12,000 to Rossendale Credit Unions to support financial inclusion services in 2015 - 2016 and 2016 - 2017.
1.2	That Cabinet confirms the allocation of £13,000 to support the continuation of Neighbourhood Forum grants in 2015 – 2016 and 2016 – 2017.
1.3	That all future minor amendments to the grants process be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek Cabinet confirmation of the allocation of Rossendale Council Grants and Neighbourhood Forum Grant funding for 2015-16 and 2016 -17.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 4.2 Not issuing grant funding via robust, open and transparent criteria could open the process to challenge by those making or wishing to make an application.
- 4.3 The grant funding criteria is designed to ensure that councillors have information which will support responsible financial management through the allocation of grant funding against the Council's agreed criteria of allocating target funding to support financial inclusion services.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 The background to this issue was presented to Cabinet on 26 November 2014. Cabinet

agreed to allocate a total of £60,000 per year in 2015 - 16 and 2016 - 17 for the provision of grants for services to facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale, and to support the continuation of Neighbourhood Forum Grants.

- 5.2 Cabinet also agreed the commencement of a grants application process for the allocation of 2 year Rossendale Council Grants for services to facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale following the principles and criteria agreed in 2014/15. It was also agreed that responsibility for assessing the completed applications is delegated to officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and confirmed by Cabinet
- 5.3 The grants application process opened on 9th December 2014 and was publicised in the local media, on the Council website and via local networks. The closing date for applications was 7th January 2015. Completed applications were received from Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and First Choice Credit Union on behalf of the 2 Rossendale Credit Unions (Bacup and First Choice – Mid Rossendale Credit Union merged with First Choice on 1 January 2015). The applications were assessed by an evaluation panel of officers on 7th January. Both applications met the stated criteria.
- 5.4 Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) applied for £35,000 for funding towards their core service. Rossendale Credit Unions applied for £12,000 for costs associated with their development workers to promote the service and encourage new members. Both organisations are currently in receipt of Rossendale Council grant funding to support the provision of financial inclusion services. CAB received a grant of £48,000 in 2014/15 towards their core funding and the Credit Unions received a grant of £12,000 in 2014/15 for costs associated with employing a development worker.
- 5.5 In 2014/15 £20,000 was allocated to Neighbourhood Forum grants. In addition, £7,600 was carried forward from the previous year. Grants of up to £500 are awarded by each of the Forums. It is likely that some of the allocation for Neighbourhood Forum grants will again be carried forward at the end of March 2015.
- 5.6 The total available for Rossendale Council Grants and Neighbourhood Forum grants is £60,000. The Grants Evaluation Panel, consisting of 3 officers, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder recommend the allocation of two year grants as follows for 2015-2017:
- CAB - £35,000 per year
 - Credit Unions - £12,000 per year
 - Neighbourhood Forum grants - £13,000 per year (to be awarded by the Neighbourhood Forums in grants of up to £500)
- 5.7 An initial equality impact assessment is attached to this report in Appendix 1. An overview is noted in section 8 of this report.
- 5.8 The recommendations are set out in section 1 of this report.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 Financial implications are noted within the report

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 All relevant comments are contained in the body of the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Consultation meetings were held with both current recipients of Rossendale Council Grant funding in October 2014. CAB moved to Stubblelee Hall and, therefore, have reduced overheads which is reflected in the reduced amount of grant funding they have applied for. The Credit Unions development worker is helping them in their aim to become independently financially sustainable through increase in membership, savings and their loan portfolio.

8.2 Neighbourhood Forum Grants provide much valued small grant funding for local community groups and organisations. However, from April - December 2014 just over £10,000 has been awarded in grants by the 4 Neighbourhood Forums, out of a total allocation of £20,000 for the financial year. In addition, £7,600 was carried forward from the previous year. Also, the future of the Neighbourhood Forums is uncertain following changes agreed by Cabinet in March 2014. A reduced grant allocation for the Neighbourhood Forums for 2015/16 and 2016/17 would provide grant funding during a transition period whilst also reflecting their changing role and reduction in the number of grant applications received. Neighbourhood Forum grants are not specifically targeted at any one specific protected equality group, therefore any reduction in grant funding to Neighbourhood Forums will not have a significant disproportionate impact on any protected equality groups.

8.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the decision to allocate Rossendale Council funding and Neighbourhood Forum grant funding as outlined in this report. In allocating £35,000 to Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and £12,000 to Rossendale Credit Unions for the provision of grant funding for services that facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale there is no reduction to current levels of service. Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and Rossendale Credit Unions are the current providers of this service and both are currently in receipt of grant funding for financial inclusion services. The allocations proposed will enable them to continue to provide the service at least at the current level.

8.4 Therefore it is determined that there is no negative or disproportionate impact on any protected equality groups as a result of allocating Rossendale Council grants as proposed.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 A robust, open and transparent process has been followed in the allocation of Rossendale Council Grants for 2015 - 16 and 2016 - 17.

9.2 Cabinet agreed on 26 November 2014 that £60,000 each year would be allocated to the provision of grants for services to facilitate financial inclusion in Rossendale, and Neighbourhood Forum grant funding, in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Cabinet also agreed that the previous grant allocation process be followed to support the allocation of target funding to support financial inclusion services. The agreed grants process has been followed and Cabinet are asked to confirm the allocation of grants to the two applicants: Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and Rossendale Credit Unions. In addition, Cabinet are asked to confirm the allocation of funding for Neighbourhood Forum grant funding each year in 2015 – 16 and 2016 – 17.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Rossendale Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants 2015/16 and 2016/17	www.rossendale.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment	Attached