

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

RAPID SCRUTINY EXERCISE

14 OCTOBER 2008

REVIEW OF WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS)

Purpose and Background

1. A one-off rapid scrutiny exercise was set up to review the paper going to Cabinet on 21 October, with a subsequent recommendation to the Implementation Executive. There was no opportunity to take the paper to the Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Management Committee prior to Cabinet due to the timing of scheduled meetings.
2. Scrutiny has tracked this matter via the Cabinet Forward Work Plan for some time, and through the detailed work it was asked to do in respect of funding the museums service.
3. Jeff Osborn - Chairman OS Management Committee, Tony Molland - Vice-Chairman OS Management Committee, John English - OS Management Committee Member, John Thomson - Cabinet Member, Sue Redmond - Corporate Director and Paul Kelly - OS Manager attended the rapid scrutiny exercise.

Summary of Concluding Views

4. Confirmation was given that the PCT had agreed to honour grant funding to the VCS next year, at the same level as the current year, as was being recommended to the Implementation Executive (IE) in respect of local authority funding. Scope for an inflationary uplift would be considered as part of the budget negotiations.
5. Proposals were being driven both nationally and locally, with general buy-in from the voluntary and community sector to the outcome of the review and the changes required following extensive consultation.
6. The information from district councils included in the report related to the published revenue budget, and was currently the subject of further clarification.
7. The early establishment of a VCS Support Unit was seen as vital to the delivery of the findings in the review. It would be located in DCS but act in a corporate role and be financed from the One Council budget, and include a joint funded post from the PCT

8. Guidance would be needed on the involvement of area boards in awarding local grants from 2010, especially relating to local flexibility against the intended framework for agreements.
9. OS would value seeing the intended framework – planned to be developed by October 2009, and linked to the new council's corporate goals with a more focused, business-like approach.
10. The need for better co-ordination and consistency in the way grants were given, and greater clarity for the organisations themselves in what was expected, especially in respect of core costs, added value and outcomes. A system with a strong emphasis on commissioning, partnership and performance management was envisaged in order to deliver improvements for all.
11. Representation from the VCS on the Wiltshire Assembly, area boards etc. would be legitimised through appropriate appointing arrangements and subsequently those appointed would carry certain responsibilities for reporting.
12. Elected members would play a vital role in the build-up to grants for next year especially those with local and district funding knowledge, and would be asked to communicate on detail as well as on the general developments proposed. Following decision by IE, members would be advised of the intended arrangements.

Recommendations

13. To support the outcome of the review and the way forward being recommended to the Cabinet and the IE subject to:
 - (i) the corporate role of the VCS Support Unit being emphasised;
 - (ii) achieving greater clarity on the current level of district funding, including one-off revenue and capital commitments made;
 - (iii) further discussions on the intended role of area boards in making local grants and the advice/support they would receive; and
 - (iv) OS being given the opportunity to consider the content of the framework being developed for October 2009 prior to implementation.