

Council

Date of Meeting: 18 October 2018

Report Title: Proposed Changes to Grant Application Process

Senior Officer: Acting Director of Legal Services, Dan Dickinson

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. Changes to the constitution are proposed by the Monitoring Officer to implement a recommendation from Constitution Committee on 20 September 2018 in relation to the process surrounding grant funding applications. The amendment will enable the Council to maximise the number of grant applications made in an efficient process.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Paragraph 6.26 of the Financial Procedure Rules be replaced with the following:-
- 6.26 Chief Officers are authorised, as set out in the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to submit applications for grant funding that align with Council priorities and initiatives in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder. In the event that an application is successful, the decision making process for approval of the application, including acceptance of any conditions, will follow that set out at paragraphs 2.40 and 2.45 below.
- 2.2 That the Chief Officer Scheme of Delegations be amended to reflect an additional delegation to all chief officers as follows:-
- To submit applications for grant funding that align with the Council budget and policy framework, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.
- 2.3 That an additional delegation is included in the Officer Scheme of Delegations for the s151 Officer as follows:-

To approve, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance and Communications) supplementary capital or revenue estimates where those estimates are fully funded through the ring-fenced grant funding awarded to enable the Council to accept awarded grant funding and apply it for the purposes for which it has been awarded.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Grant Funding opportunities often arise with little or no notice, when an external body finds itself in a position to make funding available to address a current perceived need. Where those opportunities align with Council priorities and initiatives, the Council needs to be positioned to move quickly to take advantage of such opportunities. Currently, the Constitution requires officers to seek Member approval prior to submitting bids for grant funding. The requirement to seek Member approval prior to submitting a bid can constrain the Council's ability to prepare and submit a bid on time, given the tight timescales that usually apply between notification of a bid opportunity, and the deadline for submitting bids. That constraint is most acute where bids are to be submitted for sums in excess of £500,000 and £1,000,000 (amounts likely to generate the most significant benefits for the Council and its service users) because officers are currently required to seek authority from Cabinet and Council to progress the application and are therefore constrained by the meeting schedule.
- 3.2. Receiving grant funding will usually enable a Service to spend the grant on activities or expenditure not provided for within existing budgets. To ensure that the expenditure is accurately reflected in the budget and appropriately authorised, the Financial Procedure Rules require a supplementary revenue or capital estimate to reflect the income and expenditure proposals in the relevant budget.
- 3.3. Altering the constitution so that member approval is only required to accept a funding offer more readily enables bid process timescales to be met. The requirement to consult with the portfolio holder before submitting a bid does not impact on timescales and offers adequate Member oversight in terms of selecting which bidding opportunities to take. Furthermore, there are often conditions attached to bid offers, which often are not crystallised until the point in time when a bid has been successful and a funding offer is received by the Council. Members will therefore be able to make a more informed decision on all relevant information by being involved once the funding offer is received.
- 3.4. Alteration of the Officer Scheme of Delegation is required if the proposal to move member approval from the bid stage to the offer stage is adopted.

The absence of that delegation would render redundant a change to the timing of the member approval requirement in the bidding process set out above.

- 3.5. The parameters of the delegation sought in terms of supplementary estimates, in relation to the requirement that they are fully funded, ring fenced and undertaken in consultation with the portfolio holders, is considered to offer ample safeguards in governance terms.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Consideration was given to leaving the constitution as drafted, however this would mean that the Council's opportunities to benefit from external funding would be limited.
- 4.2. No alternative suggestions as to the management of grant funding bids had been identified.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Council undertook a fundamental review of its constitution in 2017, at its meeting on 14 December 2017, accepted the recommendations of the Constitution Committee, with the current constitution coming in to effect from 1 January 2018. Notwithstanding the care by which that process was undertaken, it has been necessary to apply a number of amendments to the Constitution to ensure that it accurately reflects the operation of the Council.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1 The constitution requires amendment to enable the Council to maximise the opportunities open to it through external grant funding. Failure to implement this amendment will result in opportunities to secure additional funding being missed, which would be detrimental to the borough.

6.2. Legal Implications

- 6.2.1. The adoption of the proposed amendments will ensure that the Council makes more informed decisions in relation to grant funding application bids and awards. The submission of a bid does not compel the Council to accept the bid and it is therefore appropriate that members should be involved at the point that the Council considers whether to accept the offer of grant.

6.3. Finance Implications

6.3.1. The proposed amendments will not impact materially upon the financial position of the authority, save to improve the prospect of it obtaining additional external grant funding.

6.4. Policy Implications

6.4.1. More of the Council's policy aims and objectives will be able to be fulfilled if additional grant funding can be secured.

6.5. Equality Implications

6.5.1. No Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of this matter.

6.6. Human Resources Implications

6.6.1. None

6.7. Risk Management Implications

6.7.1. None

6.8. Rural Communities Implications

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.9. Implications for Children & Young People

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.10. Public Health Implications

6.10.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. None.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. The Monitoring Officer has consulted with the Chair of the Constitution Committee.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Meeting of Council – 14 December 2017

Meeting of Constitution Committee – 20 September 2018

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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