

Committee: Scrutiny 1 – Community and Housing
Date: 18 September 2002
Agenda Item No: 5
Title: PFI Progress Report
Author: Kathy Chapman (01799) 510537 & Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560

Summary

- 1 This report provides an update on the progress of the PFI Project.

Background

- 2 Members will be aware that on 30 May 2002 the contractual documents for the PFI Project were all executed. A verbal report was made to the Scrutiny 1 Committee on 12 June 2002 and Members requested regular updates in relation to the progress of the project.

Great Dunmow Leisure Centre

- 3 Pellikaan Construction (Building Contractor) took possession of the site during the week beginning 8 July 2002.
- 4 A barn, which was on the access road, has been demolished and the boundary of the site has been fenced to ensure that the public and School pupils cannot gain access to the construction site.
- 5 The site has been stripped and work has commenced to form the car park and Artificial Turf Pitch.
- 6 The Council's Project Manager is liaising with representatives of Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd, Pellikaan Construction and the Helena Romanes School with regard to the construction process and any related issues.
- 7 The first capital payment was made by the Council toward construction work at the beginning of September in accordance with the contract and following a site meeting and confirmation from the Technical Advisor that relevant work had been completed on site.
- 8 The work is on target in relation to the attached program.

Stansted Leisure Centre

- 9 Pellikaan Construction (Building Contractor) took possession of the site during week beginning 2 September 2002.
- 10 The boundary of the site has been fenced to ensure that the public and School pupils cannot gain access to the construction site.

- 11 A green house and other outbuildings have been demolished.
- 12 A temporary car park has been provided for the School whilst work is carried out on the new Centre, which affects the use of an existing car park.
- 13 The work is on target in relation to the attached program.

Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre – Refurbishment

- 14 Work on the refurbishment will not commence until 2 December 2002 when Linteum Leisure Ltd takeover the operation of the Centre from D C Leisure Ltd. However, Pellikaan Construction has undertaken surveys of the building and is working on detailed plans and programs for the refurbishment work.

General Operational Issues

- 15 Leisure Connection (the Operator for the Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd Consortium) will be making presentations on 9 and 10 September to the staff who are currently employed by D C Leisure Ltd and who will have the ability to transfer to Leisure Connection under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE). Following these presentations on 7 and 8 October representatives from Leisure Connection will be arranging to have individual meetings with affected staff.
- 16 Regular meeting are held with representatives of the Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd Consortium to discuss and agree the handover of the Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre and the Dunmow Sports and Fitness Centre from D C Leisure Ltd.
- 17 The Council's Leisure PFI Project Manager and the Head of Community and Leisure are working together in relation to the various issues surrounding the handover of facilities and the operation of the new centres.

FOR INFORMATION

Background Papers: PFI Files and Contracts

Committee: Scrutiny 1

Date: 18 September 2002

Agenda Item No: 6

Title: Community and Leisure Grant Schemes

Author: Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560 and
Sue Hayden (01799) 510563

Summary

- Members of the Scrutiny 1 Committee requested information about existing Grant schemes administered by the Community and Leisure Committee to enable them to review the criteria and determination processes. This report advises Members of the various Grant scheme and how they are administered.

Background

- A Best Value Review of Grants was carried out in 2001. Appended is the Minutes of the Amenities Sub-Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2001 detailing the resolved position as a result of the review.
- As a result of the Best Value Review of Grants the schemes are as follows:-

Grant Scheme	Money in Budget	Maximum Allocation	Determination of Grant	Timescales
Ad-hoc	£5,000	£500	Head of Community & Leisure Services in consultation with Chair of Community & Leisure Committee	Monthly determination. Ad-Hoc Grant forms returned to Administrative Officer by 16 th of month. Decision made by 1 st of following month.
Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (3 year)	£110,320	No maximum allocation	Recommendations made by District Grants Advisory Panel to Community & Leisure Committee	Three yearly determination. Existing tranche April 2001 to March 2004. Process for next tranche begins June 2003.
Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (1 yr)	£10,000	£1,000	Recommendations made by District Grants Advisory Panel to Community & Leisure Committee	Annual determination. Process commences beginning of June each year.

Community Project Grant Scheme	£40,000	£3,500	Head of Community & Leisure Services in consultation with Chair of Community & Leisure Committee	Annual determination. Process commences beginning of June.
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Criteria for Determining Grant

Appended is the application form for each of the four schemes. In summary, the criteria for determining each of the Grants is given below:

4 Ad-hoc Grant

Grants are available to talented individuals, non-profit making organisations and local charities providing services to/for the community and/or for the purpose of assisting the arts, sports, disabled people and elderly.

Applications from residents/groups established for less than 6 months will not be considered.

Projects/initiatives which benefit individuals or residents of the Uttlesford district. Grants will not be given for on-going costs and projects which have taken place.

5 Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (3 years)

This scheme aims to ensure a fair and equitable assessment of organisations applying for a VOSG from the Council and ensures that the grants are made to organisations that provide a service to the residents of Uttlesford.

An organisation will need to demonstrate the relevance of its work and services to the Council and will also need to initially satisfy the following eligibility requirements in order to be eligible for further consideration:-

- Applications will only be accepted from properly constituted voluntary groups.
- The benefits of the services supported should be aimed predominantly at residents of the district.
- Applications must be able to demonstrate that attempts have been made to obtain funding support from other funding organisations and have raised funds of it own.
- The applicant must have stated commitment to equal opportunities, which much be evident in the delivery of the applicant's service.

Having met the basic eligibility criteria, applicants will be selected further consideration for funding, dependent upon the overall VOSG budget available and their ability to demonstrate the following:-

- The benefit to service user
- The ability of the applicant to deliver their service in a sound financial, cost effective and efficient manner

- The degree to which any grant from the Council will assist in improving the applicant's service
- The degree of commitment to staff training to ensure ongoing delivery of quality services
- The existence of long term plans to show forward planning and preparation
- The degree to which applicant's service complements the Council's service complements the Council's service, or provides for those services unable to be delivered by the Council

6 Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (1 year)

Applications are only accepted from properly constituted voluntary groups. The benefits of the service supported should be aimed predominantly at residents of the district. Attempts must have been made to obtain financial support from other funding organisations and have raised funds of its own. The applicant must have a commitment to equal opportunities, which must be evident in the delivery of the service.

Having met the basic eligibility criteria, applications will need to demonstrate the following:-

- (i) The benefit to service user.
- (ii) The ability to deliver the service in a sound financial, cost effective manner.
- (iii) The degree to which the grant will assist in improving the application's service.
- (iv) The degree of commitment to staff training to ensure ongoing delivery of quality services
- (v) The existence of long term plans to show forward planning and preparation.

The degree to which application's service complements the Council's services, or provides for those services unable to be delivered by the Council.

7 Community Project Grant Scheme

Applications are only considered if they are submitted by properly constituted voluntary organisation or similar bodies in the Uttlesford District such as Village Hall Committees, Community Associations, Voluntary sports, play and recreational clubs and groups.

- development of land for playing field or recreational purposes, including environmental improvements.
- buildings/facilities that are available for community use e.g. village halls, community centres, pavilions, changing rooms, public conveniences etc.
- car parks and access roads to car parks directly associated with the community use building.
- children's play areas, including equipment and safety surfacing.

- improvements, refurbishment or extension to any of the facilities outlined above.
- essential equipment that contributes significantly to the aims and objectives of the project.
- training and one-off staffing costs that contributes significantly to the development of the project or increases benefits to the community. (Wage and salaries cannot be paid)

8 It was felt by Members that this scheme should not be open to Town and Parish Councils who can precept towards such projects. Consequently, the Community and Leisure Committee on 28 May removed Town and Parish Councils with a population of over 1,000 residents from the criteria for this scheme.

9 During the Health Best Value Review last year it was identified that there is potential for certain grant schemes provided by the Council, Uttlesford PCT and ECC to be amalgamated to provide one scheme for organisations to apply to. Officers of the relevant organisations are currently considering the options for developing the proposal.

Comments

9 The processing of the various schemes has highlighted a number of issues for consideration as follows:-

10 Applications to the Community Project Grant Scheme must complete their project by no later than 8 March each year. Applicants who have been unable to complete their project by this date have requested an extension to this date. Some Members have been reluctant to agree to some grants being “rolled over” to the following year as it was felt that not enough had been done by the applicant to complete the project. In most cases, however, there has been a viable reason for the request.

11 Funding under the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant is for three years. No growth is allowed for over the three year funding period. Many organisations in receipt of a grant from this scheme consider that although it is helpful to have a three year commitment from the Council, financial pressures increase year on year as there is no allowance for inflation in the grant made. A number have expressed concern about whether the next “pot” of three year funding will be increased to reflect the inflationary increases of the last three years and those to be incurred over the next three years.

12 Members of the District Grants Advisory Panel have expressed concern about the amount of paper they receive when considering applications and supporting evidence for the two Voluntary Organisation Support Grant Schemes. This was a concern of Members when reviewing Grants under Best Value and one of the reasons why delegated authority was passed to the Officers for certain grants. Members may feel that this issue can be addressed to some degree by passing delegated authority for the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (1 year) Scheme to the Head of Community and Leisure Services in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Community and Leisure Committee. It is felt, however, that Members should

be involved in the determination of the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant (3 year) Scheme due to the significance of the scheme to voluntary organisations.

RECOMMENDED that Members consider the various Grant Schemes administered by the Community and Leisure Committee and make any recommendations for policy changes.

Background Papers: Current grant criteria Best Value – Grant Report submitted to Amenities Sub-Committee held on 18 January 2001 and Committee minute AM37 and Best Value Review papers.

Committee: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
Date: 18 SEPTEMBER 2002
Agenda Item No:
Title: ESSEX AMBULANCE SERVICE – RESPONSE TIMES
Author: Mick Purkiss (01799) 510430

Summary

- 1 This report provides details of the response times of the Essex Ambulance Service relating to the Uttlesford District.

Background

- 2 At the last meeting of the Committee (Minute S1.6), it was agreed that an approach be made to the Essex Ambulance Service to obtain statistics of response times specifically for Uttlesford Ambulance Services.
- 3 Following this approach, the Chief Executive of the Essex Ambulance Service has provided details of response times for the period January – June 2002 broken down into specific District Council areas. A copy of this is set out as an appendix to this report.
- 4 The Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service adds that the national objective is that the service should meet these response time targets on the basis of its whole area. He adds, however, it is always striving to make improvements at a local level and to increase equity across the county.
- 5 A letter from the Community Health Council on this matter is also attached for information.

FOR INFORMATION

Background Papers: Letter from Essex Ambulance Service dated 9 August 2002.

Committee: SCRUTINY 1 (Community & Housing)
Date: 18 September 2002
Agenda Item No: 10
Title: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF LEISURE & CULTURAL SERVICES – PROGRESS REPORT
Authors: Councillor Robin O’Neill & Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560

Member Reference Group : Councillors Robin O’Neill, David Morson and Mrs Sue Schneider

Summary

- 1 This report details the progress made to date with the Best Value Review of Leisure & Cultural Services. It recommends that the Committee notes the direction that the next stage of the Review it to take.

Progress to Date

- 2 At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee the Members were provided with and noted details of the early work that had been carried out.

(a) Meetings with UDC and ECC Officers

- 3 Since that meeting, the Member Reference Group (MRG) has been concentrating on meeting with relevant officers and leading representatives of some of the groups that the Council works with to understand in more detail the current working arrangements and whether there are opportunities for improvement.

- 4 The meetings, held individually with the Sports Development, Arts Development, Tourism and Leisure Officers, allowed Members to explore:-

- Details of the work that is carried out
- How services might be improved
- What additional services might be provided or should any of them be discontinued
- How officers work with the voluntary sector and partners?

In addition, the MRG met with the Leisure Manager, the Head of Community & Leisure and is to meet with the Director of Community Services. The outcome of these discussion is helping to shape the emerging conclusions of the review.

- 5 These meetings were complemented by a series of meetings with Essex County Council Officers in Chelmsford. Members asked representatives of

Tourism, Youth, Sports Development, Arts, Heritage and Conservation and County Archivist and Heritage Services about:-

- The services they provide directly in Uttlesford and how these overlap with and/or complement those that the Council provides?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Uttlesford's work programme?
- What Uttlesford should do more/less of?
- How much ECC spends directly in Uttlesford, compared with other districts and how much officer time is designated to work in the district?
- How well Uttlesford compares with other districts in terms of voluntary sector support and involvement in service delivery and what kind of support they seek?
- Details of the advisory assistance provided to Uttlesford's officers
- Any details regarding the future development of services and potential transfer of services to districts.

6 The meetings with County Council officers showed that Essex County Council undertakes virtually no activities itself in the field of leisure and culture. It draws up plans in consultation with districts and boroughs, which it then looks to the districts and boroughs to implement. The County Council officers said that, in their opinion, the District Council provides high quality services in all service areas. There are excellent working relationships between the officers of the two authorities and, consequently good partnership work is achieved. In all service areas, there was little duplication and a high degree of complementary and proactive joint working. The County Council has limited budgets in all service areas and some are being cut. As a result, it is constantly seeking partnership and grant funding to boost funds. It was considered important that there was a clearer understanding at a political level of the roles and responsibilities between the two authorities with regard to youth services. It was felt that there is scope and potential for continuing partnership and joint working in all service areas. Examples include marketing of the district, promotion of services and improving access/transport to facilities and services.

(b) Further Challenge Work

7 Officers have used previously obtained survey material to assess the leisure and recreation facilities and equipment available in each Town and Parish. It is clear that there is a huge variety of provision – from a small village green to recreation playing fields and changing rooms/pavilion; from child-friendly play areas to village and community halls. The MRG received details of the grants that the Council makes available to communities towards community facility development, improvement or refurbishment and/or the purchase of essential equipment.

8 Organisations and clubs who were invited to but unable to attend the Challenge Event were sent a Questionnaire. The results from the 12 that responded indicated a high degree of interaction between officers and various organisations on a range of activities, including liaising about use of the leisure centres, use of the TIC for the promotion of activities, fundraising through grant applications, professional advice and information provision on the development of projects, organising football events and training, engaging

tutors and professional coaches and artists and joint/project work. Whilst the majority of responders felt that the Council was best placed to provide leisure and cultural services it was suggested that improvements could be made in terms of publicity and promotion of services and targeting services to specific groups.

- 9 Respondees were of the opinion that “access to advice and guidance about funding and grant possibilities” was of high importance for clubs and organisations, whereas “advice and guidance about how to improve and develop their club/organisation” was least important. In terms of where work should be concentrated, “working with schools, clubs and organisations to enable them to develop their own activities/initiatives” was of high importance, whereas improving transport access to existing facilities such as Leisure Centres, Museum etc.” was of low importance. With regard to the question of whether the Council should support clubs and organisations in other ways e.g. through grants and by providing information about where to gain further support, respondents were of the opinion that the existing approach of supporting clubs, organisations, initiatives and projects through development staff was the most effective approach. It was considered that clubs and organisations do not have the resources to provide appropriate courses and training for its members/volunteers and that the council should work in partnership with other authorities to provide activities/projects to encourage healthier life styles.

(c) Museum

- 10 The Member Reference Group has met twice with the Museum Society’s Best Value Working Party, which has been established to work with the Council. The first meeting enabled the two parties to exchange background information about the review and existing Museum management arrangements. The Member Reference Group then explained some of the ideas that it wished to explore further with the Working Group including Trust Status, Charges and Income Generation and the further development of Museum services.
- 11 A verbal report about the outcome of the second meeting held on 5 September will be made at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

(d) Compare

- 12 Officers have proceeded with work to compare the Council’s services with other local authorities. They have received three responses to an early questionnaire sent out to eleven local authorities. Analysis of the details that have been received provide useful information about what other local authorities are doing to improve their services following Best Value reviews. Examples of improvements include enhanced use of IT, Transport/access to services, targeting and prioritisation of services meeting and Disability Discrimination Act requirements.
- 13 In addition, service specific questionnaires were sent to the eleven authorities that were sent the early questionnaire. These questionnaires were designed to compare the services provided for Sports Development, Arts Development,

Tourism and Leisure Management in terms of the Government's agenda of Community Safety, social inclusion, healthy living, lifelong learning, sustainability and community planning/local needs. Five of the eleven authorities have sent responses to date.

- 14 Regarding work carried out under the five headings, South Northants Council, Stratford District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are actively involved in initiatives and projects towards the government's agenda. Each has established active working partnerships to pursue relevant initiatives. Funding for initiatives comes from internal and external sources and examples of projects are similar to those carried out in this district – outreach sports work, arts programmes and workshops, advice on providing facilities, GP Referral scheme, coordinated tourism work. The responses have also provided a number of ideas that can be considered for introduction in the district e.g. local perspectives arts projects, various project for people with disabilities, leisure card etc.
- 15 Comparative work has been carried out with regards Charitable Status and Trust Status for Museums. The paper produced by the Curator as a result of this work is appended.

Fundamental/Specific Questions – Terms of Reference

- 16 The Scrutiny Committee expressed a wish at its meeting in April to refer back to the fundamental and specific questions posed in the original Terms of Reference during the course of the Review.

General Questions

- What is the Council wanting to achieve in future in relation to leisure and cultural services?
- Does the Council have a statutory obligation to provide the services? Are there any other specific obligations, e.g. contracts?
- If not should the Council cease to provide the services and, if so, what is its impact?
- If the services are to be continued are there better alternative ways to deliver the services – in-house, outsourcing, partnership, sponsorship?

Specific Questions

- Are we working to the greatest effect, with others, to bring real benefits to the Uttlesford community in terms of its access to leisure facilities?
- Are we providing an important complementary role to other service providers, e.g. the voluntary sector, ECC (youth/arts/cultural services), leisure centres and the tourism sector?
- Should we increase our focus on those requiring greatest support, e.g. disadvantaged young persons, those 'isolated' within the villages?
- How can the arts be developed with limited resources?
- Is there a better, more effective, way to run the Museum service, e.g. external support - charitable trust, Museum Society, grants, volunteers?
- Can the Museum service meet the requirements and demands on it with expected levels of resource availability?
- Are the Council's charging policies appropriate?

- 17 Officers have accessed the Audit Commission's Best Value website which provides details of inspections that have been carried out by their Best Value inspectors. The website provides over 150 examples of inspections that have been carried out of leisure and cultural services in 2002. The number of examples emphasises the wide range of services provided by different authorities under this banner.
- 18 The key messages from the inspections are that it is essential that councils are seen to set and maintain a clear direction for services. Judgements are made on how good the services are and whether they will improve. The Best Value Review should drive improvements and the Improvement Plan should be robust and challenging and provide for continuous improvement to the services.

Emerging Options for Improvement

- 19 At this stage in the review, a number of options for improvements to the services provided are beginning to emerge. The Chairman of the Member Reference Group will present the Group's views in an oral report at the meeting.

Further Work to be Done

- 20 Over the next month or two, the Challenge and Compare work will be completed. Work will be done to confirm aspects associated with the emerging options and a final report will be prepared for the Committee which will give the basic facts about the existing services, its recent and current performance, an improvement/action plan with dates for achievement.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee note the direction that the next stage of the Review is to take.

Background Papers: Best Value Review of Leisure & Cultural Services Files
(Held by Sarah McLagan)