

Wiltshire Council

Annual Council

12 May 2015

Briefing Note - No. 19 - Burnbake Trust and Group 5 - From Councillors Jeff Osborn and Peter Edge

“This Council views with concern the manner in which the policy on voluntary sector group funding has been implemented. In particular two well regarded voluntary furniture recycling groups, in different parts of the county, have been poorly treated – the Burnbake Trust and Group 5. They have had all their Wiltshire Council funding withdrawn, with little or no consultation. The consequence is that these organisations are now at risk of closure, with a loss of local community resilience and serious reputational damage to this Council. Council need to reconsider; discuss the matter further with all those involved and seek to salvage something practical from this drastic situation.”

One of the strategic savings in the budget for 2015/16 was a reduction in voluntary sector grants equating to a minimum of 10%, but the Council has also been clear that it would be looking for VCS organisations to develop sustainable business plans that place less reliance on Wiltshire Council funding which may be achieved through sharing resources with other organisations or through accessing alternative sources of revenue.

Both the Burnbake Trust and Group 5 were contacted in December to inform them that whilst the Council would no longer be able to provide funding directly to the organisations, we would support the organisations in finding other sources of funding. The organisations had previously received approximately £5,000 each per annum from the Council.

The Burnbake Trust and Group 5 have very different financial positions. The Burnbake Trust has grown to be a substantial and very successful organisation with many income streams and a high level of financial reserves (nearly £250,000). Group 5 is a very small organisation whose main sources of income, apart from Wiltshire Council, are Selwood Housing and Town and Parish Councils. Their total income per annum has been approximately £17,000. The change in funding brings Group 5 more in line with the other furniture recycling organisations that operate across Wiltshire (Waste Not Want Not, KFR, the Repair Academy, Dorothy House) who all bring in income from a mixture of charitable foundations, business sponsorship and local fund-raising.

Increasingly, the Council is looking for VSC organisations to bring in additional finance to the County that is often not available to local government, for example, from charitable trusts. Some charitable trusts ask for a statement of support from

statutory organisations when they are assessing applications for funding to help ensure that the funding request is in line with local priorities. It is very likely that the Council would support any application by organisations that recycle furniture and prioritise low income families/families in difficult circumstances.

The Council set out in letters to both organisations in December that support can be offered to help them find alternative sources of funding. This offer has been explicitly set out again to Group 5 in March, but has not yet been taken up.