

CABINET

Wednesday, 14 March 2018

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS FOR 2018/19 (REP1606)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Approve one year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to 31 March 2019, as outlined in Appendix A, to Disability Information Advice Line (DIAL) and Access Community Trust (ACT).
2. Two year Grant Agreement to 31st March 2019, to North East Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau (NES CAB) agreed by Cabinet 16 March 2017, in line with an agreement to top slice the yearly grant as part of a five year loan agreement to support the purchase of St. Margaret’s House as their new headquarters.
3. Two year joint Waveney District Council/Suffolk Coastal District Council SLA to the Association for Suffolk Museums at a cost of £2k pa per local authority, to 31 March 2019. Previously agreed at the Cabinet meeting 16 March 2017.
4. Approve the ring-fencing of any remaining SLA budget to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations (VCS) yet to be identified, that will deliver the gaps in services identified through the EqIA process on the Council’s behalf, to support the delivery of the East Suffolk Business Plan key priorities.
5. Approve delegated authority for the Cabinet Member to allocate ring-fenced funding to VCS Organisations through further SLAs once identified.
6. Note the decision to exempt Access Community Trust from Procurement Contract Procedure rules due to the variety of services they provide.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	The SLA/Grants support the local community across Waveney.
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Cabinet Member:	Councillor Stephen Ardley Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Merger & Communities
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Supporting Officer:	Richard Best East Suffolk Communities Officer 01502 523605 richard.best@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Each year the Council's East Suffolk Communities Team leads an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to identify and prioritise the most vulnerable communities within Waveney and those communities who are most in need of the Council's support. This informs the process to help identify which VCS organisations could deliver the required services and support on the Council's behalf to address the key issues and priorities and improve the quality of life to local people.
- 1.2 This EqIA has been reviewed and has been updated from 2017/18 and reflects the needs of Waveney communities. This will ensure that the SLA/Grant budget is utilised in the most effective way, in a challenging economic environment. The priorities for 2018/19 have been identified as follows:-
- Older People and Young People
 - Vulnerable people
 - People with disabilities including mental health issues
 - Protected characteristic groups
 - Volunteering.
- 1.3 It is considered that the essential services provided by the SLA recipients are best placed with the capacity, resources and expertise to deliver essential services including advice to some of Waveney's most vulnerable communities on the council's behalf. The Council would need to *gear up* to provide the additional services itself, if it did not enter into agreements with each of the four providers.

2 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

- 2.1.1 The SLA provision has assisted the Council in meeting the aims of the East Suffolk Business Plan priorities and ensures Value for Money (VfM) and the best use of its SLA/Grant budget. Our support for VCS Organisations acknowledges that they provide good value for money through their service delivery and project outcomes. SLA's assist the Council in developing partnerships, and engaging and empowering local people. The focus is to improve the quality of life of local citizens and communities and to promote access to services for all. The organisations listed below (section 7.3) have previously received one year SLA/Grant Agreements through the Council. They have demonstrated through regular monitoring that they meet the aims of the East Suffolk Business Plan and VfM requirements. Some of the work delivered by the partners also ensures that the Council meets its statutory objectives e.g. The Homelessness Reduction Act requires good partnership working.

3 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The budget for 2018/19 is £124k. It is recognised that the process ensures that those organisations delivering services on the Council's behalf have the necessary skills, capacity and experience to deliver a higher, competitive standard of service. The Council would otherwise need to provide the services itself at greater cost.
- 3.2 All VCS organisations must meet, as a minimum, the criteria for an SLA/grant. They must all have a Constitution and Terms of Reference, and can prove financial sustainability.
- 3.3 Individual SLA/grants are negotiated separately with each organisation to ensure best value, accountability and sustainability and these are updated and negotiated on an annual basis. The agreements are informed by a number of the Council's service teams to ensure that they contribute to the annual key objectives of the Council and its statutory requirements.

- 3.4 Data quality will be ensured through a robust monitoring process developed to ensure compliance with the SLA/grant.

4 OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 This report has been prepared taking into account the results of the current EqIA.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Council has consulted with the Waveney Housing Options team and the Revenues and Benefits Team to identify local priorities and vulnerable communities. The East Suffolk Communities Manager also held meetings with each of the current SLA/grant holders to review the monitoring information supplied, to make sure it is current and relevant for 2018/19.

6 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 For the Council not to provide an SLA/Grant budget. This was rejected on the basis that the Council, acting in its community leadership role, recognises the need to provide services to its diverse communities and promote access to services for all. It further resolved that it would actually prove to be more expensive were the Council to deliver these services itself.
- 6.2 A reduction in funding allocation to the main recipient organisations occurred in 2012/13. It has been decided for the last five years to maintain the current level of funding, due to increased demand resulting from changes to Housing Benefits Regulations, the introduction of Universal Credit, and the current economic climate and its effect on families. It is advised that for 2018-19 that the current level of funding is maintained to these organisations.

7 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The East Suffolk Communities Team have reviewed the EqIA process by scoping and sourcing information relating to the current priorities and needs of the local citizens and communities and trying to anticipate (or future proof) future demands and needs.
- 7.2 By working in partnership with the identified organisations through granting further SLAs, the Council will be better placed to meet its priorities, outcomes and targets through these organisations by delivering services to local communities. It is recognised that these preferred partners are better placed with the capacity and expertise to deliver effective services on the Council's behalf. The SLA/grants will ensure that direct support is provided to citizens and local communities and specific targets and outcomes will be agreed with service providers to include cross-cutting work e.g. volunteer support and provision, support to protected characteristic groups through improved understanding of cultures and beliefs, support to some of the Districts most vulnerable citizens, provision and support to the Waveney Disability Forum, and extended service provision in rural areas to meet the needs of older and young community groups.

7.3 NORTH EAST SUFFOLK CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (NESCAB)

A Grant Agreement is currently in place between NESCAB and the Council, which expires on 31 March 2018. The Council agreed to loan NESCAB £50,000 over 5 years to help the organisation purchase St. Margaret's House, Gordon Road, Lowestoft, as their new headquarters. The payback is made by reducing the current and ongoing grant of £77,940 by £10k per year, therefore reducing their annual grant to £67,940. A £10k reduction was put in place in 2016-17 so payback of the loan should be complete by 31st March 2021. However, at present it is suggested that the Grant Agreement is only extended to 31st March 2019 as it

would be difficult to commit beyond that time given elections in May 2019 and the establishment of a single Council for the East Suffolk in 2019.

We continue to work with NES CAB as follows:-

- We are working with partners county-wide to encourage further joined up working as part of an efficiency saving process by investigating further possible mergers of CABs with closer neighbours.
- We will continue to support NES CAB to access other external funding to ensure their sustainability, particularly in light of potential future year on year Council budget reductions.

7.4 DISABILITY INFORMATION AND ADVICE LINES (DIAL)

An SLA is currently in place between DIAL and the Council, which expires 31 March 2018. The reasons for requesting a one year SLA are as follows:-

- We will continue to work closely with DIAL to look at efficiency savings whilst being aware of an increase in demand for their service due to changes to the Disability Living Allowance and the increasing number of citizens presenting with dual issues including mental health issues.
- We will support DIAL to access other external funding to ensure their sustainability and to increase capacity support for communities in the Waveney District particularly in light of potential future year on year Council budget reductions.

7.5 ACCESS COMMUNITY TRUST (ACT)

An SLA is currently in place between ACT and the Council, which expires 31 March 2018. The reasons for requesting a one year SLA are as follows:-

- We will encourage ACT to work across Waveney to encourage further joined up working as part of an efficiency saving process, in particular by reducing duplication in terms of similar services proposed by other groups and organisations.
- We will support ACT to access other external funding to ensure their sustainability and to increase capacity support for communities in the Waveney District, particularly in light of potential future year on year Council budget restrictions.

In previous years it was reported to Cabinet that the East Suffolk Communities Team were working closely with the Procurement Team in regards to procurement and commissioning as part of the SLA process to ensure compliance with the new Public Contract Regulations 2015, UK Law and the Council's contract Procedure Rules.

Due to the specialist and varied work carried out by ACT they have been awarded an exemption from Contract Procedure Rules. The Council will not have to seek annual procurement of the SLA.

7.6 ASSOCIATION FOR SUFFOLK MUSEUMS

A joint Waveney district council/Suffolk coastal district council three year SLA is currently in place with the Association for Suffolk museums, which expires 31st March 2018. The cost to each authority is £2k per annum. However, for reasons provided above in regards to NES CAB, it was recommended that a two year SLA was granted to 31 March 2019.

The Association for Suffolk museums is the strategic body for museums in the county, a registered charity and a membership organisation. The association acts as a museums' representative in strategic consultations within and beyond the county, is the advocate for the sector and the means of attracting resources for and managing joint projects and services

in an impartial manner. There are over forty museums in Suffolk with the majority being in the east. Three quarters of these are operated and led by volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the process of identifying and awarding one year SLAs with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Organisations to 31 March 2019, as outlined in Appendix A, be noted.
2. That one year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to 31 March 2019, as outlined in Appendix A for DIAL and ACT be approved.
3. That the two year Grant Agreement with NES CAB to 31st March 2019 and approved previously by Cabinet, in line with an agreement to slice the yearly grant as part of a five year loan agreement supporting the purchase of St. Margaret's House as their new headquarters be noted.
4. That the two year grant agreement with the Association for Suffolk Museums to 31st March 2019 and approved previously by Cabinet be approved.
5. That the Cabinet Member for Merger and Communities be awarded delegated authority to allocate any remaining ring-fenced funding to VCS Organisations through further SLAs once identified, providing this addresses any gaps in services identified through the EqIA process and to support delivery of the East Suffolk Business Plan key priorities, be approved.
6. That the work of the East Suffolk Communities Team supported by the Procurement Team, to exempt Access Community Trust from Contract Procedure Rules be noted.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Matrix – Financial spreadsheet 2018-19

BACKGROUND PAPERS Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

Date	Type	Available From
February 2018	Equality Impact Assessment	East Suffolk Communities Team