



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet
REOPS

14th November 2005
11th November 2005

GENERIC VOLUNTEERS CENTRE FUNDING

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval for the undertaking of a consultation exercise on the funding of a Generic Volunteer Centre from the 1st April 2006.

2. Summary

- 2.1** At the meeting of Cabinet on the 24th January 2005 it was agreed to increase funding to Voluntary Action Leicester for the Generic Volunteer Centre to £70,000 per annum.
- 2.2.** The additional resource was to be found from either a growth item in the 2005/06 budget or from compensating reductions in the budget of the Chief Executive's office.
- 2.3.** Subsequently the Council did not approve the growth item in the budget of 2005/06 and officers have been working to identify appropriate compensating reductions that do not impact upon the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. It has not been possible to identify such savings.
- 2.4** To ensure continuation of the Volunteer Bureau service pending the identification of this resource and the formalisation of a contract payments have been made under the delegated powers of the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council from the transitional fund. This fund was set up by the Council to provide temporary support for projects facing budgetary issues resulting from the agreement of the Budget Strategy 2004/07. This source of funding will be exhausted by the end of the financial year and therefore the funding issue needs to be resolved from the 1st April 2006.
- 2.5** The Council could seek a growth item in the 2006/07 budget, identify cuts in the Chief Executive's Office or reduce funding for the Volunteer Centre to its previous funds of £29,000 per annum.
- 2.6** Following the Judicial Review challenge to the in 2004/05 budget Council has recognised the need for detailed consultation on decisions regarding reduction in voluntary sector organisations budgets.

2.7 It therefore follows that if the option of reducing the funding to the Generic Volunteer Bureau to £29,000 per annum is not going to be excluded at this stage a consultation exercise needs to be undertaken to inform the final decision. This consultation would need to be carried out in line with the learning from the reconsultation carried out at the end of 2004 and reported to REOPS at its meeting on 7th February 2005.

2.8 This consultation should:-

- Compare the contribution of the Volunteer Bureau to the achievement of the 9 objectives set out in the Corporate Plan against the implications of compensatory savings from other Council resources;
- Compare the contribution of the Volunteer Bureau to the achievement of the relevant objectives of the Corporate Plan to that of the Chief Executive's Office;
- Identify the implications of the reduced and possibly ceased Volunteer Bureau on the delivery of City Council's Corporate Plan.

2.9 The timetable for the consultation in order to align with the budget strategy development will be:-

- By 18th November 2005 - letter to VAL opening consultation as set out in 2.8;
- 23rd December 2005 - deadline for receipt of consultation return;
- Early January - publication of Council proposals and letter to VAL seeking comments;
- End February - final decision.

3. Recommendations

REOPS agrees:-

3.1. To provide recommendations to Cabinet on the proposed consultation and how it wishes to be involved in informing the decision.

Cabinet agrees:-

3.2. That the Assistant Chief Executive undertake a consultation process as set out in 2.9 with Voluntary Action Leicester with regard to the Volunteer Bureau.

3.3. This consultation be aligned in time to inform the budget strategy 2006/09 as set out in 2.9.

4. Financial and legal Implications

NB. Legal implications need to be completed by Legal Services

4.1. Legal Implications

Reference is made (at paragraph 2.6) to the Judicial Review challenge. In that challenge the court reaffirmed that decision-making has to be fair and in terms of fairness this includes a requirement for consultation that is meaningful. To be meaningful, obviously no concluded decision should be in existence, rather the proposals should be at a formative stage, giving reasons for the proposals, a reasonable time for a response to be made and thereafter in the final decision the

responses received as part of the consultation process being conscientiously taken into account.

This report identifies the consultation process that is to be followed with regard to the future funding of a generic volunteer centre in accordance with established legal principles.

Anthony Cross, Legal Services, Ext 6362

4.2 Financial Implications

The revenue budget strategy for the Chief Executive's Office for 2005/06 – 2007/08 included no growth item for the generic volunteer centre. The projected cost of this increased to £70k and this sum must, therefore, be found from existing resources within the Chief Executive's Office, in accordance with the resolution of Cabinet at its meeting on January 24th 2005. The Assistant Chief Executive now reports that such resources from within the Chief Executive's office cannot be found and, although some alternative funding has been identified this is for 2005/06 only. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the matter as part of the preparation of the 2006/07 –2008/09 budget strategy.

Andy Morley, Chief Accountant Ext. 7404

4.3 Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References
Equal Opportunities	YES	2
Policy	NO	
Sustainable and Environmental	NO	
Crime and Disorder	NO	
Human Rights Act	NO	
Elderly/People on Low Income	NO	

5. Background Papers

Voluntary Sector Reconsultation	Cabinet	24 th January 2005
Voluntary and Community Sector Consultation	REOPS	9 th February 2005

6. Report Author/Officer to contact:

Keith Murdoch, Assistant Chief Executive, Ext 6001

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)