

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT GRANTS PROGRAMME 2017/18-2019/20

Cabinet Members **Cllr C Slade, Cabinet Member for Community
Cllr R Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and
Regeneration**

Responsible Officer **Stephen Walford, Chief Executive & Director of Growth**

Reason for Report: To update Members on arrangements for the introduction of grant awards linked to Service Level Agreements for selected agencies during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS that:

1. The recommended three-year funding levels set out in paragraph 2.3 be approved;
2. An allocation be made for agencies previously in receipt of an annual Strategic Grant but which applied unsuccessfully to the new Service Level Agreement grant programme as a transitional arrangement.
3. That the recommended level of grants to other external organisations set out in paragraph 3.0 be approved.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The allocation of grants provides support to external agencies delivering services that advance the Council's corporate priorities. Grant allocations tend to be most closely aligned to the Economy, Homes and Community priorities, in particular:

Priority 2: Homes - Continue to work to prevent homelessness;

Priority 3: Community - Support local communities to retain and develop local facilities and services

The services to be provided will also contribute to the Economy priority by improving the local economic vitality, increasing footfall and spend in town centres and increasing the number of people spending money in the district.

Financial Implications: The strategic shift from providing annual grants for the provision of eleven services, to three-year service level agreements for three service areas will require the Council to set aside an annual grants budget up to and including 2019/20.

Risk Assessment: Decreases to selected agencies introduced within a short period of time may lead to closure of a valued service or have a negative impact on the activities and services provided to residents. It could also result in adverse publicity for the Council. Significant reductions in established grant allocations may risk a challenge

from (a) external organisations under public law and/or (b) the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on 27 September 2016 the Community Policy Development Group recommended that:

1. The Museum of Mid Devon Life and Tiverton Tourism Information Service be moved from the grants budget to a separate tourism budget;
2. A commissioning approach to future grant allocations should be adopted; and
3. Grants to be paid on an annual basis for the duration of the 2015-2020 Corporate Plan.

These recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 27 October 2016.

1.2. The commissioning approach taken by the Council consists of (a) ending annual grant awards for the provision of eleven services (see appendix 1); (b) moving the budget for the Museum of Mid Devon Life and the Tiverton Tourism Information Service to a separate tourism budget, and (c) introducing a new Service Level Agreement Grant Programme for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020 for the provision of the following services:

1. Welfare Advice and Information;
2. Support for Community Organisations;
3. Community Transport Services;

The service areas selected each have a social and economic benefit to the district, for example, by ensuring residents receive the welfare payments to which they are entitled, that people with mobility difficulties can travel to towns and villages and charitable organisations are able to become more self-reliant and bring additional funding into the area, supporting local jobs and services. The move to a Service Level Agreement Grant Programme will enable the Council to monitor performance more effectively and achieve best value for taxpayers.

1.3 The timetable for the introduction of the Service Level Agreement Grants Programme is set out in the application guidelines as follows:

#	Milestone	Date/Deadline
1	Application process opens to written submissions	Weds 21 Dec 2016
2	Deadline for written submissions	Mon 6 Feb 2017, 5pm.
3	Successful applicants notified and invited to give a presentation to the Council	Mon 20 Feb 2017
4	Applicant's presentations to the Council	13 th Mar 2017

5	Successful applicants notified	Mar 2017
6	The Council and successful applicant discussions on Key Performance Indicators and funding levels for Service Level Agreement	Mar/Apr 2017
7	Service Level Agreement funding commences	1 May 2017

- 1.4 The awarding of grants to external agencies is a discretionary function of the Council, it having no statutory responsibility to provide a grant programme to external organisations.
- 1.5 There is likely to be a continued expectation that additional reductions to the grants budget will be required to assist the Council's overall budget setting process, and this will be consideration when agreeing grant levels with agencies selected to deliver against each of the Service Level Agreement areas.
- 1.6 The possibility of creating a small budget as a transitional arrangement for agencies that will lose their annual grant award on 1 April 2017 is a further consideration.

2.0 Service Level Agreement Grant Programme (SLAGP) – Progress to date

2.1 The timetable set out in paragraph 1.3 is being adhered to. The SLA Grants Programme is a two-stage grant application process with agencies providing a written submission assessed against a detailed grant criteria. Applications that met the eligibility criteria were shortlisted and asked to give a presentation to a Grants Working Group nominated by the Community PDG.

2.2 Nine applications were received in total. Of these:

- Three were shortlisted for the Welfare Advice and Information SLA;
- Three were shortlisted for the Support to Community Organisations SLA; and
- One applicant was shortlisted for the Community Transport Services SLA.

Two further applicants were considered not to have met the eligibility criteria enabling progression to the presentation phase.

2.3 Presentations were received by the Grants Working Group on Monday 13 March. Following the presentations, the Grants Working Group is recommending the following provisional Service Level Agreement allocations::

1. Welfare Advice and Information – an annual budget totalling £34,650 allocated as follows: Age UK Mid Devon (£9,650), Churches Housing Action Team (£12,500) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (£12,500);
2. Support to Community Organisations – an annual budget totalling £18,000 allocated as follows: Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon (£12,000), The Onion Collective (£6,000);

3. Community Transport Services – an annual budget totalling £22,000 allocated to Tiverton and District Community Transport Association.

Welfare Advice and Information	17-18	18-19	19-20
Age UK Mid Devon	£9,650	£9,650	£9,650
CHAT (Churches Housing Action Team)	£12,500	£12,500	£12,500
Citizens Advice Bureau	£12,500	£12,500	£12,500
	£34,650	£34,650	£34,650
Support to Community Organisations	17-18	18-19	19-20
INVOLVE – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000
The Onion Collective	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000
	£18,000	£18,000	£18,000
Community Transport Services	17-18	18-19	19-20
Tiverton and District Community Transport Association	£22,000	£22,000	£22,000
	£22,000	£22,000	£22,000
TOTAL	£74,650	£74,650	£74,500

The spread of awards to three agencies providing Welfare Advice and Information services is aimed at ensuring all residents are afforded some provision, whether aged 50 and over (Age UK), in need of housing support (Churches Housing Action Team), augmented by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau’s generic service. This provision is intended to complement the Council’s benefits and housing advice services.

Awards to two agencies for the Support to Community Organisations SLA will be arranged as: Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon, ongoing generalist support and advice for the many charitable organisations operating within the district, with support for social enterprises picked up via the Council’s contract with the Business Information Point. To augment Involve’s provision, there is a recommendation to pay for 20 days consultancy by The Onion Collective to enable the not-for-profit sector to deliver larger, ‘flagship’ projects across the district.

The annual award recommended to Tiverton and District Community Transport Association reflects the predicted increased demand across the district for a more mobile elderly and infirm demographic, particularly connecting people in rural settlements to services in Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton.

The recommendations are provisional on the Council and the recommended SLA delivery partners agreeing an annual funding level, key performance indicators and a schedule for reviewing performance. Negotiations with the selected providers will take place in March and April with a view to finalising each Service Level Agreement at the start of May 2017.

- 2.4 Further considerations are (a) the ability of the new grants programme to provide a funding allocation to agencies that previously received an annual grant but applied unsuccessfully to the SLA programme, and (b) realising a saving in the annual grant budget. With the recommended awards totalling £223,950 over the three-year period, the Service Level Agreement Grant Programme offers the prospective to provide a ‘parachute’ payment to agencies that do not form part of the new programme, together with a potential net saving of between 11% and 13%.
- 2.5 It is envisaged that contracts setting out performance indicators would be issued for a three-year period commencing 1 April 2017 and concluding on 31 March 2020, coinciding with the 2015-2020 Corporate Plan. Contracts would have a termination clause providing an appropriate notice period that could be enacted by either party. Joint agency reviews would be carried out at regular intervals and frequent update reports, which could include presentations by the selected service providers, to the Community PDG. An assessment on whether to continue with the Service Level Agreement Grant Programme will be made in year 3 and a report setting out future options presented to the Community Policy Development Group.

3.0 Grants to other external organisations

In addition to the SLA Grants Programme, the Council also provides grants to four other external organisations; Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, the Tourist Information Service, the Grand Western Canal and the Exe Rail Partnership. It is proposed that the Council enters into a 3 year SLA with Tiverton Museum and the Tourist Information Service at the current level of funding. It is also proposed that grants for Grand Western Canal and Exe Rail Partnership are retained at their current level for the next two financial years.

	17-18	18-19	19-20
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	£27,500	£27,500	£27,500
Tourist Information Service	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000
Grand Western Canal	£45,000	£45,000	tbc
Exe Rail Partnership	£3,500	£3,500	tbc
TOTALS	£80,000	£80,000	tbc

4.0 Summary

- 4.1 This report sets out the progress made to date on the introduction of a new three-year Service Level Agreement Grant Programme to replace the schedule of annual grant awards.
- 4.2 The Grants Working Group nominated by the Community PDG has received presentations from shortlisted applicants for each of the three SLA areas. The agencies recommended to become partners to the Council over the period 1 April 2017–31 March 2020 for the delivery of selected services are listed in paragraph 2.3. All recommendations and appointments are contingent on the Council and successful applicants agreeing a budget, key performance indicators and a review framework.

Contact for more information: John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development and Regeneration Manager, ext; 4363 email: jbodleyscott@middevon.gov.uk).

Circulation of the report: Management Team, Cllr C Slade, Head of Communities and Governance, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer, Community Development and Regeneration Manager.

Appendix A – Strategic Grant allocations 2016/17

Table 1 – Strategic Grant Allocations to External Organisations 2016/17

#	Agency	Grant awarded
1	Age UK Mid Devon	£ 4,000
2	Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT)	£ 5,000
3	Citizens Advice Bureau Mid Devon (CAB)	*£ 37,500
4	Community Housing Aid Night Stop Service	£ 2,000
5	Crediton Arts Centre	£ 1,000
6	Involve – Voluntary Action Mid Devon	£ 11,750
7	Market Centre Youth Drop-In	£ 2,750
8	Sunningmead Community Association	£ 375
9	Tiverton and District Community Transport (TDCTA)	**£ 22,000
10	Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	£ 27,500
11	Tiverton Tourism Information Service (TIC)	***£ 4,000
	Total	£117,875

Notes

* CAB: £14,500 is taken at source from the grant award to cover the cost of rental and services provided at its offices in Tiverton Town Hall and Crediton Town Hall.

** TDCTA: £5,600 of the grant allocation is held by the Council to cover the cost of rental space within the Phoenix Lane Car Park, Tiverton.

*** TIC: the Tourist Information Service is provided within and managed by the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life.