

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Executive – 14 March 2005

Report from Director of Social Services

For action

Wards affected:

All

Report Title: Partnership Working with Voluntary Sector Organisations

Forward Plan Ref:

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The report outlines the continuing development of the Social Services Department's working partnership with the voluntary sector. This is more in tune with a modern Brent and better meets the needs of our diverse community.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive approve one year grants to the voluntary groups detailed at Table 1 in paragraph in 3.14 for the year 2005/6.
- 2.2 That the Executive note progress in respect of partnership working with the voluntary sector.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Social Services Department has provided grant funding to a range of voluntary organisations for a number of years. These organisations provide essential services which supplement those provided by Social Services. The Organisations assist in ensuring that specific local needs are met through a diverse range of provision within a mixed economy of care.
- 3.2 This report details recommendations for funding during 2005/6.

- 3.4 In March 2004 the Executive approved the intention to move away from the system of awarding annual grants to the voluntary sector towards an approach which develops longer term contractual agreements. This is in line with a partnership approach based upon the identified needs of vulnerable people within our community rather than an historical legacy of annual grants.
- 3.8 In the light of the decision by the Executive last year to move from grants to a commissioning based approach work has concentrated upon putting in place contractual arrangements with voluntary organisations. Officers expect these contractual arrangements to be finalised during the next financial year. As advised to the Executive in 2004, service negotiations with the voluntary organisations can be a lengthy process spanning financial years.
- 3.6 During the past year, monitoring arrangements have confirmed that grant funding for a further year should be continued to these organisations that are providing essential services for the Department and to vulnerable people within our community.
- 3.7 This approach is being developed with voluntary organisations in Brent alongside other aspects of modernising our working with the voluntary sector. The approach incorporates a number of stages including:
- The development of joint commissioning strategies
 - Monitoring and review of existing services
 - Negotiation and discussion with our voluntary sector partners
 - Establishment of longer term contractual agreements where appropriate
- 3.9 Joint commissioning strategies, agreed between Social Services and the Primary Care Trust, will provide a strategic framework for the procuring of services for each service area which will also be important in ensuring resources are targeted to meet priority needs. The Joint Strategies also assist in identifying which services can be transferred to contractual arrangements. There has been excellent progress in 2004/5 in respect of developing joint commissioning strategies, notably around Older people's services. The Department also made good progress in reviewing its services. However, these reviews and in particular the day care services reviews have been complex and all encompassing. Social Services have not yet finalised these with partners. The establishment of long term contractual arrangements is not recommended until all of the stages detailed in paragraph 3.7 are complete. The Executive are asked to note this interim approach to approve one year grants to the voluntary groups detailed at Table 1 and then to progress to long term contractual agreements with voluntary sector agencies if appropriate.
- 3.10 It is considered that preparatory work in connection with progressing long term contractual agreements with the voluntary sector will have concluded by October 2005..

- 3.11 This will continue to ensure that resources are targeted towards organisations providing high quality, value for money services which meet identified needs and priorities locally. The approach outlined is recognised good practice within Social Services Departments across the country in order to develop the capacity of voluntary sector organisations and follows guidance and recommendations from the Cabinet Office.
- 3.12 Every voluntary organisation in receipt of grant funding during 2004/5 has been requested to provide regular and detailed monitoring information (as required by the Council's Standard Grant Aid Conditions). Work is continuing to develop more robust service specifications in order to move to a situation where service contracts can be agreed. These contracts will clearly set out what service is to be provided, the conditions of payment, monitoring information required and various standards expected. The Council's Standing Orders will be complied with in respect of any new contracts.
- 3.13 There are a number of other voluntary organisations which are no longer funded by grants but are directly commissioned to provide services under a contractual agreement following the granting of an exemption under Standing Orders by the Executive at its meeting of 18th November 2002.
- 3.14 The organisations for which approval for one year grants is sought are set out in Table 1:-.

Table 1

Voluntary Organisation	Current Grant Awarded	Proposed grant to be awarded
	2004/05 £	2005/06 £
Brent Bereavement	15,055	15,356
Brent Triangle	110,364	112,571
Mission Dine	11,016	11,236
New Testament CoG	65,597	66,909
WISE	58,731	59,906
Brent Crossroads		
	122,400	124,848
TOTAL	383,163	390,826

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Table 1 lists the planned support to the voluntary sector from existing Social Services budgets which, for the year 2005/6 is £390,826. Executive is asked to agree funding totalling £390,826.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Constitution requires the Executive to approve any grants in excess of £5,000 per annum.
- 5.2 If the services currently provided by the voluntary organisations in Table 1 are changed to contractual arrangements, the Council will need to comply with the requirements of the EC Procurement Regulations (if applicable), its Contract Standing Orders and act within its statutory powers.
- 5.3 The Council has the power to authorise the grants recommended to the voluntary organisations in Table 1 of this report.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The services provided by the organisations listed in this report contribute to the Council's overall strategic aim of delivering excellent services to our diverse community. Services provided meet a range of needs within various communities. The partnership working arrangements and contracts referred to within this report will enhance the Council's ability to meet these needs.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report

Background Papers

- Social Services Development Plan 2004-5.
- Joint Commissioning Strategies

Anyone wishing to see the above papers should contact:

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