



To make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008-2011

To review the organisations currently being funded

To review the overall VCS partnership strategy against the national and local situation of funding



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report of the Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group**

SEPTEMBER 2007

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Foreword

This Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group comprised of Councillors Joy Capstick, David Palethorpe and Jenny Conroy along with co-opted member Ms Ruth Light of the Northampton Volunteering Centre.

The Group was set up to make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term funding strategy for 2008-2011. In addition, it was found following a two day CEFAP meeting in March 2007 that a review of the partnership working with the Voluntary Sector should take place prior to funding awards for 2008-2009.

Funding for the voluntary sector organisations has been rolled over in 2007-2008 for the fifth year and a new approach and strategic view needed to be thought out between Northampton Borough Council and the Voluntary Sector.

The review was a short, focussed piece of work that was linked to the Council's corporate priorities and examined a range of information. The Task and Finish Group took evidence from a range of sources and these included witness evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration, Community Safety, Community Engagement) and from the former Portfolio Holder and CEFAP Chair.



J. Capstick

Councillor Joy Capstick
Chair, Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review:

- Councillors David Palethorpe who sat with me on this Task and Finish Group. Councillor Palethorpe graciously suggested that I take over as Chair part way through the Review due to his pressing work commitments. His experience, advice and support have been invaluable.
- Councillor Jenny Conroy, whose personal experience of the Voluntary Sector added greatly to our final report.
- Ruth Light, representing the Northampton Volunteering Centre for her breadth of knowledge and experience.
- Councillor Brendan Glynane (Portfolio Holder) for attending a meeting to give evidence and answer questions from the Group to inform the Review.
- Robert Goldbourne (Senior Accountant) for his expert contributions to our work and suggestions for our final report.
- Lindsey Cameron (Participation Team Leader) for his commitment in adding valuable advice and suggestions during the process.
- Simone Wade (Policy and Governance Manager) for providing advice and support.
- Tracy Tiff (Scrutiny Officer) for her hard work and professional dedication to this complex piece of work, produced in a very tight time frame.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Task and Finish Group was set up to make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008-2011.

To review the organisations currently being funded to establish: -

- a. Contribution of the organisations to the corporate aims and objectives of Northampton Borough Council.
- b. To review and assess the service provision required to be commissioned and therefore to be mainstream funded to meet the aims and corporate objectives of the Northampton Borough Council.
- c. To review the applications of currently funded organisations and organisations currently not receiving funding to establish the degree of duplication of services being provided or being offered by the voluntary sector organisations.
- d. To review the local service providers currently receiving funding and those local applicants who do not currently receive funding to assess their contribution to neighbourhood community cohesion in accordance with the Northampton Borough Council corporate objectives.

To review the overall Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) partnership strategy against the national situation of funding.

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

Money was vired from the Voluntary Sector Grants `account' to two organisations. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that this was outside the grants to voluntary sector process. The organisations had addressed Full Council and asked to be considered for funding and had received it. Some letters of complaint had been received about this, challenging the process.

The Task and Finish Group realised that there was a need for a set sum, for example £700,000, to be made available in the budget process for Voluntary Sector grants in order that the Sector is aware of the available fund.

There is need for a longer term strategy regarding funding for vcs organisations which avoids short-term funding agreements and addresses issues such as the possible loss of funds at NBC's annual budget setting rounds.

The future timetable for funding should avoid the situation of voluntary organisations needing to issue redundancy notices because decisions about funding take place too close to the start date for funding.

The Voluntary Sector Post was deleted from the establishment in 2007. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that there was the need for an Officer to be responsible for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector, and suggested that this should be at Senior Manager level. An Officer should also be responsible for

commissioning services with the Voluntary Sector and the Task and Finish Group felt that this should be at Corporate Director level.

The key elements of a successful council funding programme are: good communication and engagement with the sector; transparency; equality; clarity (including specific priorities for funding); following the Compact between the statutory and voluntary sector (including the funding and procurement code of practice); and a minimum of three-year funding arrangements.

The Task and Finish Group noted a need for an Officer to focus on identifying and securing external sources of funding for NBC and the vcs in partnership with vcs organisations.

This was a short, sharp review carried out over a five-week period and the Task and Finish Group was unable to complete its entire scope. It was realised that there is a need for further work and suggests that the Task and Finish Group be reconvened early next year to carry out further work.

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations.

The Task and Finish Group requests that all of the recommendations detailed below are implemented in order that the improvements that this Task and Finish Group seeks can be delivered: The recommendations are in two parts. The first part deals with immediate recommendations and activity, the second part deals with recommendations that require further work but must be completed by June 2008. A clear timetable of this activity will be shared with the vcs as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term Recommendations

- 5.1 That a Senior Officer, minimum of Corporate Manager level, is explicitly identified as being responsible for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector.**
- 5.2 That a minimum of £700,000 is ringfenced in the budget for 2008/2009 for Voluntary Sector grants ahead of the full budget process so that the grant application process can proceed between now and March 2008 £50,000 of this sum be allocated to the Small Grants pot.**
- 5.3 That funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector under the Partnership Fund be on a minimum three-yearly basis.**
- 5.4 That only Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations should be funded from the Voluntary and Community Sector grants pot.**

- 5.5 That interim arrangements for those organisations currently funded for one year (to end 31 March 2008) should be put in place and clearly communicated to organisations concerned no later than 30 November 2007.**
- 5.6 That the Administration decides which of the currently funded organisations will be mainstream funded with funding linked to the Corporate objectives and Council departments.**

Medium Term Recommendations

- 5.7 That a feasibility study be carried out to ascertain whether the administrative function for grant applications should be outsourced.**
- 5.8 That the Council develops a Commissioning Strategy for the provision of services to meet the Council's corporate objectives.**
- 5.10 That, given that the entire scope of the review was not fulfilled, the Task and Finish Group be reconvened early next year to carry out further work.**

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of the Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008-2011.

To review the organisations currently being funded to establish: -

- a. Contribution of the organisations to the corporate aims and objectives of Northampton Borough Council.
- b. To review and assess the service provision required to be commissioned and therefore to be mainstream funded to meet the aims and corporate objectives of the Northampton Borough Council.
- c. To review the applications of currently funded organisations and organisations currently not receiving funding to establish the degree of duplication of services being provided or being offered by the voluntary sector organisations.
- d. To review the local service providers currently receiving funding and those local applicants who do not currently receive funding to assess their contribution to neighbourhood community cohesion in accordance with the Northampton Borough Council corporate objectives.

To review the overall Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) partnership strategy against the national situation of funding.

- 1.2 A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2. Context and Background

- 2.1 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established. One co optee joined the Group, Ms Ruth Light, Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC).

- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities: -

- Details of the funding round mechanisms currently used
- List of the Groups currently funded
- Verbal evidence from internal witnesses
- Written evidence from users.
- Best practice external to Northampton
- Sources of funding/match funding

2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities as it demonstrates listening to local people and providing the services that they need. (Corporate Priority 1 refers).

3. Evidence Collection

In scoping this review it was decided that evidence would be collected from a variety of sources:

3.1 Expert Witnesses

3.1.1 Core questions were devised and issued to all witnesses providing evidence to the review. A summary of all written responses is detailed below. Copies of all written evidence received is attached at Appendix B. A copy of the core questions is attached at Appendix C.

3.1.2 Key points of evidence: -

- If organisations have similar aims and are not working within a specific community, pooling their resources could be beneficial
- An information pack would help organisations not to feel alone and to feel that they can continue to seek funding from other sources
- The Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC) is the local infrastructure organisation providing support to frontline VCS groups. A lot of this support is around funding. NVC provides one to one advice on finding funding including Fundfinder sessions using software to help groups identify grant-making trusts. NVC has produced information sources, has web based information and a library of publications available for loan therefore another pack would not necessarily be of use.
- Information packs are only useful if accompanied by some sort of support and guidance, it is easy to send out lists that can be obtained elsewhere anyway, but it is the 'how to' and input from someone that knows the 'scene' that matters.
- Whilst an information pack would not be unhelpful, it would rather miss the point and there may be a better use for these resources elsewhere.
- Any information about other types of funding is useful, but by the time the funding process has taken place and decisions made, it is often too late to apply elsewhere, both in terms of accessing funding streams and also regarding the budget setting and determining the future of affected posts.
- Information packs would be useful for smaller organisations that do have the expertise/resources to undertake this work. I
- It appears that organisations are overly reliant on Northampton Borough Council funding. Whilst it is true that any organisation that receives a significant proportion of its funding from any one funder will be vulnerable should that funding be threatened it is not the case that organisations do not know about potential sources of funding. There are software packages such as 'funder finder' as well as the tailored support available from infrastructure organisations or national bodies.
- What may be a problem for organisations is in successfully bidding for funds. There are two distinct issues that act as barriers to accessing funding. One is the lack of expertise such as writing a successful bid which in itself can be a sophisticated process and managers of small organisations may not have the

skills or at the very least the time to do so. The Authority must accept that Northampton is a relatively prosperous town. In some way it is easier for voluntary organisations to access funding to work in those fields that they often do – community work, regeneration, the relief of poverty and deprivation – where an area shows signs of serious social decline. Much of the need to invest in the voluntary sector in Northampton comes not just from responding to deprivation but as a part of an expansion of mainstream services to meet the needs of a growing town and changing economy.

- Each organisation needs to be funded fairly to its needs and how it contributes to the Council's priorities.
- Grants to the Voluntary Sector is a fair process but there needs to be more support given to the Voluntary Sector.
- The Council has not been found to be proactive in learning about many organisations' work or indeed supporting it. For example, one organisation contributes greatly to community cohesion and health and happy communities but it was felt that this was not taken on board
- CEFAP, together with the voluntary sector officer being present, seems to be quite a rigorous process, but not fair and equitable as there were many organisations that were again 'left out in the cold'.
- There is no communication going on with the voluntary sector at present, which will only lead to more suspicion and a further breakdown in the relationship between them and the Council.
- Compared with other funding processes, the grants to Voluntary Sector process does seem to be fair, however, some other processes use scoring systems that are easily understood and feedback can be given easily about where applications did not meet the criteria or scored less highly than others.
- There is not always good (or any real) feedback about decisions; sometimes several versions about decisions have been given.
- It would be helpful and constructive to have open meetings where officers present their recommendations and decisions are made. This would give real transparency.
- The process of distributing funding may benefit from increased information being made available to the Councillors and possibly through organisational presentations prior to the decision making process
- The current system may contribute to the Council's priorities – it is not however fair and equitable. Aside from those enabled through the Partnership Fund, there is a range of other funding arrangements that have been arrived at either directly between the Council and voluntary sector organisations, or indirectly through the Council's membership of certain partnerships, that may not have been arrived at in a way that was transparent or fair.
- There are services that are currently provided 'in house' that simply cannot be provided as well or as cost effectively as would be the case if provided by the voluntary sector.
- The suggestion of co-opting a representative of the Voluntary Sector to the Task and Finish Group is a step forward towards the Council's support to the Voluntary Sector Infrastructure
- It would be good to have a Council representative attend the Northamptonshire Voluntary and Community Sector Forums
- Unsuccessful organisations should be signposted to other funding streams

- Office accommodation, such as empty offices at Northampton Borough Council could be used for Voluntary Sector organisations
- Hot-desking – allowing groups to share office space and equipment
- The Council could profile voluntary groups for example provide a stand at the Balloon Festival to organisations such as Irish dancers, Indian dancers.
- The Council could give practical support such as opening up its own training more at reduced cost, particularly in relation to management, which the voluntary sector often struggles to resource. Also it could offer access to its own basic Information such as Information Technology (IT) or Health and Safety. Training could be offered at free or reduced cost and offered access to reduced cost hardware such as IT if the Council has bulk contracts.
- A named contact within the Authority whose remit is to link with the voluntary sector is needed. Additionally, an improved communication processes to inform, update and disseminate relevant information and most importantly a longer lead in to the application process.
- The monitoring and evaluation process could focus more on the application and resources of the organisation as to how targets can and are being met
- A less lengthy monitoring could take place in the first quarter of receiving the grant to ascertain whether the organisation has implemented the project, if not, whether the Council would be able to support the organisation on a short-term basis.
- Other organisations, such as the Local Network Fund host a workshop on how to monitor and evaluate. This was found useful by many groups
- The monitoring and evaluation process is vital for both sides.
- It might be helpful, for the Council to nominate individual Councillors to 'sponsor' a voluntary group, whether funded or not, so as to ensure a spread of knowledge about the voluntary sector and individual issues and successes. This would need commitment from Councillors as, where it happens in other areas, often the Councillor contact/attendance either does not happen or drops off.
- Organisations that receive funding are diverse and their resources are vital to the well-being of their clients and to the overall objectives of the Council
- Groups that are “known” to Northampton Borough Council are successful in attracting funding. Officers need to make sure that other groups are not marginalised.
- It is hoped that the Council will continue with some sort of formal structure of engagement with the voluntary sector if it does not continue with CEFAP. Although Northampton Volunteer Centre is highly rated it needs to be far wider than just consulting with them.

3.1.3 Various witnesses were invited to attend a meeting and provide evidence: -

3.1.3.1 Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Safety)

The Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Safety) attended the meeting on 23 August 2007 (A copy of the minutes of that meeting is attached at Appendix D)

Key points of evidence: -

- An information pack would be useful. It would also be a good idea to signpost unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams.
- Eight years ago the Council had a dedicated External Funding Officer in Post who did research for potential external funding. Such a facility should be in place but if voluntary sector grants were outsourced, there would need to be a Service Level Agreement, and the organisation could be asked to produce such a pack.
- Liverpool City Council receives £9 back for every £1 it grants as funding. Liverpool CC received funding from Agencies and organisations such as the Government Office for the North West (GONW) and Lottery Grants.
- The Council should have an enabling role.
- A new Corporate Plan is being produced which will ensure that it fits in with the Council's priorities.
- A lot of services will fit in with the Council's objectives. Many organisations that the Council funds have services that overlap, an agreement could therefore be made to fund just one of these organisations. There needs to be a proper long term Strategy that states how much funding the Council will make available to the whole Voluntary Sector. For example, informing the Sector of the amount that would be available over the next 3-4 years.
- If the Council was funding the Voluntary Sector it could provide the relevant training to the Sector. However, if grant funding was to be outsourced to another organisation, the Service Level Agreement would ensure that the Sector received proper training.
- By giving the grant in one initial payment rather than in quarterly intervals supports the Voluntary Sector organisations. The organisations then do not have to continually report back to the Council. The Council could support the organisations by liaising with them about their roles and purpose and what impact it has on citizens' lives.
- There is a need to publicise the outcomes and talk about the benefits.
- Should Voluntary Sector grants be outsourced to an organisation such as Northampton Volunteer Centre (on behalf of the Voluntary Sector Forum) or Northants Community Foundation, a lot of the bureaucracy would be cut out and they would be able to bid for large sums of money. There is a need to be mindful that another organisation might be able to facilitate grant funding better than the Council.
- This year's Balloon Festival was part of the learning process. As a suggestion, there could be distinct areas at the Balloon Festival, such as Northampton Celebrates and Voluntary Sector Groups could promote their work in this area.
- The Council needs to be sensitive that such organisations that help vulnerable people are not forgotten.
- Cabinet would be happy to outsource the grant system; a section of the Service Level Agreement would be to signpost applicants to other funding streams.
- Northampton Museum assists individuals and organisations with Lottery bids, for example, a group of youngsters from Spring Boroughs were researching the history of the area and the Museum signposted them to the Lottery Heritage Grant, which they were awarded.

- £2 million of funding is expected for the borough but it is difficult to acquire funding for the Voluntary Sector from the Lottery Funding Community Asset Fund. The deadline for bids for Pathfinder funding is October 2007.
- The Portfolio Holder is not adverse to commissioning services, especially if finance and timesavings are produced. If it can be undertaken better by someone else and still fits in with the Council's priorities, he is open to suggestions.
- Regarding outsourcing the grant funding process, there is a need to get the correct balance. Cabinet would look to the Voluntary Sector and organisations that were noted as best practice and whether it fitted in with the Council's priorities. There would be clear criteria and boundaries.
- There is a need for a very ongoing robust monitoring system: -
 - Administration and the procedure is only a small part of the process.
 - There is a need for the Council to show its commitment.
 - The philosophy and ethos is commissioning services.

3.1.3.6 Previous Chair, CEFAP

The previous Chair, CEFAP attended the meeting on 23 August 2007 to provide details of the process of grant funding to the Voluntary Sector.

The main points of evidence were: -

- The grants to Voluntary Sector process has changed over the past year to include representatives from the Voluntary Sector on the Panel. This was felt to be beneficial in terms of transparency and openness.
- A two-day meeting was held on 14 and 15 March 2007, comprising four elected Members and the Voluntary Sector, investigated the grant funding process.
- It was realised that it was not ideal for the Sector to bid for funding in March they needed the funding earlier in the year.
- The process excluded a number of organisations that could apply for funding through CEFAP.
- The Panel was mindful of the budget 2007 discussions and outcome. For this year £650,000 was available for Voluntary Sector funding which had been cut to £600,00. Prior to the March CEFAP meetings £800,000 funding was received from Central Government as a one off payment. In the light of this Cabinet increased the £600,000 back to the original £650,000 funding figure for the Voluntary Sector. Money was vired from the Voluntary Sector Grants 'account' to two organisations (this was outside the grants to voluntary sector process). The organisations had addressed Full Council and asked to be considered for funding and had received it. Some letters of complaint had been received about this, challenging the process.
- CEFAP had decided to look at organisations that the Council currently funds and address these first out of the £650,000 'pot.' There was £30,000 available for small grants. At the end of the process, approximately £580,000 was allocated leaving £67,000 and £27,000 for small grants funding.
- The Sunflower Centre fell out of the criteria for a grant from CEFAP and the Panel addressed this with the Council's Chief Executive. The Chief Executive has delegated powers regarding funding and finance up to the value of

£50,000. The Sunflower Centre needed £40,000 and this sum was vired from the Voluntary Sector funding `account' with the intention to vire it back into the account at a later date.

- The grants to Voluntary Sector process is in place to enable organisations to bid for funding. It is apparent that for some organisations that bid for funding, the Council should be commissioning their services, for example it could state that it cannot deliver that service itself but could commission the organisation to do it. Funding for vulnerable people should not come out of the Voluntary Sector `pot'. How the Council supports such organisations and individuals needs investigating, for example, the provision of tools, training etc
- Northampton Borough Council has representatives on the Supporting People Board.
- There is a need for a manager at senior level to have responsibility for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector.
- The Voluntary Sector Post was deleted from the establishment earlier this year and the Post cannot be re-introduced.
- There needs to be a new approach and strategic vision how the grants process will be managed with the Voluntary Sector
- Three year Service Level Agreements with the Voluntary Sector finished in 2004 and were carried forward for 2005, 2006, and 2007.
- The Voluntary Sector needs to be informed of the Council's priorities.
- There is a need to be prescriptive about tailoring resources to priorities and how the Council's support to the Voluntary Sector is changed.
- There needs to be a set amount, for example £700,000, to be made available in the budget process for Voluntary Sector grants.

3.2 Policy and Governance Manager

3.2.1 The Policy and Governance Manager provided baseline data on:-

Background to the Grant Funding Process to the Voluntary Sector

Funding for Voluntary Sector organisations has been rolled over in 2007-2008 for the fifth year without a full review being carried out during this time.

The inclusion of Voluntary sector representation on the CEFAP has made the process more open and transparent, however there continues to be concerns on how individual organisations are chosen to receive grants and how the eservices they provide contribute to the Corporate Objectives of Northampton Borough Council.

It was agreed at the CEFAP meeting held on the 14th March 2007 that a review of the partnership working with the voluntary sector should take place prior to the award of funding for the period 2008 - 2009 and beyond.

Protocol

To produce a questionnaire based on the current application form for all currently funded organisations and applicants who are not currently funded to establish services provided and/or offered.

Interview currently funded organisations.

Interview organisations/applicants for funding not currently receiving funding.

Interview Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) staff and Councillors to establish detailed information on NCC strategy and funding policy

Interview Northampton Borough Council staff and Councillors.

Resources

In respect of officer involvement, the post of Voluntary Sector Support Officer has recently been deleted as part of the recent efficiency savings.

3.2 Scrutiny Officer

3.2.1 The Scrutiny Officer provided baseline information on: -

Northamptonshire County Council's Funding to the Voluntary Sector process

Strategic Funding Programme is the largest of the grants programme and is for revenue core funding (£1.5m 2007-08).

There is one round per year. There is no upper limit on the amount that can be awarded, however it is not expected that more than 50% of the organisations costs would be funded. Cover core costs such as: salaries of key workers, administration, training, maintenance, insurance and rent costs. Funding agreements can range from 1 – 3 years. Applications are required and activity for which funding is required is expected to contribute to the Council's and Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities. Applications are scored by Officers and recommendations are presented to the Community Funding Advisory Panel and Cabinet Sub-Committee for consideration and endorsement. Payments for grants of over £5,000 are made in two instalments; 60% on receipt of signed agreement and 40% after interim monitoring.

Capital Funding Programme £500,000 per annum

Rural and Urban regeneration capital projects (including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act). Regeneration and provision of community spaces. Two rounds in a year, decisions in April and October, match funding expected (can include In-kind contributions). Up to 50% of total cost (Maximum award £50,000). Applications are required and activity for which funding is required is expected to contribute to the Council's and funding programme priorities. Applications are scored by a scoring panel and recommendations are presented to the Community Funding Advisory Panel and Cabinet Sub-Committee for consideration and endorsement. Payments are made on receipt of invoices. The project visited prior to commencement of work and after completion.

Youth Small Grants Project £300,000 per annum

Grants are available from £2,500 to £5,000 for start-up money to support projects to stimulate and encourage new youth work activity. There are currently two

rounds per annum, but it is planned to move to quarterly rounds. Applications are required and activity for which funding is required is expected to contribute to the Council's and funding programme priorities, including supporting one or more of the 5 outcomes of the Children and Young People Services Children Act.

Payment is made in full on receipt of signed agreement. Applications will be considered by a Panel that reports to the Community Funding Advisory Panel and Cabinet Sub-Committee.

Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Investment £410,000p.a.

This is conducted through a tendering process and current contracts, which commenced in September 2006, are in place for 3 years. The Youth Infrastructure Contract, which commenced in April 2007, is also for 3 years. Payments are made in two instalments; 50% on receipt of signed agreement (successful annual review in subsequent years) and 50% after mid-interim monitoring.

Details Required from Applicants

All successful applicants are expected to provide governance and policy documents (e.g. organisation's memorandum and articles of association, signed constitution or set of rules, equal opportunities, health and safety, insurance policies etc). They should also where possible provide evidence of need for the activity for which funding is required (in the case of the grants programmes). Capital applicants are also required to provide details of planning and other permissions (where appropriate) and quotations. Funded organisations will undergo monitoring according to performance indicators set in the schedules of the funding agreements.

NCC does not have a pack signposting organisations to alternative funding streams, however, in its communications with the VCS, it provides contact details for the local infrastructure organisations (LIO) and advises unsuccessful and all other applicants to contact their LIO for advice and support on securing other sources of funding and also for other related support. . Electronic links can be accessed from the Council's website. In addition to directing applicants to LIOs, the Council also has the GrantNet grant database facility that can be accessed by the public. This facility enables it to undertake their own search for funding.

3.3 Senior Accountant

The Senior Accountant provided information on: -

Service Budgets and Voluntary Organisations Fit

Details of service budgets and Voluntary Organisations fit are attached at Appendix E.

Community Enabling Fund – Criteria for 2007/2008

Details of the Community Enabling Fund – Criteria for 2007/2008 are attached at Appendix F.

Small Grants Funding

There is no funding in the current year to run the small grants funding programme. However in 2006-07 the budgets were as follows:

Service	£
Arts	6,940
Community	12,480
Sports	<u>5,390</u>
Total	<u>24,810</u>

The Sunflower Centre

There is currently no authorisation to pay the Sunflower Centre. The Council is aiming to mainstream this organisation, which will in time become part of the Community Safety Team's budget. The funding of £40,000 still needs to be identified in order to pay the grant to the Sunflower Centre.

3.4 Senior Estates Officer

The Senior Estates Officer provided details on the Council's support when leasing buildings and its policy on income on such leases. A copy of the Council's Lettings and Disposals Protocol is attached at Appendix G which describes the process that "*enables the Council to let its properties on the basis of commercial and professional good practice, in away that contributes positively to the aspirations set out in the Community Strategy but which can also respond appropriately to specific factors affecting partners and the not-for-profit sector*".

3.4 Co-Opted Member to the Task and Finish Group

The co-opted member provided information about Northampton Volunteering Centre and the Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, which brings together over 160 local voluntary and community sector organisations.

Evidence from Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

Key points of evidence: -

- The Voluntary and Community Sector plays a very significant role in delivering services for people in Northampton and much can be gained by working in partnership.
- The Forum strives to improve the partnership working and understanding between the voluntary and community sector and its statutory partners, and in the light of the recent policy decisions by NBC, the Forum would like to contribute to an improved strategy for funding the work of the sector. This can help avoid some of the issues experienced recently in connection with the launch of the Partnership Fund and proposals to abolish community grants.
- Forum members feel that the recent launch of the Partnership Fund

demonstrated a lack of a partnership approach because there was a lack of consultation with the Forum about the funding programme and therefore a lack of transparency to the process. The Forum elected representatives to the Borough Council CEFAP and Small Grants Panels in August 2006 and the Forum made repeated requests for information about plans for strategic funding for months before the launch of the Partnership Fund. Better communication and dialogue would have avoided some of the issues regarding the fund, which have emerged since its launch.

- The Forum believes that the Council has shown a lack of clarity of vision for the future of funding for key services provided by voluntary sector organisations, and despite undertaking the CLEARreview, NBC does not seem to be any clearer in identifying its key priorities for funding despite the Partnership Fund aligning objectives with the LAA and Corporate Plan.
- The VCS is innovative and adaptive and organisations would welcome the opportunity to be involved in work to enable NBC to deliver its services in new and more effective ways. Some individual organisations have been involved in discussion of commissioned work but this has not been progressed by NBC.
- There is a major issue regarding timing of the decision making process regarding the Partnership Fund which is leading to uncertainty which makes effective planning extremely difficult for organisations. The decisions about funding will not be known until late March meaning that organisations have already had to serve redundancy notices on staff both creating additional work for organisations and making it likely that staff will leave before the decisions are known.

The aims of the Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum are attached at Appendix H.

Northampton Volunteering Centre – Support Services for Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups in Northampton

Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC) is the local infrastructure agency providing support to frontline voluntary and community groups in Northampton has expertise gained through many years of working with the voluntary sector. NVC operated as a volunteer bureau for 15 years and has undertaken a range of project work including a 2 1/2 year project supporting voluntary and community groups in the town centre wards. NV holds a contract for this work with Northamptonshire county Council and is funded by NBC.

Services

It provides: access to user-friendly information; and a range of one off and ongoing support for voluntary and community organisations on a range of subjects, including:

- Funding sources
- Planning
- Management committees
- Developing a constitution
- Charity registration
- Personnel issues

- Legal issues
- Starting a new group
- Publicity/marketing
- Quality standards
- Working with volunteers
- Finding volunteers

Membership

Northampton Volunteering Centre is a membership organisation. Membership is free. Its services for Voluntary and Community Organisations are provided to three levels:

v Level 1 = basic information including information sheets and resource lists

v Level 2 = use of resources, one to one support through an advice session, meeting, telephone or email etc.

v Level 3 = more protracted or in depth work

In order to access level 2 or 3 services VCS asks voluntary/community organisations to become a member of Northampton Volunteering Centre.

Advice leaflets are provided, an example of which is attached at Appendix I.

3.4 Participation Team Leader

The Participation Team Leader provided details on Organisations currently funded by NBC and details of organisations unsuccessful in the funding round to the meeting that was held on 13 August 2007 (A copy of the minutes of that meeting are attached at Appendix G).

Organisations passing the initial assessment and considered for funding by Northampton Borough Council (2007/2010)

Ability Northants
 Age Concern Northampton and County
 Care and Repair
 Doddridge Centre
 Dostiyo
 Manna House
 NCDA
 Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge
 Northampton CAB
 Northampton Door to Door Service
 Northampton Hope Centre
 Northampton Volunteering Centre (Age Span)
 Northampton Volunteering Centre LIO Function
 Northampton Women's Aid
 Northamptonshire Autistic Society
 Northamptonshire Race Equality Council
 Northamptonshire Rape and Incest Crisis Centre
 Northamptonshire YMCA
 Patel Somaj of Northampton

Prince's Trust
Relate Northamptonshire
Spurgeons
Victim Support Northamptonshire
Welfare Rights Advice Service
YWCA

Applications deemed to have failed the initial assessment against the essential criteria and a brief summary as to the reason for failure.

Converge Learning Consortium	Only twelve of the eighteen essential criteria satisfied
Cruse Bereavement Care	Only fourteen of the eighteen essential criteria satisfied
Kings Heath Adventure Club	Only twelve of the eighteen essential criteria satisfied
Need To Know Shop	Only five of the eighteen essential criteria satisfied
Sunflower Centre	Not a registered/unregistered Charity, Voluntary or Community Group, or Social Enterprise. Therefore not eligible to apply to the Partnership Fund
Thorplands and Thorplands Brook Community Cooperative	Only five of the eighteen essential criteria satisfied

Each organisation above was contacted in writing with a full and detailed explanation of the reasons as to why the application failed.

3.4 Looking at Best Practice and other Local Authorities

3.4.1 Local Authorities

3.4.1.1 Desktop research was carried out with a number of Local Authorities and other organisations regarding their community engagement processes.

3.4.1.2 The following Local Authorities were contacted:

- Gloucester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Torridge District Council
- Liverpool City Council
- London Borough of Camden
- Manchester City Council
- London Borough of Newham

- London Borough of Barnett

3.4.1.3 Other information was obtained via the Internet and the Audit Commission's website.

3.4.1.4 The Organisation, Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), was also requested to provide information, details of which are contained in the main body of this briefing note. APSE sent a global email to all of its members asking for information on their funding process, in particular around a pack signposting unsuccessful applicants to other funding sources.

3.4.1.5 The East Midlands Funders Forum was contacted and asked which Local Authorities grant funding process was noted as best practice. Leicestershire County Council's was commended as an excellent example of best practice.

3.4.1.6 In addition the following Charities were contacted, or their websites looked at, to find out what their funding process was and how they signposted unsuccessful applicants to other funding streams:

- National Lottery (Big Lottery Fund)
- The Big Boost (part of the Big Lottery Fund)
- Comic Relief
- The Arts Council

The Big Boost Programme

The Big Boost programme is run by Un Ltd, Scarman Trust, The Prince's Trust and Changemakers. The programme is funded by Big Lottery Fund and is part of their Young People's Fund initiative. The Big Boost gives awards to young people of between £250 and £1000 (11-16) and £500 and £5000 (16-25), to help them get their ideas off the ground. Applicants are asked to complete a questionnaire in quiz format to find out if they are eligible for a grant. The website contains a Frequently Asked Questions page. There are no details signposting unsuccessful applicants to other funding streams.

Arts Council, England

The Arts Council funds arts activities that benefit people in England, or that help artists and arts organisations. It regularly funds over 1,100 arts organisations on a three-year basis, investing around £400 million in these organisations in 2006/07. The Arts Council has standard conditions for grants, which set out important parts of the relationship between the Arts Council and the recipients of the Arts Council's grant funding. The conditions apply to every grant given by the Arts Council, and applicants are advised that they should be read along with other documents that set out the responsibilities of grant recipients. There are no details of where unsuccessful applicants can apply for alternative funding.

National Lottery Funding

The National Lottery Funding Process is very complex and there are separate categories of funding dependent upon for example the type of grant, the amount requested. On its website, National Lottery Funding has help sheets which detail the information that applicants must submit with their National Lottery Funding application. The website gives information of where alternative funding can be sought. It has listed a range of funding organisations and information resources for applicants on where to go for further help. The list of funding organisations is not exhaustive. It states that there are many government schemes, trusts and foundations that provide funding for specific causes. Applicants are also advised to always check with the relevant local body, for example their local authority about current grant schemes. The information resources include a selection of national second-tier agencies and helper organisations that may be able to give applicants detailed advice on how to make an application to Lottery funders. These organisations may also give applicants advice on planning a project or running an organisation. The website details a list of organisations that the National Lottery suggests to unsuccessful applicants to contact for alternative funding streams.

Audit Commission

After perusing the Audit Commission's website, in particular the Comprehensive Assessment Performance (CPA) page, no Local Authorities were recognised from their CPA reports as being good or excellent for their grant funding process. The majority of specific reviews into this topic found the Local Authority being investigated as poor.

However, the Audit Commission has published a recent report on commissioning public services from the voluntary sector. The report examines commissioning and procurement practices amongst local Councils and calls for an intelligent approach to commissioning which involves the sector in designing as well as delivering services.

Government has been pushing an agenda to encourage a significant increase in commissioning from the voluntary sector. The Audit Commission research found that:

- Many smaller voluntary organisations were unable or unwilling to compete for contracts.
- Capacity-building programmes had not had a significant local impact.
- There is little evidence (in part due to problems of data collection) that voluntary sector providers offered, at either a national or local level, improved performance or value for money compared to the public or private sectors.

The Audit Commission is keen to see the Voluntary Sector overcome these barriers by:

- contributing to national training programmes for third sector commissioning;
- continuing to assess councils' commissioning as part of the use of resources element of CPA;

- for the future, how councils and their partners work with the voluntary sector, in the Commission's development of Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The key recommendation contained in the report focuses on what the Audit Commission describe as 'Intelligent commissioning' and 'effective procurement'. This, it argues, is likely to be a more effective framework for voluntary organisations to prosper than one which gives them 'special treatment': 'not least because the sector has not demonstrated that it has inherent advantages that warrant such special treatment'. The report is aimed primarily at managers in local Councils who are responsible for commissioning services; but it is described as being of interest to 'voluntary organisations that are seeking to influence and deliver public services, as well as national policy makers'.

Leicestershire County Council

The East Midlands Funders Forum recognises the Leicestershire Compact as an example of best practice. A Compact is a partnership agreement between voluntary and community organisations and the statutory agencies they work with. It sets out a framework for relations and identifies principles to adopt when working together. The Leicestershire County Compact has been drawn up between the voluntary and community Sector in Leicestershire and Leicestershire County Council and serves as a template for the CVS to refer to when writing their own version. It also helps voluntary organisations that operate across numerous districts and need to relate directly with Leicestershire County Council.

The Leicestershire County Compact was publicly signed on the 13th August 2004 at an official launch. The Compact document provides a guide on the way that the County Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Leicestershire work together. It explains that there can be different kinds of relationship with partners, or none at all but there may be times when a relationship needs to be formed with either the County Council or a Voluntary and Community organisation and this should be done based on sufficient knowledge of that organisation and its practices.

Gloucester City Council

The Council signposts all groups, successful or unsuccessful, to local infrastructure organisations that can offer specialist-funding advice. It also offers them other support and guidance from its own Community Development team.

Gloucester City Council's grant funding is managed centrally. It is a transparent process and written grant assessments are shared with applications prior to any decision being taken. Standard terms and conditions are used to promote good practice and Officers support organisations to meet these. A new process is being introduced that will offer grant-funded groups three-year agreements linked to service level agreements. This gives more opportunity to fund specific time limited activities on a one off basis. A single application form and simpler monitoring process has been introduced. Both commissioned services and grant-funded projects will be resourced on a full cost recovery basis.

3.3 Newcastle City Council

Newcastle City Council has three types of grant funding: -

- Strategic – a contribution to core funding strategically important organisations
- Project – For one-off pieces of work or pilot initiatives for a fixed period of time
- Development – investment in the capacity of voluntary or community groups

The Council has a three-year funding programme, with service level agreements for those who have funding agreed for that period. The move to three year funding has meant less flexibility in the mainstream grants budget but the small grants and externally funded grants pots allow for greater flexibility to fund new and innovative projects. The Council has a good record for developing funding to help organisations delivery strategically important niche services to develop internal procedures and good practice.

The Council has a common application form and standard agreement for grant funding. All funding opportunities are published on the Council's website.

3.4 Reading Borough Council

The Council has a clear application process and regular cycle for its grant programmes. Monitoring is proportionate to the amount of funding granted. Those with grant funding of more than £10,000 have negotiated service level agreements which follow a standard format and increase in complexity proportionate to the amount of funding. Should organisations not be offered funding they may be offered 'in kind' support or help from the External Funding Team. The Local Authority administers all its own grant distribution.

3.5 Manchester City Council

The Council provides a range of different funding programmes to the voluntary and community sector, ranging from very small start-up schemes to high-value multi-year agreements, all of which have their own criteria and monitoring frameworks.

Across various departments, the City Council has longstanding funding, service delivery, and partnership relationships with many of the estimated 1,500 active voluntary and community groups in Manchester.

In 1992, the City Council established the Voluntary Sector Policy and Grants Section (VSPG) to rationalise and co-ordinate the City Council's non-contractual funding to voluntary groups, and to improve grants monitoring systems and practice. To achieve this objective, many of the historically funded groups and associated departmental budgets were transferred from departmental responsibility to VSPG. The section sits within the Regeneration Division of the Chief Executive's department, and currently oversees a central revenue-funding budget in excess of £4.8m, which supports 97 organisations working in a range of service areas. In addition, for the last 4 years, £500,000 has been made available through VSPG for the CAS:H (Clean and Safe) small capital grants scheme, which aims to help improve community safety through local environmental projects. A small grants programme is also available, mainly to support the development of groups at local community/neighbourhood level.

Government has provided substantial funding for the establishment of a Community Network for Manchester, to link together the different parts of the voluntary and community sector, and develop mechanisms to enable the sector to become involved in decision making structures in the City, including the Manchester LSP. The Network

will be responsible for nominating voluntary and community sector representatives to the LSP bodies and for enabling two-way communication between the sector and the Partnership.

London Borough of Barnet

The London Borough of Barnet has been awarded Beacon status for its Voluntary Sector Funding. The Beacon Scheme identifies excellence and innovation in Local Government. The scheme exists to share good practice so that 'best value' authorities can learn from each other and deliver high quality services to all. There are two forms that are sent out to applicants for funding, one for requests over £5,000 and the other under that sum. Guidance notes are similar, although the Council tries to make it a bit simpler for smaller requests. All applications up to £20,000 are dealt with under delegated powers to the Cabinet Member for Community Services. Above this level they go to Cabinet and Cabinet Resources Committees. Most groups receiving over £50,000 have moved into a contract.

The Council does not have a pack to sign post to other sources of funding, although it administers one large local charity which may be appropriate for anyone it is unable to help. Otherwise it funds a post at Barnet Voluntary Service Council, Funding Advice Officer, who picks up most of this work.

London Borough of Newham

The Council is currently going through its own transition from grant funding to a commissioning process. It has consulted with the Third Sector and is now just developing the process.

With regards to sign posting the Council works in partnership with GRANTnet to help community and voluntary groups obtain up-to-date information on funding and grants free of charge. The Council also offers support to organisations to complete funding applications.

GRANTnet, is a straightforward free-to-use service from GRANTfinder. It can help small businesses to identify suitable funding. Information on over 4,000 grants and other incentives is rapidly identified by answering a few simple questions about the activity applicants wish to undertake and the type of funding required. There are several steps and, at each step, a Help screen assists the applicant in completing the required information. The system is updated regularly to ensure access to the very latest funding information and includes funds from Europe, the UK Government and local authorities. GRANTnet also provides a link to experts from Business Links in England, Scottish Enterprise, Invest Northern Ireland, Business Eye Wales and the European Information Centres (EICs) in the UK - so once an organisation has been identified a grant, it can get advice on submitting an application. The web address for GRANTnet is www.grantnet.com.

The London Borough of Newham has a small grants programme that encourages residents to form informal community groups that deliver innovative activities that encourage community cohesion specifically within diverse groups. The grant funding section of its website contains comprehensive information, together with guidance notes and a frequently asked questions page.

4. Conclusions

After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

- 4.1 Money was vired from the Voluntary Sector Grants 'account' to two organisations. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that this was outside the grants to voluntary sector process. The organisations had addressed Full Council and asked to be considered for funding and had received it. Some letters of complaint had been received about this, challenging the process.
- 4.2 The Task and Finish Group realised that there was a need for a set sum, for example £700,000, to be made available in the budget process for Voluntary Sector grants in order that the Sector is aware of the available fund.
- 4.3 There is need for a longer term strategy regarding funding for vcs organisations which avoids short-term funding agreements and addresses issues such as the possible loss of funds at NBC's annual budget setting rounds.
- 4.4 The future timetable for funding should avoid the situation of voluntary organisations needing to issue redundancy notices because decisions about funding take place too close to the start date for funding.
- 4.5 The Voluntary Sector Post was deleted from the establishment in 2007. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that there was the need for an Officer to be responsible for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector, and suggested that this should be at Senior Manager level. An Officer should also be responsible for commissioning services with the Voluntary Sector and the Task and Finish Group felt that this should be at Corporate Director level.
- 4.6 The key elements of a successful council funding programme are: good communication and engagement with the sector; transparency; equality; clarity (including specific priorities for funding); following the Compact between the statutory and voluntary sector (including the funding and procurement code of practice); and a minimum of three-year funding arrangements.
- 4.7 The Task and Finish Group noted a need for an Officer to focus on identifying and securing external sources of funding for NBC and the vcs in partnership with vcs organisations.
- 4.8 This was a short, sharp review carried out over a five-week period and the Task and Finish Group was unable to complete its entire scope. It was realised that there is a need for further work and suggests that the Task and Finish Group be reconvened early next year to carry out further work.

5. Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group requests that all of the recommendations detailed below are implemented in order that the improvements that this Task and Finish Group seeks can be delivered: The recommendations are in two parts. The first part deals with immediate recommendations and activity, the second part deals with recommendations that require further work but must be completed by June 2008. A clear timetable of this activity will be shared with the vcs as soon as possible.

Short Term Recommendations

- 5.1 That a Senior Officer, minimum of Corporate Manager level, is explicitly identified as being responsible for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector.
- 5.2 That a minimum of £700,000 is ringfenced in the budget for 2008/2009 for Voluntary Sector grants ahead of the full budget process so that the grant application process can proceed between now and March 2008 £50,000 of this sum be allocated to the Small Grants pot.
- 5.3 That funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector under the Partnership Fund be on a minimum three-yearly basis.
- 5.4 That only Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations should be funded from the Voluntary and Community Sector grants pot.
- 5.5 That interim arrangements for those organisations currently funded for one year (to end 31 March 2008) should be put in place and clearly communicated to organisations concerned no later than 30 November 2007.
- 5.6 That the Administration decides which of the currently funded organisations will be mainstream funded with funding linked to the Corporate objectives and Council departments.

Medium Term Recommendations

- 5.7 That a feasibility study be carried out to ascertain whether the administrative function for grant applications should be outsourced.
- 5.8 That the Council develops a Commissioning Strategy for the provision of services to meet the Council's corporate objectives.
- 5.10 That, given that the entire scope of the review was not fulfilled, the Task and Finish Group be reconvened early next year to carry out further work.

Appendices

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR/ FUNDING FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

To make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008-2011.

To review the organisations currently being funded to establish:-

- a. Contribution of the organisations to the corporate aims and objectives of Northampton Borough Council.
- b. To review and assess the service provision required to be commissioned and therefore to be mainstream funded to meet the aims and corporate objectives of the Northampton Borough Council.
- c. To review the applications of currently funded organisations and organisations currently not receiving funding to establish the degree of duplication of services being provided or being offered by the voluntary sector organisations.
- d. To review the local service providers currently receiving funding and those local applicants who do not currently receive funding to assess their contribution to neighbourhood community cohesion in accordance with the NBC corporate objectives.

To review the overall VCS partnership strategy against the national situation of funding.

2. Outcomes Required

- To identify resources available to provide support to organisations awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process.
- To identify a process of distributing funding to the Voluntary Sector in a fair and equitable way that contributes to the Council's priorities.
- To identify how the Council supports the Voluntary Sector infrastructure so that the organisations become fit for purpose.

3. Information Required

- Details of the funding round mechanisms currently used
- List of the Groups currently funded
- Verbal evidence from employees, Portfolio Holder, Chair of CEFAP

- Written evidence from users.
- Best practice Councils
- Sources of funding/match funding

4. Format of Information

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data
- Best practice external to Northampton
- Witness interviews/evidence
- Portfolio Holder evidence
- Chair of CEFAP evidence
- Evidence from S Gooding, NCC
- Employee Evidence

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of the meetings
- Desktop research
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Interviews/evidence: -
 - Users of the service
 - Portfolio Holder
 - Chair of CEFAP
 - S Gooding, NCC
 - R Golbourne, Senior Accountant, NBC

6. Co-Options to the Review Committee

Suggested co-optee – Ann Gilbert – to represent the Voluntary Sector.

7. Evidence gathering Timetable

July – September 2007

30 July	Scoping the review
August	Evidence gathering
September	Finalise Chair's report

8. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Simone Wade
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff

9. Resources and Budget

Simone Wade, Policy and Governance Manager, to provide support and advice.

10 Final report presented by:

Completed by September 2007. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 and then to Cabinet.

11 Monitoring procedure:

To review the impact of the report after six months (March 2008).

Hi Tracy

Sorry this is very last minute but this is my response to the 5 questions which I hope will be useful

1. **1. signposting pack** – these are only useful if accompanied by some sort of support and guidance, it is easy to send out list which can be obtained elsewhere anyway, but it's the 'how to' and input from someone that knows the 'scene' that matters.
2. **2. current process** – in my narrow experience of being a CFAP member earlier this year together with the NBC voluntary sector officer being present it seemed to be quite a rigorous process, but I would not say it was fair and equitable as there were many organisations that were again 'left out in the cold'. Work was going to start on looking at duplication of services – what happened to this? There is also no communication going on with the voluntary sector at present which will only lead to more suspicion and a further breakdown in the relationship between them and NBC. Consultation with them is crucial, look at what happened at the end of last year (2006) when the then current administration threatened to pull all the voluntary sector grant money or at best half the grants. This caused much stress and anxiety to the very people we serve, our service users.
3. **3. support for the voluntary sector** – crucial that you have a named voluntary sector officer, (or similar) how can you provide support without someone taking on that responsibility and rebuilding relationships, damaged or otherwise?
4. **4. support for organisations awarded grants** – I have no problem with the monitoring and evaluation process, this is vital for both sides but again I refer to my comments in 3. Again it is vital to have a named person you can build up a relationship and understanding with, they then can inform Council and give their judgement and opinions.
5. **5. further comments** – I hope NBC will continue with some sort of formal structure of engagement with the voluntary sector if they do not continue with CFAP. Although I rate Northampton Volunteer Centre highly it needs to be far wider than just consulting with them.

I am on leave now until 28th August so I hope this makes sense!

Kind regards,

Sandra Bell
Director
Ability Northants
13 Hazelwood Road
Northampton NN1 1LG
Tel: 01604 624088

Overview and Scrutiny Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

Background

Northampton and District Citizens Advice Bureau is part of a national network of CAB services. It is an independent charity and draws funding from both local authorities and other sources such as Barclaycard, HMRC, and also The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (Citizens Advice). In 2007/8 we expect to help 4,500 people, with 6000 enquiries and in this process deal with 11,000 issues. We are one of the most improved Citizens Advice Bureau in the region in terms of Quality of Advice and now offer access through face to face, letter and Email. We are in the final planning stages, and the lead bureau, of a County Wide partnership of Citizens Advice Bureaux aiming to provide enhanced access to telephone advice through the creation of a Virtual Call Centre and other channels of access. We currently support over 50 volunteers in a range of capacities.

Core Questions

Alternative Funding Streams Pack

The premise of this appears to be that organisations are overly reliant on NBC funding. Whilst it is true that any organisation that receives a significant proportion of its funding from any one funder will be vulnerable should that funding be threatened it is not, in our view, the case that organisations do not know about potential sources of funding. There are software packages such as 'funder finder' as well as the tailored support available from infrastructure organisations or national bodies. What may be more of a problem for organisations is in successfully bidding for funds. In this respect there are two distinct issues we believe act as barriers to accessing funding. These are, firstly lack of expertise. Writing a successful bid is a sophisticated process and managers of small organisations may not have the skills or at the very least the time to do so. Secondly, the Authority must accept that Northampton is a relatively prosperous town. In some way it is easier for voluntary organisations to access funding to work in those fields that they often do – community work, regeneration, the relief of poverty and deprivation – where an area shows signs of serious social decline. Much of the need to invest in the voluntary sector in Northampton comes not just from responding to deprivation but as a part of an expansion of mainstream services to meet the needs of a growing town and changing economy. In summary then, whilst a pack as suggested would not be unhelpful, it would rather miss the point and there may be a better use for these resources elsewhere.

Fairness of distributing funding to the voluntary sector.

The current system may, in a round about way contribute to the Council's priorities – it is not however fair and equitable. Aside from those enabled through the Partnership Fund, there are a range of other funding arrangements that have been arrived at either directly between the council and voluntary sector organisations, or indirectly through the council's membership of certain partnerships, that may not have been arrived at in a way that was transparent or fair. These all need to be scrutinised to determine:

- The manner in which these arrangements were originally made
- Whether these arrangements do actually contribute to the overall objectives of Council or whether they were made simply based on officer preference
- Whether there are other providers who would service the authority more effectively.

In other words, to place the same disciplines of accountability, on all funding relationships, that exist as a result of those relationships created through Partnership Fund decisions.

Equally well, there are services that are currently provided 'in house' that simply cannot be provided as well or as cost effectively as would be the case if provided by the voluntary sector.

Support to the Voluntary Sector

The CAB service is well supported by its national association in a range of areas such as fundraising, IT, training and the like. Thinking carefully about the needs of smaller organisations or those not enjoying the same level of central support it would be our view that supporting infrastructure to place an enhanced focus on fundraising would be helpful although this would need to be a little more considered than producing a pack.

Support to organisations awarded grants

We would actually value a more robust monitoring and evaluation process – simply to demonstrate the improvements in performance we have made over the last 2 years.

Martin Lord
Manager
Northampton and District CAB
01604 628152
manager.northamptoncab@cabnet.org.uk

2

1

MINI CASE STUDY

Should still be fair to everyone who puts their bids in.

- Can you suggest ways that the Council ~~can~~ could support the Voluntary Sector infrastructure so that the organization become fit for purpose.

To be helpful fair and to listen in order for them to become fit for purpose and if not to signpost them to other funders so that they then don't feel left out, or feel that they cannot continue. This could hopefully then encourage them to become fit for purpose.

- How do you feel the Council could provide support to organisations awarded grants including the monitoring and evaluation process?

Appendix B Overview and Scrutiny Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group.

- Do you feel that a Pack signposting unsuccessful organization to other funding streams would be useful?

Yes, it would help organizations not to feel alone and not to feel that they can no longer continue to seek funding from other sources.

- In your opinion do you feel that the current process of distributing funding to the Voluntary Sector is a fair and equitable procedure that contributes to the Council's priorities.

I do feel that they are fair, however I do feel that they need to work more and support the Voluntary Sector more. I also feel that they

③

When the grants been awarded to the voluntary sector they should inform them about there voluntary work and how they have been getting on so that they can monitor there service in order to have a good case for next years award process.

Response from Irish Community (Small Grants)

**Do you feel that a pack signposting unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams would be useful?

We already have the use of the Volunteer Centre and their Funder-Finding workshops. I am attending one of these in the near future.

We also know how to research funding streams via the internet.

To have another pack would not necessarily be of use.

**In your opinion do you feel that the current process of distributing funding to the VS is fair and equitable procedure that contributes to the councils infrastructure?

No – not in our case. It may partly be our own fault, but we have not found NBC to be proactive in learning about our work or indeed supporting it. Our organisation contributes greatly to community cohesion and healthy and happy communities, but we do not feel that this is taken on board.

**Can you suggest ways that the Council could support support the Voluntary Sector infrastructure?

Short answer – money!

Long answer -

Office accommodation – empty offices at NBC buildings could be used.

Hot-desking – allowing groups to share office space/equipment.

Our organisation is funded by the Irish Government for staff wages and some projects, but we desperately need a home.

OR

Council could profile our groups/use us at events and activities – for instance – give a stage at the balloon Festival to Irish dancers – Indian dancers etc.... have ethnic sports groups playing games – kabadi (wrong spelling!!) and Gaelic Football?

OR

Ask us to be more involved with your groups – for instance your sports development people.

****How do you feel the Council could provide support to organisation awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process?**

We are adept at sticking to evaluation procedures – but that is because I worked on the side of giving money before – and understand what to do.

Other organisations such as the Local Network Fund give a workshop on how to monitor and give evaluation. We found this very basic when we went, however other groups do find it useful.

****Any further information you may wish to include.**

It has appeared to us that groups who are “known” to NBC are successful in attracting funding. Officers need to make sure that other groups are not being marginalised. Many groups do good work, but may not “profile” themselves as well as others.

9th August, 2007

Dear Councillor Capstick,

Overview and Scrutiny Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

With reference to your letter dated 6th August, 2007 regarding the above and the questions which were detailed in your letter.

I would like to make the following comments to the points in question.

- It is difficult to ascertain whether signposting unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams would be useful when not knowing which organisations are unsuccessful.
I would say though that if the aims are similar and the organisation is not working within a specific community then pooling their resources could be beneficial.
- Again without the information of what funding is given to which organisation it is difficult to form an opinion.
Each organisation needs to be funded fairly to its needs and how it contributes to the Council's priorities. There should also be some leeway to those organisations who perhaps do not, or cannot, work within the Council's priorities, but whose aims are to benefit the needs of their clients in a more holistic approach.
- I think by the suggestion of co-opting a representative of the Voluntary Sector to the Review Committee is a step forward toward the Council's support to the Voluntary Sector infrastructure. A further step would be for a representative of the Council to be made available to be present at the Northamptonshire Voluntary and Community Sector Forums. Not only within an official capacity but by being present on a non-official capacity which would draw an even working partnership.

- Once an organisation has been awarded the funding on the basis of their application, then the monitoring and evaluation process could take more consideration of the application and resources of the organisation as to how targets can and are being met.

It may be that Council resources will not be able to meet this suggestion, but perhaps a less lengthy monitoring could take place in the first quarter of receiving the grant to ascertain whether the organisation has implemented the project, and if not, whether the Council would be able to support the organisation on a short term basis in whatever way would be suitable.

- Looking at the names of those organisations who do receive funding from the Council I can see how diverse they all are and how vital their resources are to the well-being of their clients and to the overall objectives of the Council.

I hope these comments are of some help and if you would like to discuss any points further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Community House Manager

Councillor Joy Capstick
Interim Chair,
Overview and Scrutiny Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton.
NN1 1WJ.

Response from Nene Valley Christian Refuge

Point 1 - Yes I do feel that a sign posting pack to other funding streams would be useful

Point 2 - Is the distribution process of funding a fair and equitable procedure? I am not sure - the process is quite arduous and the effort required can be disproportionate to the amount for money possibly granted. Small organisations may not have the skills or expertise to make applications, and even medium sized ones like ourselves are sometimes challenged. This year there did seem to be some discrepancy in the monitoring requirements as some organisations had agreed a detailed SLA and targets before the decision was made just to go ahead and sign the SLA without a meeting to discuss targets - so there was no consistency in the requirements for different organizations. The language used is not always user friendly and could therefore be disadvantageous to less 'professional' groups.

Point 3 - Ensuring ongoing funding is available for those organizations who can provide the infrastructure

Point 4 - Some continuity between NCC and NBC in terms of applications, monitoring requirements would be helpful - replicating the same or similar information for more than one funder is time consuming and not good use of staff resources. Is there a way that information could be passed between NBC and NCC (with our permission), this saving paper and time for us?

- More practical in kind support would also be helpful - this may already be available, but the Voluntary Sector are not always aware of the nature of support available - a list of the range of specific areas of support available would be helpful.

- NBC staff who have 'on the ground' knowledge or experience of the voluntary sector would be helpful - not just experience of working at an executive level within the VCS, but some understanding of the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the challenges faced on a day to day basis

- a commitment to at least 3 year funding agreements. Every application requires a considerable amount of time in preparation - this is not good use of resources

- a demonstration from NBC that consideration has been given to the bigger picture and to the repercussions of cuts.

- a more joined up approach within NBC to supporting the VCS - and a clear communication to the VCS of how this is happening

Hope this is helpful

Jacqui Johnson
Project Manager
Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge

Our response to the core questions posed in your mailing of 6th August 2007.

❖ ❖ **Do you feel that a pack signposting unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams would be useful?**

Yes – especially for smaller organisations who do not have the expertise/resources to undertake this work. In addition advice, guidance and support in the preparation of applications to funding bodies would be very beneficial.

❖ ❖ **In your opinion do you feel that the current process of distributing funding to the voluntary sector is a fair and equitable procedure that contributes to the Council's priorities?**

We feel that the process of distributing funding may benefit from increased information being made available to the Councillors and possibly through organisational presentations prior to the decision making process.

❖ ❖ **Can you suggest ways that the Council could support the Voluntary Sector infrastructure?**

A named contact within the authority whose remit is to link with the voluntary sector. Additionally improved communication processes to inform, update and disseminate relevant information and most importantly a longer lead in to the application process.

❖ ❖ **How do you feel the Council could provide support to organisations awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process?**

Appreciation of the partnership working practices with voluntary agencies in fulfilling the Council's objectives.

Peggy Shilson
Chief Executive Officer
Northampton Women's Aid
PO Box 315
Northampton NN1 1LS

Tel: 0845 123 2311
Email: peggy@northamptonwomensaid.org.uk

Appendix C

Witness Core Questions

- Do you feel that a pack signposting unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams would be useful?
- In your opinion do you feel that the current process of distributing funding to the Voluntary Sector is a fair and equitable procedure that contributes to the Council's priorities?
- Can you suggest ways that the Council could support the Voluntary Sector infrastructure?
- How do you feel the Council could provide support to organisations awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process?
- Any further information you may wish to include.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Monday, 13 August 2007

PRESENT:

Councillor Joy Capstick - Chair
Councillor Jenny Conroy
Ruth Light, NVC, - Co-Opted Member

Lindsey Cameron - Participation Team Leader
Robert Golbourne - Senior Accountant
Tracy Tiff - Scrutiny Officer

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Palethorpe and Councillor Simpson (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1).

In the absence of Councillor Palethorpe, Councillor Capstick was elected Interim Chair for this meeting.

The Chair welcomed Ruth Light, co-opted member, representing the Voluntary Sector, to the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 30 JULY 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2007 were agreed as a true record.

3 TO APPROVE THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The Task and Finish Group approved the Scope of the Review, as amended. Copy attached at Annex 1 to the minutes.

The Group discussed the current position regarding Voluntary Sector Funding: -

- The Council recently deleted the Voluntary Sector Support Officer Post from the establishment. There is a need to arrange who will deal with this work. Currently no designated Officer has sole responsibility for this work.
- Up until approximately eight years ago the Council had a dedicated External Funding Officer in Post, whose main job was to seek out external local, regional, national and European funding that the Council could utilise. Potentially the borough could be missing out from Government projects such as Pathfinder.
- The Northampton Volunteering Centre uses the Community Grant Finder

computer package and has a number of grant programmes that it funds in Northampton

- It was suggested that the local PCT be contacted to find out its funding arrangements
- Voluntary Groups would welcome an enhanced feedback process
- It could be beneficial for Borough Councillors to visit certain voluntary organisations once a year or 'adopt' an organisation as part of a monitoring process. The views of Councillors should be sought to see if this would be a valuable tool in the monitoring process and as a means for elected Members to aid feedback from the Voluntary Sector
- The current monitoring process is proportionate to funding allocated
- Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has a heavy monitoring process
- Community Groups, in particular those that are small, not well established, lack a proper infrastructure and do not have the correct accounts in place to apply for a grant, need support. An informal arrangement is in place between NBC and Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC) regarding liaison with the Voluntary Sector to provide help to small groups
- There is a need for unsuccessful applicants to be given both general and generic advice, and in some instances specific tailor made advice, or a pack signposting them to alternative funding sources
- Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC) has a comprehensive website which does include details of alternative funding streams. There is a need for a Funding Strategy and it was noted to implement such a document would take time
- It would be useful to ascertain from organisations/groups funded from the Partnership Fund, the percentage of NBC funding that attributes to their organisation
- The current infrastructure is that NBC funds NVC to provide support to Voluntary Organisations. NVC supported 152 organisations of varying size last year. NVC is often the organisations first port of call. R Light emphasised that there is a need for more investment in NVC's services
- There is a need to find out NCC's funding mechanisms and monitoring process. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to contact NCC to ask whether this information could be provided
- It was suggested that it might be beneficial for the forthcoming year for the historical funding process to be continued and then with Cabinet's approval a new improved funding process be introduced

4 WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) ROBERT GOLBOURNE, SENIOR ACCOUNTANT, NBC

Robert Golbourne, Senior Accountant, NCC provided a schedule setting out the criteria that all Voluntary Sector and Community Groups are assessed by when applying for funding. A copy is attached at Annex 2.

It was noted that for all voluntary organisations and community groups: -

- There is a regular assessment process
- All funding monies were paid quarterly up to March 2007 when it has

subsequently been agreed by Accounting Services that awards to Partnership funded organisation can be paid as a single annual payment

The Group commented, asked questions and heard: -

- If an annual payment was made it was felt this could hinder the monitoring process
- The newly implemented criteria for the Partnership Fund caused concern amongst some Voluntary Sector Organisations
- The CEFAP process is very good, it now has representatives from the Voluntary Sector sitting on it, which has opened up the process making it more transparent
- Funding up to £500 is delegated to one NBC Officer and two Voluntary Sector representatives for recommendation to the Chief Executive for decision; however, CEFAP is always informed of the decision made. The Group felt this was a good, accessible system
- Funding for small grants needs to be clearly and widely advertised, and should contain a helpline number. There is also the need for an Officer to check applications to ensure that they have been correctly completed
- Regarding the Partnership Fund, there is a need for some of the decisions to be made at service level, as this is currently no such link. For example, housing and homeless issues, funding is made available by NBC to the Sunflower Centre and the Hope Centre, if this was linked to Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) it is possible that NBC service departments could provide more funding to those groups that assist with the delivery of services
- Regarding joint working between NBC and Voluntary Sector, the Group heard that CAB and Welfare Rights liaise closely and there is scope for joint working. Mixed provision is a more comfortable process with the Voluntary Sector. There is a need to identify where current organisations fit into service budgets. **R Goulbourne would provide this information to the next meeting**
- The total paid to Volunteer Assistants, i.e. representatives from Age Concern, Scouts Disability Organisations etc., was £5,000 for last year. It is a model of good practice for payment to be made to such representatives, and helps to make the process more transparent.
- There is a need to find out where the amount available (£27,000) for small grants funding is. **R Goulbourne to provide this information to the next meeting**
- In response to a query regarding the Council's funding of £40,000 for the Sunflower Centre, the Group heard that the Sunflower Centre is a multi agency partnership. NBC had forwarded £40,000 to the Sunflower Centre until this finance was available from another funding pot. **R Goulbourne undertook to provide comprehensive detail on this issue to the next meeting**

(B) PREVIOUS CHAIR - CEFAP

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

(C) WRITTEN EVIDENCE RECEIVED SO FAR

Written evidence received so far was noted.

Officer would produce a summary of the main points made by responders.

5 OFFICERS' REPORTS

The Group noted the list of organisations that had been successful and unsuccessful in the last funding round. R Light, co-opted member circulated further details for the Group's consideration.

6 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The schedule of meetings was noted: -

Thursday 23 August – Evidence gathering

Tuesday 4 September – Finalise Chair's report

All meetings would be held at the Guildhall and would commence at 5pm

The meeting concluded at 7:10 pm

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR/ FUNDING FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

To make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008-2011.

To review the organisations currently being funded to establish:-

- a. Contribution of the organisations to the corporate aims and objectives of Northampton Borough Council.
- b. To review and assess the service provision required to be commissioned and therefore to be mainstream funded to meet the aims and corporate objectives of the Northampton Borough Council.
- c. To review the currently funded organisations and organisations currently not receiving funding to establish the degree of duplication of services being provided or being offered by the voluntary sector organisations.
- d. To review the local service providers currently receiving funding and those who do not currently receive funding to assess their contribution to neighbourhood community cohesion in accordance with the NBC corporate objectives.

To review the overall VCS partnership strategy against the national and local situation of funding.

2. Outcomes Required

- To identify resources available to provide support to organisations awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process, which should be proportionate to the amount of funding.
- To identify a process of distributing funding to the Voluntary Sector in a fair and equitable way that contributes to the Council's priorities.
- To identify how the Council supports the Voluntary Sector support services so that the organisations become fit for purpose.

3. Information Required

- Details of the funding round mechanisms currently used
- List of the Groups currently funded
- Verbal evidence from employees, Portfolio Holder, Chair of CEFAP
- Written evidence from users.
- Best practice Councils
- Sources of funding/match funding

4. Format of Information

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data
- Best practice external to Northampton
- Witness interviews/evidence
- Portfolio Holder evidence
- Chair of CEFAP evidence
- Evidence from S Gooding, NCC
- Employee Evidence

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of the meetings
- Desktop research
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Interviews/evidence: -
 - Users of the service
 - Portfolio Holder
 - Chair of CEFAP
 - S Gooding, NCC
 - R Golbourne, Senior Accountant, NBC

6. Co-Options to the Review Committee

Ruth Light – to represent the Voluntary Sector.

7. Evidence gathering Timetable

July – September 2007

30 July	Scoping the review
August	Evidence gathering
September	Finalise Chair's report

8. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Simone Wade
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff

9. Resources and Budget

Simone Wade, Policy and Governance Manager, to provide support and advice.

10 Final report presented by:

Completed by September 2007. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 and then to Cabinet.

11 Monitoring procedure:

To review the impact of the report after six months (March 2008).

Minute Annex

Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny

Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

Monday 13 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

Community Enabling Fund - Funding Criteria for 2007/2008

Set out below is process for assessing applications for funding

Initial Assessment

Criteria	Up to £500	£500 to £5,000	£5,000 and above
Must be based in Northampton	✓	✓	✓
Have a Board of Trustees or Management Committee (3 min)	✓	✓	✓
Be a registered Charity, an unregistered Voluntary or Community Group or registered charitable company limited by guarantee, Social Enterprise	✓	✓	✓
Project / activity must support one or more of the aims of The Corporate Plan	✓	✓	✓

Have the following documents

Completed and signed application form	✓	✓	✓
Articles of Association / Constitution	✓	✓	✓
Set of Accounts and /or Annual Report (not more than 12 months old)	✓	✓	✓
Equal Opportunities Policy	✓	✓	✓
Bank or Building Society Account (requiring 2 signatories – must not be related)	✓	✓	✓
Insurance where applicable	✓	✓	✓
Certificates of Employer and Third Party Liability Insurance	✗	✓	✓
Staff and Volunteer recruitment and retention policies	✗	✗	✓
Staff and Volunteer training and development policies	✗	✗	✓
Complaints procedures / policy	✓	✓	✓

Monitoring and Evaluation

Simple Monitoring form	✓	✗	✗
Monitoring form	✗	✓	✗
Service Level s Agreement	✗	✗	✓
Monitoring and Evaluation	✓	✓	✓

**Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group**

Monday 13 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

Matched funding is required on a pound for pound basis for bids between £2,500 and £5,000.

Ineligible for funding

Criteria	Budgets		
	Up to £500	£500 to £5,000	£5,000 and above
Not based in Northampton	✓	✓	✓
Second request for funding within a 12 month period	✓	✓	✓
Application from other Statutory Bodies	✓	✓	✓
Capital expenditure – such as building materials and / or refurbishment	✓	✓	✓
Transport	✓	✓	✓
Refreshments	✓	✓	✓
Activities of a political nature			
Individual beneficiary	✓	✓	✓
Private (for profit) activity / business	✓	✓	✓
Retrospective Activities	✓	✓	✓
Failure to provide information by the deadline	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Applies
× = Does not apply

Awards Process

The decision-making; is made in partners with representatives from Northampton's Voluntary Sector Forum, the Director on Northampton Volunteer Centre and NBC officers. Awards of funding support Corporate and Local Area Agreement priorities

Up to £500 – Small Grants Panel Decision, signed of by Chief Executive, and reported to CEFAP

Between £500 and £5,000 – Small Grants Panel Recommendations to CEFAP. CEFAP recommendations to Chief Executive, signed of by Chief Executive.

There are no 'Small Grants' programmes in 2007-08.

£5,000 and above (The Partnership Fund) – Grants Panel Recommendations to CEFAP. CEFAP recommendations to Chief Executive, signed of by Chief Executive.

Payment is made either by cheque or directly to the organisations bank accounts once there is a signed agreement. This does not apply to the Partnership Fund.

**Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group**

Thursday 23 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

Appendix E

	Grant				
Organisation	2007-2008	Service	Corporate Plan	LAA	Inclusion
Ability Northants	31,350		✓	✓	✓
Care and Repair	28,000	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Dostiyo	6,500		✓	✓	✓
Manna House	14,000		✓	✓	✓
Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge	10,000	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Northampton CAB	91,911	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Northampton Door to Door Service	70,389		✓	✓	✓
Northampton Hope Centre	15,000	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Northampton Volunteering Centre	45,000		✓	✓	✓
Northampton Women's Aid	40,000	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Northamptonshire Race Equality Council	21,000		✓	✓	✓
Northamptonshire Rape and Incest Crisis Centre	30,000		✓	✓	✓
Relate Northamptonshire	10,000		✓	✓	✓
Victim Support Northamptonshire	22,000		✓	✓	✓
Welfare Rights Advice Service	110,000	Housing	✓	✓	✓
Total	545,150				

**Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group**

Thursday 23 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

	Grant				
Organisation	2007-2008	Service	Corporate Plan	LAA	Inclusion
Light House Mission	500	Arts	✓	✓	✓
Northamptonshire Society For Autism	250		✓	✓	✓
Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation	1,926	Arts	✓	✓	✓
Somali Health Awareness Foundation	1,264		✓	✓	✓
Northampton Irish Support Group	1,424		✓	✓	✓
Anjuman Ghulam-E-Hazrat Abbas	1,000		✓	✓	✓
Total	6,363				

Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group
Monday 13 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

Appendix F

Community Enabling Fund - Funding Criteria for 2007/2008

Set out below is process for assessing applications for funding

Initial Assessment

Criteria	Up to £500	£500 to £5,000	£5,000 and above
Must be based in Northampton	✓	✓	✓
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Be a registered Charity, an unregistered Voluntary or Community Group or registered charitable company limited by guarantee, Social Enterprise	✓	✓	✓
Project / activity must support one or more of the aims of The Corporate Plan	✓	✓	✓

Have the following documents

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Bank or Building Society Account (requiring 2 signatories – must not be related)	✓	✓	✓
Insurance where applicable	✓	✓	✓
Certificates of Employer and Third Party Liability Insurance	✗	✓	✓
Staff and Volunteer recruitment and retention policies	✗	✗	✓
Staff and Volunteer training and development policies	✗	✗	✓
Complaints procedures / policy	✓	✓	✓

Monitoring and Evaluation

Simple Monitoring form	✓	✗	✗
Monitoring form	✗	✓	✗
Service Level s Agreement	✗	✗	✓
Monitoring and Evaluation	✓	✓	✓

**Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny
Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group**

Monday 13 August 2007 at 5:00 pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall

Matched funding is required on a pound for pound basis for bids between £2,500 and £5,000.

Ineligible for funding

Criteria	Budgets		
	Up to £500	£500 to £5,000	£5,000 and above
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Second request for funding within a 12 month period	✓	✓	✓
Application from other Statutory Bodies	✓	✓	✓
Capital expenditure – such as building materials and / or refurbishment	✓	✓	✓
Transport	✓	✓	✓
Refreshments	✓	✓	✓
Activities of a political nature			
Individual beneficiary	✓	✓	✓
Private (for profit) activity / business	✓	✓	✓
Retrospective Activities	✓	✓	✓
Failure to provide information by the deadline	✓	✓	✓

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Awards Process

The decision-making; is made in partners with representatives from Northampton's Voluntary Sector Forum, the Director on Northampton Volunteer Centre and NBC officers. Awards of funding support Corporate and Local Area Agreement priorities

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There are no 'Small Grants' programmes in 2007-08.

£5,000 and above (The Partnership Fund) – Grants Panel Recommendations to CEFAP. CEFAP recommendations to Chief Executive, signed of by Chief Executive.

Payment is made either by cheque or directly to the organisations bank accounts once there is a signed agreement. This does not apply to the Partnership Fund.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Thursday, 23 August 2007

Councillor Joy Capstick	Chair
Councillor Jenny Conroy	
Councillor David Palethorpe	
Ruth Light	Co-Opted Member
Simone Wade	Policy and Governance Manager
Tracy Tiff	Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Brendan Glynane Portfolio Holder for item 3(A)

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simpson, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 AUGUST 2007

Subject to the following amendment:-

The Northampton Volunteering Centre uses **Funder Finder** and provides support around access ...

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 August 2007 were agreed.

3 WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) PORTFOLIO HOLDER - COUNCILLOR BRENDAN GLYNANE

Councillor Brendan Glynane, Portfolio Holder, provided a response to the Group's core questions: -

Do you feel that a pack signposting unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams would be useful?

Yes a pack would be useful. It would also be a good idea to signpost unsuccessful organisations to other funding streams.

Eight years ago the Council had a dedicated External Funding Officer in Post who did research for potential external funding. Such a facility should be in place but if voluntary sector grants were outsourced, there would need to be a service level agreement, and the organisation could be asked to produce such a pack.

Liverpool City Council receives £9 back for every £1 it grants as funding. Liverpool CC received funding from Agencies and organisations such as the Government Office for the North West (GONW) and Lottery Grants.

The Council' should have an enabling role.

In your opinion do you feel that the current process of distributing funding to the Voluntary Sector is a fair and equitable procedure that contributes to the Council's priorities?

I am unsure whether the current Council's priorities fit in with the Voluntary Sector. However, a new Corporate Plan is being produced which will ensure that it fits in with the Council's priorities.

A lot of services will fit in with the Council's objectives. Many organisations that the Council funds have purposes that overlap, an agreement could therefore be made to fund just one of these organisations. There needs to be a proper long term Strategy that states how much funding the Council will make available to the whole Voluntary Sector. For example, informing the Sector of the amount that would be available over the next 3-4 years.

Can you suggest ways that the Council could support the Voluntary Sector infrastructure so that the organisations become fit for purpose?

If the Council was funding the Voluntary Sector it could provide the relevant training to the Sector. However, if grant funding was to be outsourced to another organisation, the Service Level Agreement would ensure that the Sector received proper training.

How do you feel the Council could provide support to organisations awarded grants, including the monitoring and evaluation process?

By giving the grant in one initial payment rather than in quarterly intervals. The organisations then do not have to continually report back to the Council. The Council could support the organisations by liaising with them about their roles and purpose and what impact it has on citizens' lives.

There is a need to publicise the outcomes and talk about the benefits.

Any further information

Should Voluntary Sector grants be outsourced to an organisation such as Northampton Volunteer Centre (on behalf of the Voluntary Sector Forum) or Northants Community Foundation, a lot of the bureaucracy would be cut out and they would be able to bid for large sums of money. There is a need to be mindful that another organisation might be able to facilitate grant funding better than the Council.

The Group asked Councillor Glynane supplementary questions: -

Is it possible that more support could be given to Community Groups hosting stands at the Balloon Festival?

This year's Balloon Festival was part of the learning process. Entrance to the Northampton Show was free only for the first three years. As a suggestion, there could be distinct areas at the Balloon Festival, such as Northampton Celebrates and Voluntary Sector Groups could promote their work in this area.

What is your view on mainstream organisations? I.e. organisations that clearly delivery services outside the Voluntary Sector, for example to vulnerable people?

The Council needs to be sensitive that such organisations are not forgotten.

Why does the Council not have an External Funding Officer?

The Council has been under pressure answering to Central Government therefore there has not been the Officer time to prepare a Strategy for external funding. It is acknowledged that the Council has missed out on many funding opportunities. There would be a need to have an individual who is good at researching for external funding.

Is it your priority that there is funding for such a Post?

Cabinet would be happy to outsource the grant system; a section of the Service Level Agreement would be to signpost applicants to other funding streams.

The Museum assists individuals and organisations with Lottery bids, for example, a group of youngsters from Spring Boroughs were researching the history of the area and the Museum signposted them to the Lottery Heritage Grant, which they were awarded.

Councillor Glynane advised that £2 million of funding is expected for the borough but it is difficult to acquire funding for the Voluntary Sector from the Lottery Funding Community Asset Fund. The deadline for bids is October 2007 for Pathfinder funding.

What are your thoughts on different types of funding for the future that other Local Authorities have?

I am not adverse to commissioning services, especially if finance and timesavings are produced. If it can be undertaken better by someone else and still fits in with the Council's priorities, I am open to suggestions.

Outsourcing the grant funding process is supported by the Voluntary Sector, but it could be seen as passing over the responsibility and ensuring proper transparency in the process?

There is a need to get the correct balance. Cabinet would look to the Voluntary Sector and organisations that were noted as best practice and whether it fitted in with the Council's priorities. There would be clear criterion and boundaries.

There is a need for a very ongoing robust monitoring system.

Administration and the procedure is only a small part of the process.

There is a need for the Council to show its commitment.

The philosophy and ethos is commissioning services.

Councillor Glynane was thanked for his address.

(B) PREVIOUS CHAIR OF CEFAP - COUNCILLOR DAVID PALETHORPE

Councillor Palethorpe advised that he was the previous Chair of CEFAP, as he had been the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety and the Voluntary

Sector.

He advised on the grant funding process:-

The process had changed over the past year to include representatives from the Voluntary Sector on the Panel. This was felt to be beneficial in terms of transparency and openness.

A two-day meeting was held during March 2007, comprising Councillor Palethorpe, three other elected Members and the Voluntary Sector, investigating the grant funding process. It was realised that it was not ideal for the Sector to bid for funding in March they needed the funding earlier. The process excluded a number of organisations that could apply for funding through CEFAP. The Panel was also mindful of the budget 2007 discussions and outcome. For this year £650,000 was available for Voluntary Sector funding which had been cut to £600,00. Prior to the March CEFAP meetings £800,000 funding was received from Central Government as a one off payment. In the light of this Cabinet increased the £600,000 back to the original £650,000 funding figure for the Voluntary Sector. Money was vired from the Voluntary Sector Grants `account` to Need to Know and Thorpelands Community Centre prior to the CEFAP meeting this year (this was outside the grants to voluntary sector process). The Organisations had addressed Full Council and asked to be considered for funding and had received it. Some letters of complaint had been received about this, challenging the process.

CEFAP had therefore decided to look at organisations that the Council currently funds and address these first out of the £650,000 `pot.` There was £30,000 available for small grants. At the end of the process, approximately £580,000 was allocated leaving £67,000 and £27,000 for small grants funding.

The Sunflower Centre fell out of the criteria for a grant from CEFAP and the Panel addressed this with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive has delegated powers regarding funding and finance up to the value of £50,000. The Sunflower Centre needed £40,000 and this sum was vired from the Voluntary Sector funding `account` with the intention to vire it back into the account at a later date. Councillor Palethorpe had assumed that the £40,000 had already been vired back into the Voluntary Sector `account` Therefore a total amount of £640,000 had been allocated for funding including small grants. S Wade confirmed that liaisons would take place with the accountants as to the situation and the Group would be notified accordingly.

Councillor Palethorpe confirmed that the process that is in place enables organisations to bid for funding. It is apparent that for some organisations that bid for funding, that the Council should be commissioning their services, for example it could state that it cannot deliver that service itself but could commission the organisation to do it. He gave an example of an organisation that CEFAP would not fund – a voluntary gardening service.

The Group asked supplementary questions and heard:-

- Funding for vulnerable people should not come out of the Voluntary Sector 'pot'. How the Council supports such organisations and individuals needs investigating, for example the provision of tools, training etc. The gardening project referred to above would link to Supporting People.
- NBC has representatives on the Supporting People Board.
- There is a need for a manager at Senior level to have responsibility for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector.
- It was emphasised that the Voluntary Sector Post had been deleted from the establishment earlier this year and the Post could not be re-introduced
- The work the Voluntary Sector Officer undertook is being picked up by the Team
- There needs to be a new approach and strategic vision how the grants process will be managed with the Voluntary Sector
- Three year Service Level Agreements with the Voluntary Sector finished in 2004 and were carried forward for 2005, 2006, and 2007.
- The Voluntary Sector needs to be informed of the Council's priorities.
- There is a need to be prescriptive about tailoring resources to priorities and how the Council's support to the Voluntary Sector is changed.
- There needs to be a set amount, for example £700,000, to be made available in the budget process for Voluntary Sector grants.

A potential recommendation for the final report was suggested – The grants funding process should be amended to include a section to prevent organisations from asking Full Council for grant funding, which is outside the CEFAP procedure to obtain grants.

A potential recommendation for the final report – That a senior officer, minimum of Corporate Manager level, is responsible for the relationship with the Voluntary Sector. Commissioning must be at Corporate Director level.

A potential recommendation for the final report – That Cabinet be requested to include a minimum of £700,000 in the budget for 2008/2009 for Voluntary Sector grants.

4 WITNESS EVIDENCE - WRITTEN EVIDENCE

The Task and Finish Group noted the further written evidence. This information would be appended to the report.

6 SUMMARY OF WITNESS EVIDENCE

The Task and Finish Group received a summary of all witness evidence received.

7 WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM NORTHAMPTON VOLUNTEER CENTRE RUTH LIGHT

The Task and Finish Group noted the written evidence received from R Light, Co-Optee. This information would help inform the final report.

8 WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Senior Estates Officer provided written evidence detailing the Council's Letting

and Disposals Protocol. This information was duly noted.

9 OFFICERS REPORTS

The Task and Finish Group noted reports on:-

- Service budgets and voluntary organisation fit
- Small grants funding
- £40,000 funding for the Sunflower Centre
- NCC's grant funding process

10 RESULTS OF DESKTOP RESEARCH (INFORMATION TO FOLLOW)

The Task and Finish Group received the Scrutiny Officer's report detailing the results of desktop research. This information would be included in the Chair's final report.

11 DATE OF FINAL MEETING

The final meeting was noted as Tuesday 4 September 2007 commencing at 5pm.

The meeting concluded at 7:05 pm

Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

Aims

The Forum was established in March 2004, after pilot work and research. It enables groups/organisations from all parts of the Northampton voluntary and community sector to come together and have a voice. It provides three important things:

1. A channel for communication between the voluntary sector and statutory organisations, making it easy for statutory agencies to consult and for voluntary/community organisations to feed in their views and collectively respond to important consultations
2. Democratically elected representation from the sector to a range of multi-agency groups and committees (eg the Local Strategic Partnership), which discuss issues and make decisions impacting on the voluntary/community sector and the users and members of voluntary and community organisations. Importantly the Forum offers a route for Representatives to feedback to the Forum membership and be open to contact from Forum members about issues they are concerned about and would like to see raised.
3. The opportunity for networking and exchange of information between voluntary organisations and statutory partners. The emphasis is on easy to digest information relevant to voluntary organizations' needs.

The Forum has been having quarterly meetings and a Forum newsletter is produced in between meetings along with other briefings and updates.

Membership

Membership of the Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum is free and open to all Voluntary and Community Sector organisations operating in Northampton.

There are currently 160 member organisations. Forum members come from a broad range of organisations from very small new groups, community organisations, to large voluntary organisations working in Northampton and beyond. Groups may focus on a particular client group or activity.

Steering Group

A Steering Group elected from the membership oversees the activity and development to of the Forum. This group meets 4 times a year and is responsible for the Forum's Terms of Reference and direction.

Role of NVC

The Forum is facilitated by Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC). This involves:

- admin support - including maintaining the membership database organising and minuting meetings and distributing information.
- development support – such as working with other agencies on possible consultations, promoting the Forum and developing forum representation
- information services – including identifying and synthesising relevant information, writing the newsletter and other information briefings

Achievements

The Forum has enabled members to develop a voice and to participate in national and local consultations such as local planning about health services; the Borough Council's review of funding to the voluntary sector and currently we are working with the new West Northamptonshire Development Corporation to ensure that the voluntary sector can have a significant input into the growth plans for Northampton.

Membership of the Forum has grown steadily and engagement with Forum activities has also increased.

The Forum has followed the development of the LAA and the work of the West Northants Development Corporation.

The Forum has elected a number of representatives to different partnership including the LSP, Compact Steering group. LAA VCS task Group, LAA avoidable injury group and Town Centre Commission.

The Forum engaged in dialogue with Northampton Borough Council about change to its funding programme for voluntary and community organisations. This resulted in representatives places being created on NBC's two funding panels.

Forum meetings have covered a range of different topics and promoted dialogue and increased understanding.

A number of members have commented that the Forum helps to make them feel less isolated.

Where the forum fits

The idea for a forum came about a few years ago following a consultation exercise by CVS Northants. This produced a model for local fora in all of the districts in Northamptonshire, which would feed into a countywide forum, with the flexibility for countywide theme based groups.

In 2003 there was no forum in Northampton giving the voluntary sector a voice. Therefore NVC obtained initial SRB6 funding and subsequent funding from Northampton Borough Council and Northampton PCT to develop a forum, which is for and run by voluntary sector organisations.

Similar fora have been established in other Northamptonshire Districts. There is currently no countywide voluntary and community sector forum, although options for its development are being explored.

Northampton Volunteering Centre has expertise gained through many years of working with the voluntary sector. NVC operated as a volunteer bureau for 15 years and has undertaken a range of project work including a 2 ½ year project supporting voluntary and community groups in the town centre wards.

Membership

Northampton Volunteering Centre is a membership organisation.

Our services for voluntary and community organisations are provided to three levels:

- ❖ Level 1 = basic information including information sheets and resource lists
- ❖ Level 2 = use of resources, one to one support through an advice session, meeting, telephone or email etc.
- ❖ Level 3 = more protracted or in depth work

In order to access level 2 or 3 services we ask voluntary/community organisations to become a member of Northampton Volunteering Centre.

Membership is free.

For more information about membership or the work we do please contact us.

our contact details

Where to find us

Northampton Volunteering Centre
15 St Giles Street
Northampton
NN1 1JA

Phone: 01604 637522

Fax: 01604 601221

Email: info@northampton-volunteers.org.uk

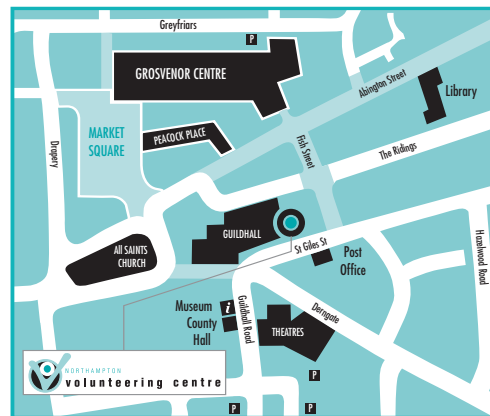
Web: www.northampton-volunteers.org.uk

Opening hours

Monday 10am - 6pm

Tuesday - Friday 10 am - 4 pm

Support outside these hours can be arranged



Registered Charity No: 1087513
Company Ltd by Guarantee in England and Wales No. 4184061

Support Services

for voluntary organisations
and community groups
in Northampton



services available

Appendix 1

Northampton Volunteering Centre (NVC) exists to promote volunteering and to support the local voluntary and community sector.

As the Local Hub for the Northampton voluntary and community sector NVC provides support services and signposts to other sources of help.

We provide: access to user-friendly information; and a range of one off and ongoing support for voluntary and community organisations on a range of subjects, including:

- ❖ Funding sources
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Management committees
- ❖ Developing a constitution
- ❖ Charity registration
- ❖ Personnel issues
- ❖ Legal issues
- ❖ Starting a new group
- ❖ Publicity/marketing
- ❖ Quality standards
- ❖ Working with volunteers
- ❖ Volunteer brokerage

You can access our help through face-to-face sessions or by email or telephone.

our services in more detail

Information

- ❖ Information packs and resource lists.
- ❖ A resource library of best practice information available for reference and loan.
- ❖ Access to web based information.
- ❖ Someone to help find the information you need.

One to One help

- ❖ One to one sessions on issues affecting your organisation.
- ❖ Help with searches for possible funders using Funderfinder or other sources.
- ❖ Help for those thinking of starting a new group.

Practical resources

- ❖ Free Internet use to access online information or use email.
- ❖ A laptop and printer loan service for small groups.

our services in more detail

Working with volunteers

- ❖ Volunteer brokerage service - linking potential volunteers to opportunities.
- ❖ Support for work with volunteers and help to develop volunteer involvement.
- ❖ Volunteer Managers Forum - for volunteer programme managers and people who supervise volunteers to share and learn best practice and ideas.

Training & Consultancy

We provide a link to a range of training to support you or your group and offer some in house and bespoke training. We also offer individual fee based consultancy.

Signposting

A key part of our role is to link services and support. We work to help people find and access the best type of help. We will signpost you to external sources of expertise as appropriate.

Northampton Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

We support this forum - which is open to all voluntary and community organisations in Northampton - providing a route for a collective voice and effective representation.