

Appendix 1

Hastings Borough Council Community Partnership Fund (CPF)

Summary of consultation Feedback on CPF priorities and process for 2017-19

The CPF consultation document (**attached below –page 6**) sets out draft proposals for the Community Partnership Funding (CPF) 2017-19 programme. The consultation process began on 20th June 2016 and closed on 8th August 2016.

There were ten written responses to the proposals all from the community and voluntary sector with most in receipt of council funding at the moment.

In summary, the council proposed the following:

That future CPF programmes are likely to be smaller in scale and the Council believes funding should be directed towards supporting the most vulnerable residents in the borough.

The focus will be on the following priority areas:

- 1) Housing, Welfare and Debt advice
- 2) Domestic Violence
- 3) Advice and support to community organisations
- 4) Rough Sleepers' support
- 5) Advice to migrant and newly settled communities

These priorities will be commissioned via specifically detailed specifications to be delivered by the community and voluntary sector. The Council also stated that a decision on the overall funding available will take place during autumn 2016 and was not part of this consultation process.

Summary of feedback from the community and voluntary sector

Ten organisations responded to the consultation and this is a summary of the main points raised in the feedback. Copies of the actual responses are available on request. Where possible we have kept the responses anonymous.

Main points:

- 1) Most organisations understood the financial pressures on the Council and agreed with the proposal to reduce the number of priorities and focus on the needs of the most vulnerable residents in the borough. Some fully supported the proposed changes.

HBC response: The council appreciates the positive comments from most organisations and hopes to work with the community and voluntary sector to continue to grow and provide active interventions in the community.

- 2) Several organisations argued that CPF enabled a greater number of organisations to function (with small amounts of funding) and attract other funding as match.

HBC response: There are currently several small grants programmes of considerable value delivered by our partners e.g. Clinical Commissioning Group, Sussex Community Foundation, Big Lottery and the Foreshore Trust. These programmes address a wide range of priorities, but we accept some of these do not cover core costs. The council has had to focus on fewer priorities in order to focus on services that help the most vulnerable in our communities.

- 3) An organisation was surprised that economic development and support for the business community was excluded from the list of priorities, especially in the light of the current economic uncertainty

HBC response: The council still sees supporting local businesses as a key economic priority. We will continue to work with LDBG to access alternative funding for businesses support activities. The Council is currently preparing several funding bids to support economic and employment support projects in the town, and continues to support the business services provided by Locate East Sussex.

- 4) Feedback comment: 'We previously received funding to run mental and emotional wellbeing programmes for residents of Hastings and the surrounding areas. It is a service that was established to 'fill a gap' and provided preventative support to adults whose mental and emotional wellbeing is low and is impacting on their life functioning.'

HBC response: The above programme approved during the previous CPF round has had a positive impact on those using the service. The council recognises that by focusing on fewer key priorities it will no longer be able to fund some innovative and specialist services.

- 5) Feedback comment: 'HBC is either keen to just hand out some money to established organisations already engaged in delivering in the priority areas which on face of it would reduce the cost of delivering funding or has not noticed that each of these priorities are covered by several organisations already. In a town with high levels of young people without gainful or useful occupation and low levels of both self-esteem and aspiration, to cut this group out of the priorities is unfair.'

HBC response: The Council is committed to supporting the needs of all young people in the town. It employs a worker to support the work of the Youth Council, offers 'youth grants', and is engaged in several projects to help young people access work and training.

The commissioning process of the CPF programme will ensure it is open to the whole of the voluntary sector in Hastings to provide the service specified.

- 6) Feedback comment: 'HBC should hold some funds specifically to allow the sector to demonstrate to other funders that they have some matched funding from their Local Authority. This is a powerful way of demonstrating support with the effect of enabling much greater amounts to be leveraged in to a possible overall spend on target groups/ issues.'

HBC response: Ability to attract match funding will be a key consideration in the assessment of all funding applications. It should also be recognised that the Council is no longer the key funder for most voluntary and community sector organisations; however, it would like to see its funds being actively used to match larger funding bids. The council is happy to provide support to organisations to submit funding applications where possible.

- 7) Feedback comment: 'Funding for Hastings Community Transport and in particular for the Dial-a-Ride (DAR) service is at risk with this approach. The DAR service will be at risk if funding ceases.'

HBC Response: The Council recognises the risk to the organisation. However, the service it provides is not a free service and we believe there are currently comparable services from various taxi companies in the area.

- 8) Feedback comment: 'We are a long established small charity providing assistance to people with impaired mobility to access town centre shops and businesses usually through the loan of powered scooters or manual wheelchairs. The service allows users to maintain independence and a better quality of life.'

HBC Response: Hastings Shopmobility is an important service for town centre users supported by the council for many years. Given the reduction in council resources, we now believe shops in Priory Meadow and other town centre businesses should now take full responsibility for supporting this service.

- 9) Feedback comment: 'I would like to see additional discussion about how we as providers and commissioners ensure that the funding we receive from all the different sources is better co-ordinated to enable the client journey to be managed in the most effective way possible.'

HBC response: Co-ordination of different funding streams for the same organisation is an ambition the council supports but quite difficult to achieve. This is because of the different time frames for funding, the decision making processes and varying funding priorities. We would however like to discuss with appointed organisations the specialist service needing support.

- 10) Feedback comment: 'Voluntary sector funding has diminished significantly and the report gives the impression that the sector has "assimilated" the cuts by a mixture of independent income and seeking alternative funding. This may be true, to a certain extent for some organisations, but a potentially misleading picture.'

HBC response: Funding for the local voluntary sector has significantly changed over the last few years and is no longer simply reliant on the Borough Council. There are alternative funders of the sector and this is what the consultation document was attempting to assert.

- 11) Feedback comment: 'Whilst the areas for investment clearly relates to HBC strategic priorities some of the areas no longer a priority also align just as closely. It seems clear that the alignment has not changed but reducing the budget is the sole reason for making the decision. We are concerned that job creation and digital inclusion are no longer regarded as priorities for continued investment.'

HBC response: The selected priorities for continued support will be for the next two years and are considered to be important for our most vulnerable residents. However, this does not mean the council will stop seeking alternative funding to support the other priorities. An example of this is the Community Led Local Development proposals currently being developed with more than six voluntary and community sector partners.

12)Feedback comment: 'The report makes no mention of the impact of the EU referendum as adding to the financial pressures faced by the sector over the next 2-3 period and beyond.'

HBC response: The consultation process started (20th June) prior to the referendum. The impact of the result is uncertain but everyone recognises that the budget pressures on local authorities will continue. This review is being conducted due to the pressures on HBC budgets over the next two years.

13)Feedback comment: 'It may be arguable that consideration should be given to extending current arrangements rather than embarking in an "open" procurement process which leads to the same result.'

HBC response: Procurement of services by the council needs to be as open and transparent as possible.

14)Feedback comment: 'We believe that further evidence would be required to support the contention that the revisions to CPF would enable the council to fill gaps in current funding. If the council is asserting that funding for those areas which the Council are no longer supporting is more accessible than the remaining ones on what evidence is this based?'

HBC response: Most of the services identified as priorities by the council are also those which relate to its statutory responsibilities. This is how the needs and gap have been identified, and the specifications for the new services will reflect these requirements. Funding for infrastructure support is to maintain the ability of smaller voluntary sector organisations to continue to attract funding and work directly with local communities.

Consultation Document on CPF priorities and process for 2017-19

This consultation document sets out draft proposals for the Community Partnership Funding (CPF) 2017-19 programme. The consultation process will be open from 20th June 2016 to 17th July 2016. All written responses to the proposals, particularly from the community and voluntary sector, should be forwarded to pdatta@hastings.gov.uk.

The Council wishes to prioritise services to the most vulnerable in our community, recognising the need to maintain a basic level of support at a time of cuts. Although it has always encouraged new and innovative funding bids, it also recognises the importance of maintaining key existing services.

The Council's Cabinet will consider a final set of proposals taking any comments received into account, following which the commissioning process for the programme will start with provisional decisions expected in December 2016. The final budget will be agreed at the Council's Budget Cabinet meeting in February 2017.

Introduction

The current round of Community Partnership Funding comes to an end in March 2017. The previous round was agreed and commissioned in 2014 covering the 2015-16 & 2016-17 programme. With continued pressures on the Council's budget over the next two years, and the need to focus on the most vulnerable in our community, it is important to review the programme and establish its future for the next two years.

CPF - Previous Programme

The total funding levels for the 2015-17 programmes were £ 278 967 in 2015-16, and £260 277 in 2016-17. There were five thematic areas - job creation/employment, advice services, safer communities, active involvement of residents, and digital inclusion - with broad outcomes set for each. 13 organisations were awarded funding to deliver various projects covering these thematic areas.

Background to proposed changes to the CPF Programme 2017-18 and beyond

Funding for the community and voluntary sector (particularly for large and medium sized organisations) is rapidly changing. With central/local government budget cuts over the last six years, many have had to seek alternative sources of funding, become more commercial and compete for outsourced service contracts by the statutory sector on a regular basis.

The alternative sources of funding for local community organisations have primarily been from Big Lottery programmes, Sussex Community Foundation, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Health Inequalities Programme, East Sussex County Council and North East Hastings Big Local initiative and other charitable funds.

In December 2015, the CCG awarded more than £255,000 of NHS funding to the voluntary sector and community organisations in Hastings and Rother to improve health and wellbeing, access to local healthcare and other support services. The CCG launched a similar grant round in March 2016. Sussex Community Foundation is managing this with support from Hastings Voluntary Action.

Reasons for proposed changes to the CPF Programme

The Council is considering changes to the CPF programme for 2017-18 and 2018-19, because:

- The funding available for the 2017-19 programme is likely to be less than previous rounds.
- There is a need to focus CPF investment on the key priorities of the Council. The Council's budget has reduced significantly over the last five years and it is no longer able to support the wide number of activities and services provided by the voluntary and community sector in the town. The number of applications approved also dilutes the amount of funding available and reduces the overall impact of the programme.
- The Council believes setting broad priorities has raised expectations and encouraged a wide range of applications for the previous programme. HBC forwarded 73 Applications during the 2015-17 CPF Programme, received 36 completed applications for Stage 1 assessment, which was reduced to 19 final applications for further submissions. There were 13 applications finally approved.

With reduced budgets, the Council also needs to reduce the administration and associated costs of managing the grant application and monitoring process. It believes the current process creates unnecessary work for many community and voluntary organisations.

The proposed changes to the CPF Programme 2017-19 relate to the funding priorities and the process rather than the level of funding available. The Council is committed to minimising the impact of the budget cuts on the provision of local community services, but is unable to set even an indicative budget in advance of the significant budget review and the separate budget consultation process.

Proposed Changes to the CPF Programme

The suggested new approach to delivering the CPF Programme means commissioning work from the community and voluntary sector for specifically identified outcomes. We believe this approach would best ensure that the available funding is directed to achieving the Council's priorities which meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

The Council wishes to prioritise services to the most vulnerable in our community, recognising the need to maintain a basic level of support at a time of cuts. Although it has always encouraged new and innovative funding bids, it also recognises the importance of maintaining key existing services.

It is recommended therefore that the following priorities be funded:

- a. Housing, Legal, Welfare and Debt Advice
- b. Domestic Violence Support
- c. Advice and support to community organisations
- d. Rough Sleepers Outreach Support
- e. Advice and support to migrant and newly settled communities

It is suggested that the outcomes will be commissioned by providing a broad specification for each of the areas and inviting applications using the current application form, although comments are welcomed on this.

The Council believes there are clear advantages to these new proposals:

- Focusing on selected outcomes rather than broad priorities enables the Council to assist the community and voluntary sector fill gaps in local services that are not met by other programmes or not available generally.
- With improved clarity on the priorities, fewer organisations will waste valuable resources completing detailed applications where their chances of receiving funding are generally low.
- The proposed approach enables the Council to maintain the CPF programme over two further years.

The Council recognises that these proposals will have an immediate impact on some traditionally funded organisations. However, with continued pressure on our budgets, we believe focusing investment on these key outcomes maintains a level of support for local residents provided by the community and voluntary sector for the next two years.

HBC 20th June 2016