



Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Resources And Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny Review of the Provision of Funding and Funding Advice from the Council to the voluntary & community sector

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Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Resources And Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny Review of the provisions of funding and funding advice from the Council to the voluntary and community sector

1. Introduction By The Chair

It is with pleasure that we jointly present to the Council, the Resources and Community Services Scrutiny Panel's report on Funding and Funding Advice, a review that has spanned two municipal years.

Tameside Council and our various partners are responsible for both distributing and helping to secure many millions of pounds of grants to local community groups and organisations throughout the Borough. Our review has principally focused on the variety of funding available, accessibility of funding advice, the assistance available externally, and, importantly, the signposting to that help.

We have, again, attempted to produce a comprehensive and informative report, including detailed comparisons with other authorities, and hope that the Panel's findings will be able to inform an ongoing debate on both funding and funding advice in Tameside.

Once again, we would like to place on record our thanks and appreciation to the officers and witnesses who gave valuable evidence to the Panel during this review. Thanks also to the Scrutiny Support Team for their commitment and hard work, and to all the Panel members, including Mr. John Barlow, for their active and ongoing involvement in the review.



Councillor Bernard Walsh (Chair 2004/05)



Councillor Andrew Gwynne (Chair 2003/04)



Councillor
B Walsh
2004/05



Councillor
A J Gwynne
2003/04

2. Summary

- 2.1 The members of the Scrutiny Panel undertook this review in response to a request from a member of the public.
- 2.2 The Council currently has three funds specifically for the voluntary and community sector and has a number of contracts with voluntary and community groups for the provision of some council services. Local groups can also seek financial assistance from the District Assemblies and from the Councillors' ward monies.
- 2.3 Sports and leisure clubs (which includes community and voluntary clubs) also receive Discretionary Rate Relief, and registered charities receive Mandatory Rate Relief and Discretionary top-up rate relief for Business Rates.
- 2.4 The Council does not provide a specific advice service although it supports voluntary and community groups in applying for a number of external funds for example the European Social Fund, or funds provided through various partnerships such as the Tameside Valley Partnership.
- 2.5 Voluntary and community groups can also receive funding advice from 'umbrella' groups in the borough – the recognised Council for Voluntary Services, the Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC), which employs a full time Funding Advice Worker; and the Tameside Association of Community Organisations.
- 2.6 Consultation with voluntary and community groups raised issues over the adequacy of the Council's information and signposting systems but also highlighted a good level of satisfaction with the services available from the T3SC.
- 2.7 The Panel's research found that improvements could be made to the decision-making process for the three main funds and to the information and signposting arrangements used by voluntary and community groups.

3. Membership Of The Panel

2003/04

Councillor Andrew Gwynne (Chair), Councillor P Harrison (Deputy Chair), Councillors Duffy, A Holland, M J Smith, Walsh, Welsh and K Wright.

2004/05

Councillor B Walsh (Chair), Councillor P Harrison (Deputy Chair), Councillors Hill, A Holland, M J Smith, Wareing, Welsh and K Wright.

4. Terms Of Reference

The following Terms of Reference and objectives for the Review were approved by the Panel at its meeting held on 27th November 2003.

Terms of Reference

“To review the policies and provision of funding and funding advice given by the Council”.

Objectives

- A. To produce accurate information on the provision of funding and advice available by the Council.**
- B. To clarify and assess how the Council determines the distribution of funding and provision of advice.**
- C. To assess the experience of voluntary groups in seeking funding and funding advice.**
- D. To evaluate the Council’s information systems and the effectiveness of ‘signposting’.**
- E. To review the Council’s monitoring arrangements.**

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The Panel invited Mr. John Barlow, a representative of the voluntary and community sector to join the Panel for the duration of this review.
- 5.2 The Panel met with the Cabinet Deputy for Community Services, in order to discuss current policies with regard to funding and funding advice provided by the Council.
- 5.3 Members of the Panel met with the Council’s Community Economic Development Manager and Head of Policy and Performance to receive background information about the Tameside Compact and the Council’s priorities.
- 5.4 Members of the Panel met with the Funding Advice Worker from the Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC), the recognised Council for Voluntary Service in Tameside.
- 5.5 The Panel met with the Sports Services Manager and Head of Youth Service as funding providers.

- 5.6 The Panel received information regarding the criteria for distribution of funds and providing advice, links made to Council priorities and the promotion of equal access.
- 5.7 The Panel received information from the Service Unit Manager for Exchequer and Community Services responsible for Business Rates about the Council's contribution to Rate Relief for eligible voluntary and community groups.
- 5.8 At a meeting of the Panel members were invited to navigate the Council's website together with those of neighbouring authorities and other 'excellent' councils in order to compare information available to organisations.
- 5.9 The Scrutiny Panel undertook consultation with voluntary and community groups in the borough through a telephone survey. The survey requested views of the groups with regard to the current processes for obtaining funding and advice and invited suggestions for improvements.
- 5.10 As a follow up exercise to the telephone survey the Scrutiny Panel undertook a discussion groups with local community groups in the borough.

6. Background Information

- 6.1 An earlier consultation exercise carried out by the T3SC with 100 local voluntary and community groups found that funding was a particular concern for many. When asked what kind of help was required 69% said 'funding' above all other issues and placed 'funding' at the top of the list of needs of voluntary and community groups in Tameside. The top three types of information requested were 'finding funders', 'making funding bids', and 'income generation'.
- 6.2 Voluntary and community groups in Tameside receive funding from a variety of council services, which are the responsibility of a number of Cabinet Deputies. Community Development falls within the remit of the Cabinet Deputy for Community Services. The Council's Economic Development Unit works with local umbrella groups, including the T3SC, to develop the voluntary and community sector and has helped to lead the development of the 'Compact', the partnership agreement between the voluntary and community sector and public agencies.
- 6.3 Voluntary and community groups in Tameside receive funding from the Council in the form of grants or contracts.
- 6.4 There are three key funds, which are available to the community and voluntary sector in the form of grants from the Council. These funds cover recreational activities and general start-up and maintenance costs.

6.5 The table below is a summary of these funds:

Name of fund	Purpose	Current annual budget 2004/05
Sports Club Development Fund	50% of total cost of work/equipment up to £15,000	£200,000
Education Charities and Grants to Voluntary Bodies and Sporting Individuals	£500 for any individual to attend a competition or event, £200 start-up grant for new clubs, £1000 for clubs serving a large number of schools	£13,220
Starter and Maintenance Grant	Starter Grant of £100 to new organisations and 25% Maintenance Grant to assist with building running costs	£30,000
Total available 2004/05		£243,220

6.6 The financial information used in this report is from 2002/03 and is the most recent information available in detail. A break down of figures for 2003/04 has not yet been finalised.

6.7 Both the Sports Club Development Fund and the Education Charities and Grants to Voluntary Bodies and Sporting Individuals have been under spent in recent years and funds carried forward in to the next financial year. A decision has recently been made by the Council that future under spends will no longer be carried forward.

6.8 Although not exclusively for the provision of small grants to community and voluntary groups funding can be obtained through District Assembly Discretionary Fund and Ward Monies. The combined annual budget for these funds is £231,000. Any fund remaining from the previous year is carried forward.

6.9 Currently sporting and leisure organisations are granted Discretionary Rate Relief from Business Rates based on a set criteria developed from Government Guidelines. This is funded by Central Government (75%) and TMBC (25%). TMBC is contributing £38,500 to Discretionary Rate Relief.

6.10 Registered charities receive Mandatory Top-up Relief of 80% funded by Central Government. The extra Discretionary Top Up Relief of 20% is funded by TMBC (75%) and by Central Government (25%). There are no qualifying criteria but groups need to be a registered charities. The contribution from TMBC to funding discretionary top-up relief is currently £153,000.

6.11 In terms of publicising this financial assistance, information about applying for DRR and top up relief is sent with Rate Bills. The Service Unit Manager for Exchequer and Community Services described the arrangements as

more reactive than proactive. No information is specifically sent to T3SC or TACO although as both groups receive Discretionary Top Up Relief they must be aware of it and could pass information to other voluntary and community groups.

- 6.12 There are two organisations in Tameside that receive Hardship Rate Relief because they do not qualify for either kind of Rate Relief (i.e. are not a sporting/leisure club or a registered charity).
- 6.13 The Inland Revenue has developed a new scheme called the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme. All sporting and leisure clubs that previously received Discretionary Rate Relief are being encouraged to sign up to the scheme and would be eligible for Mandatory Rate Relief and the Discretionary Rate Relief currently received by registered charities. The Council has recently written to all relevant clubs in Tameside about the new scheme. This would save the Council around £40,000 per year by no longer having to contribute to Discretionary Rate Relief.
- 6.14 Voluntary and community groups can access a limited level of advice about funding from the Council. At the time the Scrutiny Panel was researching this subject, the Economic Development Unit provided advice about lottery funds jointly with the T3SC. The Panel has been informed that this is now entirely provided by the T3SC.
- 6.15 Voluntary and community groups in Tameside can access information either from the EDU, the T3SC or Tameside Association of Community Organisations (TACO).
- 6.16 Tameside Association of Community Organisations was formed in 1978 and is a Member Federation of the national organisation Community Matters. TACO is a voluntary organisation and receives funding from Tameside Council in the form of a Headquarters Grant of £1000. TACO worked closely with the Youth and Community Service and specialized in helping community organisations and community centers with constitutional matters, leases, training etc. TACO also provides free access to Funderfinder and other funding packages.
- 6.17 The Tameside Third Sector Coalition is the voluntary group partnership behind the Tameside Compact, which was launched in April 2002. Out of the development of the Compact it was recognised that an infrastructure agency was needed to deliver support to the voluntary and community sector to enable it to grow in size and strength. The Compact set out how the Council and the voluntary and community sector will work in partnership for the interests of the local community. T3SC was constituted in 2002 and established as Tameside's Council for Voluntary Services in late 2002.
- 6.18 The T3SC helps groups become established and developed by providing funding support, training and supports the voluntary sector networks and

lobbys on a regional and national level for the voluntary sector in Tameside. The T3SC also provides one access point for information and advice for voluntary and community groups, including funding information and advice, and be an access point for officers and members wishing to refer groups seeking advice.

- 6.19 Following a report to Executive Board in February 2004, in which it was recommended that the consideration be given to a three-year contract for funding the shortfall in finance that the T3SC will require, this Scrutiny Panel was requested to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Tameside Third Sector Coalition. Information gathered as part of the review has been used to inform the Panel in relation to this review where this is relevant.
- 6.20 In an initial meeting with Mr Andrew Mason, Assistant Executive Director Sustainable Communities and Mr Phil Spence, Economic Development Manager it was felt that the transparency of the application and decision making process involved in each of the council's grants should be included in the Panel's research.
- 6.21 This was also a view shared by the Funding Advice Worker employed by the Tameside Third Sector Coalition. The Funding Advice Worker was of the opinion that groups feel that applying to the council for grants is not always an open process, an although repeated grants are important to the sustainability of local groups, there was a feeling that grants are awarded to favoured organisations. This may also be because new organisations in particular are not aware of what funds are available and so only groups that are aware actually apply. The Funding Advice Worker felt that the system would be improved through greater transparency and accountability from the council in terms of justifying why applications are successful or not.
- 6.22 At a pre-scope background meeting, the Panel was informed in a meeting with the Head of Policy and Performance and the Council's Community Economic Development Manager, that funding of the voluntary and community sector is important in Tameside as there is the recognition that the sector is better placed to carry out some services than the Council (for example, voluntary groups often have well-established links with the community and access to target groups). The Voluntary sector should be helped to attract funding from sources outside the Council as a way of helping themselves become self-sufficient and more sustainable in the long term. This is particularly important if the number of voluntary and community groups in the borough is to be increased. However, a problem with short term funding of the voluntary sector was highlighted.
- 6.23 Helping the voluntary and community sector attract funding also helps the Council achieve its priorities. Bids to external funds by voluntary groups are only supported if the Council feels there is a gap in provision. Often a community's perceived solution is not the most effective and the Council can help groups develop more sustainable response to problems.

Moreover, the Council is proactive in encouraging existing groups to apply for funding when this will help the Council achieve its priorities.

7. Funding Sources And Advice

7.1 Grants

7.1.1 District Assembly Ward Monies and District Assembly Discretionary Fund

The annual budget for Ward Monies totals £57,000 annually, with each of the 19 Wards in Tameside being allocated £3000. Together with monies carried over from a previous year an amount of £87,570 was available in 2002/03.

7.1.2 The District Assembly Discretionary Fund has an annual budget of £174,000. Additional funds carried over from the previous year meant that £266,670 was available in 2002/03.

7.1.3 There is no written criteria for receiving District Assembly discretionary budget and ward monies. Requests for funds are made to the DAs either directly through a local Councillor or via a council officer. These requests are considered by the Leader of the Council who can support or question the application.

7.1.4 Information from the DA financial records, which include use of ward monies, shows that these funds are being used to support locally identified need and this includes the activities of community groups.

7.1.5 The following grants are available to the voluntary and community sector directly from Tameside MBC: -

7.1.6 Education Charities and Grants to Sporting Individuals and Voluntary Bodies

£500 for any individual to attend a competition and £200 - £1000 available to new or established clubs or any association serving a large number of schools or clubs. The annual budget for this grant is £13,220. Funds carried forward from the previous year meant a total of £35,861 was available in 2002/03. At the end of 2002/03, £17,676 remained. A decision has recently been made by the Council that this and future underspends will no longer be carried forward.

7.1.7 The Council's Grants to Sporting Individuals and Voluntary Bodies have detailed criteria for application and terms and conditions are applied to the use of funds.

7.1.8 The grants are aimed at providing opportunities for young people (through financial support for individuals and clubs) and training for volunteers, both of which are council priorities.

7.1.9 **Sports Club Development Fund**

Grants are available to clubs who can demonstrate a commitment to developing opportunities for young people. This fund has an annual budget of £153,000. A total of £1450 remained in the fund at the end of 2002/03.

7.1.10 The Council's Sports Club Development Fund also has criteria for application and terms and conditions are attached to the allocated funds.

7.1.11 The grant is also aimed at developing opportunities for young people in the borough by supporting new or expanding sports clubs.

7.1.12 Applications are received by the Officer responsible for the grant and recommendations are made to the Cabinet Deputy for Community Services for approval. Written explanations for failed and successful applications are produced and made available to applicants.

7.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel was informed at a meeting with the Sports Services Manager that the decision making process would change with the anticipated creation of a Sports Federation in the borough. This would make the process more transparent and is likely to include a range of stakeholders.

7.1.14 The Sports Services Manager explained that the emphasis of the Sports Club Development Fund is on larger clubs. Clubs apply for funds to cover 50% of costs of a planned project and receive a grant from the fund when the project is complete. Smaller clubs are not often in a position to spend large amounts of their own funds even if they are available. The Sports Services Manager explained that applications under £1000 receive 75% of the total cost and allowances can be made to small organisation to provide the grant before any costs are incurred.

7.1.15 The grant is not actively targeted at particular types of groups or groups from particular areas. The service is aware that there are gaps in terms of which groups from across the borough apply for the grant. This is being addressed as part of the improvement of the Sports Development service.

7.1.16 **Starter and Maintenance Grant (also includes Headquarter Grant)**

A starter grant of £100 (to increase to £200 in 2004/05) is available to newly formed organisations/groups. A maintenance grant of 25% (to increase to 30% in 2004/05) towards the related running costs of the organisation/group. Up to 2004/05 the annual budget for this fund had been £19,000 with the total fund allocated each year. The annual budget for this fund has now increased to £30,000.

- 7.1.17 The Council's Starter and Maintenance Grant is traditionally aimed at 'uniformed groups' for young people. A Starter Grant of £500 is available to any organisations whose activities are targeted at young people. A Maintenance grant of 25% is available towards the costs of maintaining buildings owned by community groups. A Head Quarters Grant is also available for "a branch or local network of a national organisation which is active throughout the whole of the area...and whose activities are in line with the Authority's Community Education policy" (extract from criteria and condition for the grant). These have traditionally been allocated to the Tameside Association of Voluntary Youth Organisations, the Tameside Association of Community Organisations, and the main Scouts and Guides bases in the area.
- 7.1.18 The decision making body for these grants is a Grants Panel. The Council formed the Grants Panel in the 1970s. The current Chair of the Grants Panel represents the Indian Community Centre in Ashton-under-Lyne and has been Chair of the Grants Panel for twelve years. Other members of the Grants Panel represent the Girl Guides, Tameside Association of Voluntary Youth Organisation, and TACO. This membership has been in place for around ten years.
- 7.1.19 The Chair of the Grants Panel explained that membership is open to any who wish to join and members are appointed. However, officers feel that there is no clear mechanism for nominating and appointing individuals to the Panel.
- 7.1.20 The current criteria and application procedure was developed by the previous Head of the Youth Service. It is a very strict criteria and the Panel adhere to the requirements of the Grant to the letter.
- 7.1.21 The annual budget of the Panel used to be as much as £50,000 per year but was reduced over the years to £19,000 per year. This was largely due to the nationwide cuts in Council spending in the 1980s. The Leader of the Council has recently agreed to increase this to £30,000 per year.
- 7.1.22 Under the old Council structure the Panel made recommendations to the Council for the allocation of grants, which were then approved by the Education Committee. The Council Administration Officer supporting the Grants Panel explained that these recommendations are now minuted as final decisions and do not go to any officer or elected member for approval. The Head of the Youth Service authorises the invoices but does not verify the decisions of the Panel.
- 7.1.23 A record of grants awarded is kept in a ledger book. The Council's finance section records these allocations under the cost centre for the grant. When gathering financial information about the Starter and Maintenance grant for the purposes of this review it emerged that the grants had not been recorded under the correct cost centre and it therefore appeared that the total budget available had not been allocated. However, the situation

had now been rectified and an improved system for recording allocations has been introduced.

7.1.24 The Chair of the Panel explained that he was confident that the Panels recommendations are based on thorough consideration of the criteria for the grants and the information presented by applicants. The process is very open and every effort is made to be fully accountable. All meetings are minuted, members of the Panel declare an interest and often leave the meeting when applications for certain groups are considered, the Panels own accounts are open for inspection.

7.1.25 To ensure that all of the money available is allocated to local groups (as any remaining funds cannot be carried over to the following year) members of the Grants Panel actively target groups to encourage applications. These are generally groups that have applied in the past.

7.1.26 There are also other potential sources of funding available to community and voluntary groups from external sources, which are distributed by partnerships of which the Council is a member. As a partner the Council proactively assists local groups in applying for these funds. Examples include:

- The Tame Valley Partnership allocates funds from the 'Single Regeneration Budget', to voluntary groups
- The Tameside Early Years and Childcare Partnership receives a grant from the Department for Education and Skills which it distributes to providers of childcare for the voluntary sector and private sector

7.2 Contracts

7.2.1 Most large grants given to voluntary and community groups in the past have been transformed into contracts to provide services which the Council cannot do or where it is more cost effective for the Council to contract these services to other bodies. Contracts are a legal documents and often time-limited therefore, providing greater means for the Council to ensure the provision of quality services.

7.2.2 The Council has 20 contracts with the voluntary sector for the provision of Social Services, Community Legal Services and for support to childcare providers. The annual value of those contracts is just over £1.4m with contract ranges from 12 months to three years. Some examples of those contracts are:

- Off the Record (for the provision of counselling advice for young people)
- Tameside Citizen Advice Bureau (for the provision of citizen advice including welfare rights, employment rights and advocacy work)
- Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (for the provision of advice and support to immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees)

- Tameside Racial Equalities Council (for the provision of casework support for individuals of racial harassment and the provision of strategic leadership for BME groups within Tameside)
- Tameside Victim Support (for the provision of support to people who are victims of crime; extensively involved with families of victims of Dr Shipman)

- 7.2.3 Some contracts are provided jointly with other local stakeholders, for example, Tameside and Glossop Association of MIND are jointly commissioned by TMBC, the Tameside and Glossop Primary Care Trust and Derbyshire County Council to provide information, advice and guidance, publicity, drop-in duty service, day service and co-ordination of volunteers.
- 7.2.4 The response from Social Services as to why the service chooses to enter contracts with voluntary groups was that they “offer desired services within a best value framework of cost and quality...All contracted services are based on an evaluation of the needs of children or adults within the borough” (comment from the Head of Strategy and Support, Social Services).
- 7.2.5 Contracts for Community Legal Services have been awarded on a ‘preferred provider’ basis. When CLS was launched in Tameside many legal advice and support services were provided by voluntary organisations, particularly where these services were targeted at minority or vulnerable groups for example Tameside Racial Equalities Council and Tameside Victim Support.
- 7.2.6 Preferred providers were also identified for supporting community and private sector childcare providers. At the time these were the only providers of this type of advice in the borough. Contracts were put in place to ensure that the organisations would provide a specific level of service in the borough to enable the Council to achieve the targets set by the DfES.
- 7.2.7 The Scrutiny Panel has since learned that two of the three contracts have not been renewed. One is being reviewed and will be finalised in September.

7.3 Funding Advice

- 7.3.1 Funding and funding advice providers were asked to provide information about the criteria for grants or how the provision of advice is decided. Providers were also asked to demonstrate how the funding and advice available supports council policy.
- 7.3.2 The Economic Development Unit (EDU) promotes take up of external funding sources by both council services and external groups including the voluntary and community sector.

- 7.3.3 The only grants administered by the EDU are awarded to businesses by the Tameside Business Environment Association project for businesses to make environmental improvements, the Green Routes to Work project, the Social Enterprise Support project, and e-tameside. Voluntary groups may be eligible to apply for these grants if they fulfill the business criteria.
- 7.3.4 The EDU traditionally supports applications to the following sources of funding:
- **European Social Fund** – funding for training, human resources and equal opportunities schemes to help people become more employable.
 - **European Regional Development Fund** – funding to improve economic prosperity and social inclusion through projects, which promote the diversification of industry into other sectors in areas lagging behind. Funds are allocated to the 10% most deprived wards. In Tameside these funds are administered by the Ashton Renewal Partnership and the Hattersley Development Trust.
 - **Lotteries** – the EDU provides support to Council service areas and other agencies (e.g. schools) in applying for lottery funding. Support is also available to voluntary and community groups for applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England and the Arts Council. Groups are signposted to the Tameside Third Sector Coalition for help with applying for the Community Fund and Awards for All.
- 7.3.5 Information is also disseminated and bids are supported by the EDU on other European funding initiatives such as Leonardo, Interreg and EQUAL.
- 7.3.6 The 'Northwest Network' organisation is the first point of contact for the voluntary and community sector for information on the European Social Fund (ESF). The Northwest Network receives funding from ESF to encourage applications for European funding from the voluntary and community sector.
- 7.3.7 The Unit can also offer general advice about other sources of funding and is often the first point of contact for groups seeking funding although this is for historical reasons rather than as a specific service.
- 7.3.8 The Unit is also responsible for ensuring effective partnership working with other voluntary sector support groups such as TACO and the T3SC.
- 7.3.9 The Funding Advice worker of the T3SC supports voluntary and community groups seeking and applying for funding directly or by attending on the T3SC funding advice drop in sessions or seminars.
- 7.3.10 Information about funding sources is received by T3SC directly from funders, from voluntary and community sector networks and from the Council.

- 7.3.11 The Economic Development Unit works closely with council's services and voluntary and community groups to attract funding in order to meet the needs of the community as identified in the Community Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy. Information and advice about funding is provided as part of these specific projects.
- 7.3.12 The funding advice and assistance provided by the EDU supports the Council's policies of supporting the voluntary and community sector and developing the labour market in the borough, and contributes towards the Council's Community Strategy and Economic Development Strategy.
- 7.3.13 The direct provision of funding advice from the Council is limited to advice about specific external funding bodies. Voluntary and community sector umbrella groups, such as the T3SC and TACO, are the main sources of information and advice for the sector. The EDU will direct the majority of queries for general assistance to these umbrella groups.

Conclusions

1. The Panel welcomes the anticipated creation of the Sports Federation in Tameside if it leads to the awarding of sporting related grants in a more transparent way.
2. The Starter and Maintenance Grant panel does not include representation from either Council Officers or Elected Members. Its decisions however regarding the allocation of council funding are implemented without further approval or verification. Although the propriety of the members of the grants panel is not doubted, without this additional representation the panel may be seen to be acting beyond the powers of non-elected representatives.
3. The formula for allocating the Starter and Maintenance Grant has remained relatively unchanged and the Scrutiny Panel supports the Head of the Youth Service desire to review the purpose and management of this grant.
4. The grants available are used to support council priorities although there is an emphasis on supporting young people largely through sporting activities.
5. Grant managers should be aware of the recent Council decision that any underspend for these grants will no longer be carried forward in to the next financial year with the consequence that any underspending of the budget will mean less support for the voluntary and community sector.

Conclusions continued

6. The members of the grant panel awarding the Starter and Maintenance Grant have been proactive in ensuring that the annual budget for the fund has been allocated each year although similar organisations have been contacted each year, However the Scrutiny Panel is aware that the grants panel has been operating with minimal administrative support from the Council.
7. There appears to be effective monitoring of contracts with the voluntary and community sector for the provision of council services, which reflects the authorities priorities.
8. The Panel acknowledges that whilst the funding advice available from the council is limited and is not provided as a specific service, the Council works with other agencies in the borough, which provide this assistance.
9. That the financial advantages to the Council of eligible organizations taking up the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme, are clearly tangible and should be encouraged.

Recommendations

1. That the inclusion of other stakeholders in the decision-making process for sporting related grants be considered when the process is transferred to the proposed Sports Federation.
2. That the Membership of the Starter and Maintenance Grant Panel be reviewed to include representation of Council Officers, Elected Members and other relevant stakeholders.
3. That grant providers aim to ensure that the total budget available is allocated each year to maximize the benefit to the voluntary and community sector.
4. That the Head of the Youth Service in conjunction with the Starter and Maintenance grants panel undertake a review of the grant and if necessary recommend any amendments to the Cabinet Deputy for Community Services.
5. That the Service Unit Manager, Exchequer and Community Services, be recommended to explore with appropriate services, incentives to encourage eligible organizations to take up the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Scrutiny Panel undertook two consultation exercises with local voluntary and community groups as part of this review. The first of these, a telephone survey, covered two related Scrutiny reviews – the review of the provision of funding and funding advice by Tameside Council to the voluntary and community sector, and also the review of the effectiveness of the Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC) on behalf of the Executive Board.
- 8.2 Feedback from voluntary and community groups about the service provided by the T3SC is included in this report where it has bearing on the provision of funding advice provided directly by the council and how the council works with external agencies to ensure voluntary and community groups can access funding advice.
- 8.3 The telephone survey was carried out with two hundred randomly selected local voluntary and community organisations on the database of around 800 organisations held by the Tameside Third Sector Coalition.
- 8.4 A private market research company, PH Research (Oldham), was commissioned to carry out this survey.
- 8.5 The telephone interviews covered the following issues:
- Awareness of funding and funding advice available from the Council
 - Experience of accessing funding and funding advice from the Council
 - Preferences for contacting the Council about funding and funding advice
 - Use of the Council’s website
 - The support available from the Tameside Third Sector Coalition, including experience of this support, outcomes and suggested improvements.
- 8.6 The telephone survey was complemented by a discussion group with representatives from local community groups. Representatives were identified from the library database of local community groups and were also recruited at an event held by the T3SC at Hyde Town Hall. Five community group representatives attended the discussion group along with four members of the Scrutiny Panel.
- 8.7 The workshop included discussion of the financial demands on community organisations and the general experience of applying for funding. This helped the members of the Scrutiny Panel at the meeting have a better appreciation of the funding needs of local groups.

What costs? The following examples were given:

- Stationary and postage
- Rent and utility bills
- Insurance
- Advertising
- Transport
- Food and other refreshments
- Equipment
- Maintenance of buildings and equipment

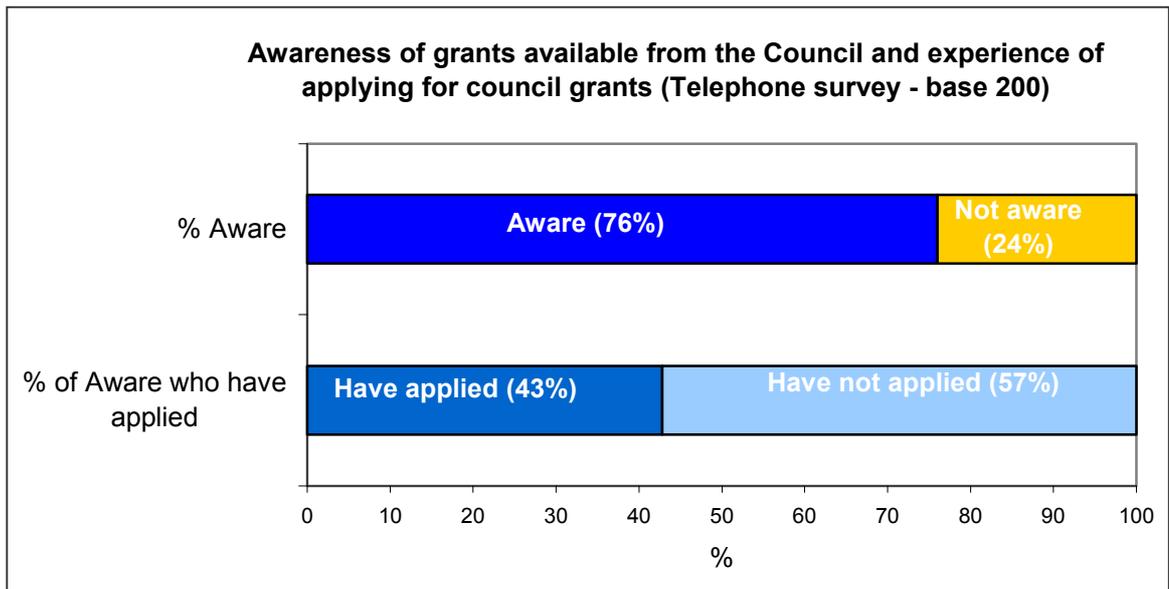
'Wish lists' included capital expenditure and IT equipment.

Finding funding: what's it like? The group described the experience and the process in the following ways:

- Panic!
- Frustration
- Can be personally expensive (if money can't be found from elsewhere)
- Minefield of paperwork
- Time-consuming
- Initially isolated and not supported (when the group is new and does not know where to go for help)
- Lots of information available but most not relevant

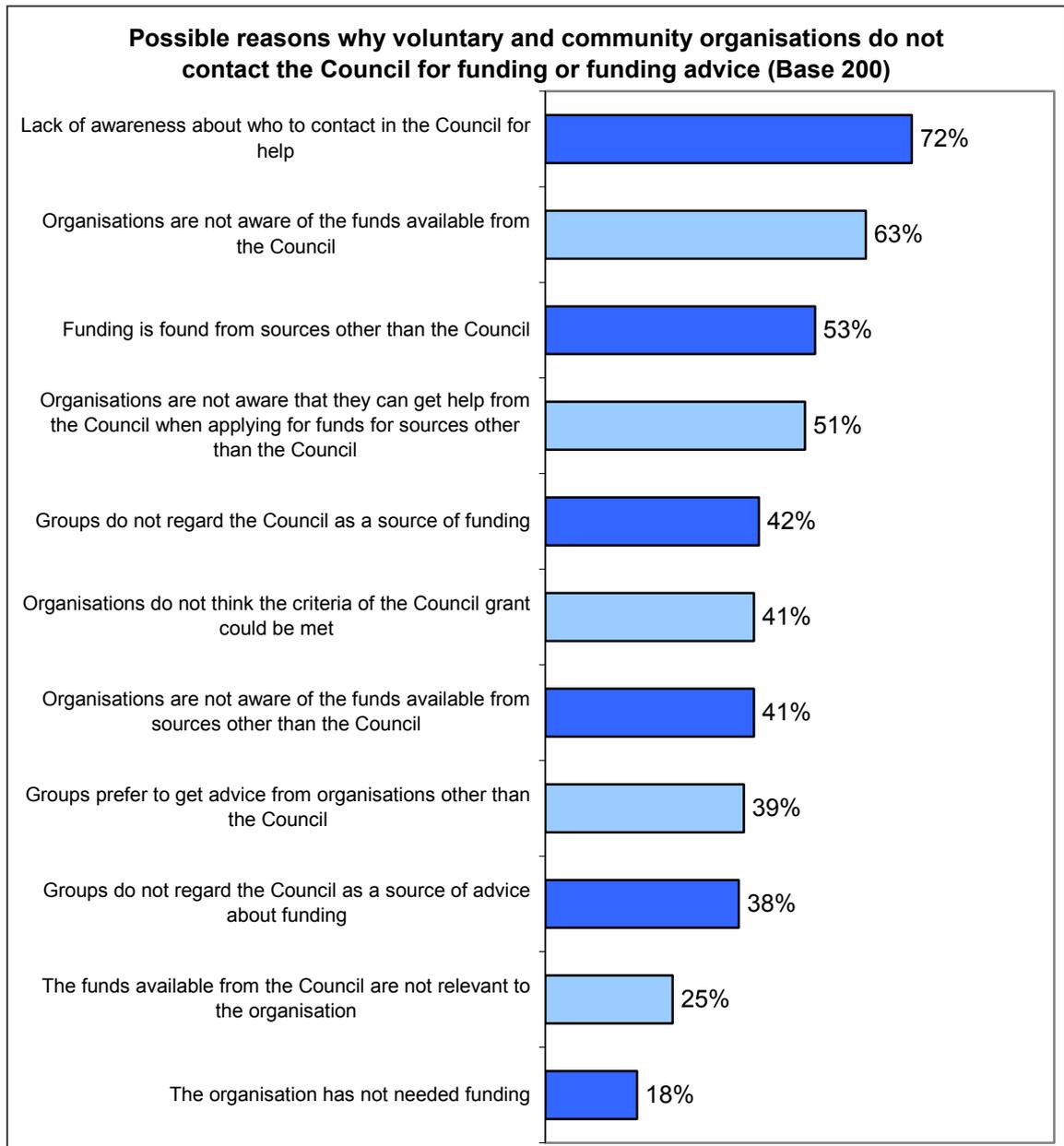
8.8 The results of both consultation exercises indicated that the majority of organisations were aware of the grants available from the Council. However, of those responding to the telephone survey that said they were aware of the grants, less than half have ever applied (Chart 1).

Chart 1



- 8.9 Feedback about the application process from those organisations, which had applied to the Council for funding, was generally positive. For the telephone survey, three quarters of respondents found the application process straightforward, and that it did not take up too much of their time. However only half of those applying felt they were aware of who was involved in the decision-making process.
- 8.10 Of those organisations that took part in the telephone survey and had received funding from the Council, the great majority had been asked to account for how this funding had been used although some claim not to have been asked or were unsure.
- 8.11 The telephone survey indicated that voluntary and community groups generally do not approach the Council for information about funding not provided directly by the council. Just under a fifth of those asked have ever approached the Council for information about non-Council funding.
- 8.12 All organisations taking part in the telephone survey were asked to consider a series of possible reasons why voluntary and community groups may not approach the Council for funding or funding advice. Chart 2 below shows how far organisations feel these possible reasons explain any lack of contact with the Council.

Chart 2



8.13 The main reasons given as to why voluntary and community groups may not approach the Council for funding or funding advice were lack of awareness about who to contact and what funding is available, and that groups find funding from other sources than the Council. In the discussion group a number of other sources of funding were mentioned including the Primary Care Trust, 'parent' organisations and Gift Aid.

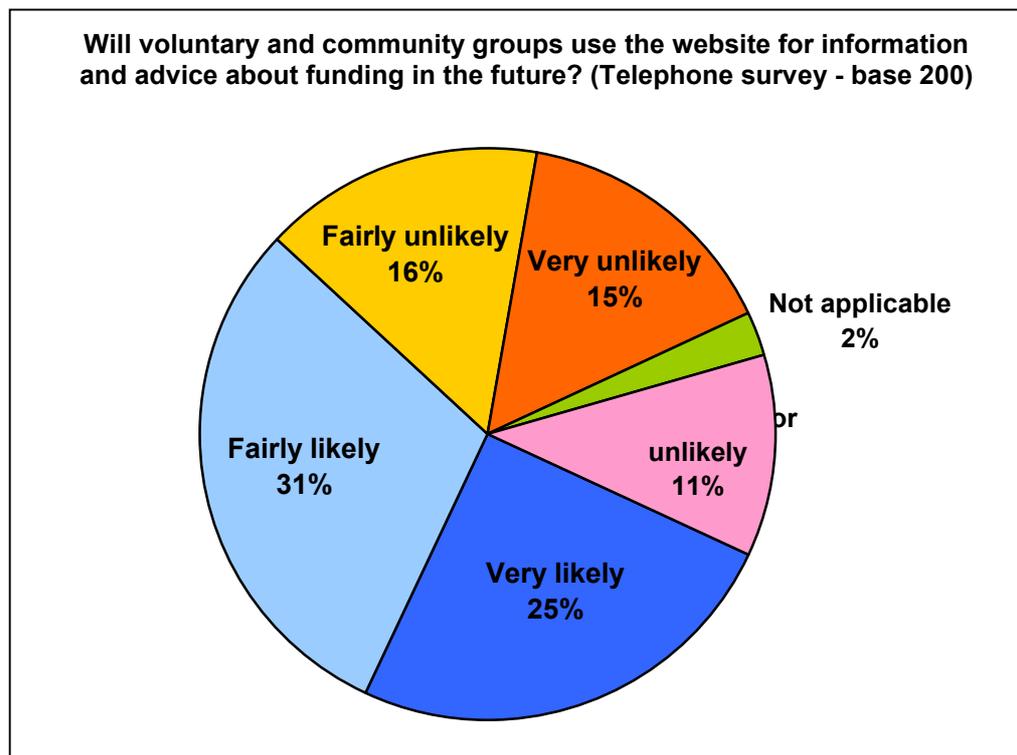
8.14 Currently voluntary and community groups interviewed for the telephone survey receive information about funding and funding advice provided by the Council from an umbrella group (T3SC was named most frequently) and responses indicate that this is also a preferred option for the future. Respondents had also received information about funding from Tameside Councillors and Council publications. Written and email requests were preferred methods of receiving information in the future. Participants in the

discussion group also said that they receive help from the T3SC, TACO, and Councillors as well as directly from the Council.

8.15

Just over a quarter of organisations interviewed for the telephone survey had visited the Tameside Council website to access information about funding and funding advice. Of these three quarters found it very or fairly easy to find the right information. Chart 3 below shows that of all 200 groups interviewed, just over half (56%) said it was very or fairly likely that they would visit the website in the future.

Chart 3



8.16

Participants in the discussion group were asked to describe the experience of seeking funding for their groups 'in an ideal world':

Finding funding: in an ideal world?

- More relevant advice
- Know who to talk to
- One source of information – including Council information (T3SC or TACO both mentioned)
- Condensed information
- Information easier to understand

8.17

The group suggested ways that the Council can improve the experience of community groups looking for funding. These typically reflected the problems currently encountered by groups as identified above:

What can the Council do?

<input type="checkbox"/> Liaise with support agencies about funding available from the Council (T3SC, TAVYO, TACO and the Volunteer Bureau all mentioned)	<input type="checkbox"/> Create an 'encyclopaedia' of information
<input type="checkbox"/> More two-way signposting between the Council and other agencies	<input type="checkbox"/> Better advertising located where people go (libraries and Council Customer Services mentioned)
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage Councillors to make the community aware of funding available	<input type="checkbox"/> Not just web-based information
<input type="checkbox"/> The Council should inform Councillors of what is available	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider how to advertise to groups not on a database

8.18

The consultation for this review was carried out alongside consultation for the Panel's review of the effectiveness of the T3SC. These subjects are closely linked and the Panel has been informed by its findings from the latter review. Conclusions contained in the Panel's report on the effectiveness of the Third Sector Coalition included:-

- The feedback from the consultation exercise was generally positive and indicates a good take-up of services now and in the future with potential for growth.
- The outcome of the support from the T3SC matches the needs identified by the voluntary and community sector, as highlighted in the consultation exercise.

Conclusions

10. Of those surveyed there was generally a good level of awareness about the funds available from the council although less than half have applied.
11. All those surveyed were asked about the potential reasons why some groups may not apply to the Council for funding. The main reasons given were possible lack of awareness about what is available, how to access this provision and that funding may be found elsewhere.

Conclusions continued

12. Community groups access information in a number of different ways although seeking assistance from support agencies was most frequently mentioned and is the preferred option in the future.
13. Of those surveyed there was generally a good level of awareness about the funds available from the council although less than half have applied.
14. All those surveyed were asked about the potential reasons why some groups may not apply to the Council for funding. The main reasons given were possible lack of awareness about what is available, how to access this provision and that funding may be found elsewhere.
15. Community groups access information in a number of different ways although seeking assistance from support agencies was most frequently mentioned and is the preferred option in the future.
16. Councillors were regarded as an important source of information for local community groups.
17. Local groups are likely to use the Council's website in the future to access information about funding and funding advice.
18. Feedback about the support received from the Tameside Third Sector Coalition was positive.
19. Consultation about the use of support services available from Tameside Third Sector Coalition indicates that there will be an increase in take-up in the future.
20. A significant proportion of those surveyed felt that some groups may not apply to the council because it is not regarded as a source of funding or funding advice.

Recommendations

6. In the light of this consultation grant managers may wish to review the information available and how this is made available to potential applicants.
7. The consultation highlights a lack of clarity about the role of the Council as a provider of funding and funding advice. The Cabinet Deputy may wish to consider whether this should be clarified.

9. Signposting And Information Systems

9.1 Tameside Council does not publish any general materials about funding for voluntary and community groups other than the information available on the Tameside website.

9.2 Individual providers produce some literature. For example the Tameside Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership produces leaflets and a newsletter, which includes information on funding for voluntary and private sector childcare providers, and the Sports Development Team produce a leaflet for Sports Clubs about available funding including the Tameside Sports Club Development Grant.

9.3 Information about the following Council funds is available on the Council's website:

- Tameside Sports Club Development Fund
- Tameside Education Charities and Grants to Voluntary Bodies
- Sporting Individuals Fund

9.4 Since the Scrutiny Panel began its review the web pages relating to funding for Sports Clubs have been improved and now contain all sources of funding that local groups can access, both Council funding and external funding (Pictures A and B). Whilst these web pages include contact details for the various funds they do not signpost groups to umbrella organisations such as the T3SC where they can get help with applying for these funds for example completing application forms, which can be demanding for some groups, particularly newly established groups.

SPORTING GRANTS - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites History Print Mail News RSS

Address <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/tmbc/sportgrants.html> Go

Last Updated : 09:33AM, Thu 29th Apr 2004 [Text Only Link](#)

www.tameside.gov.uk Search go

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y Z

Tameside Sports Development

Guide to Funding for Sports Clubs

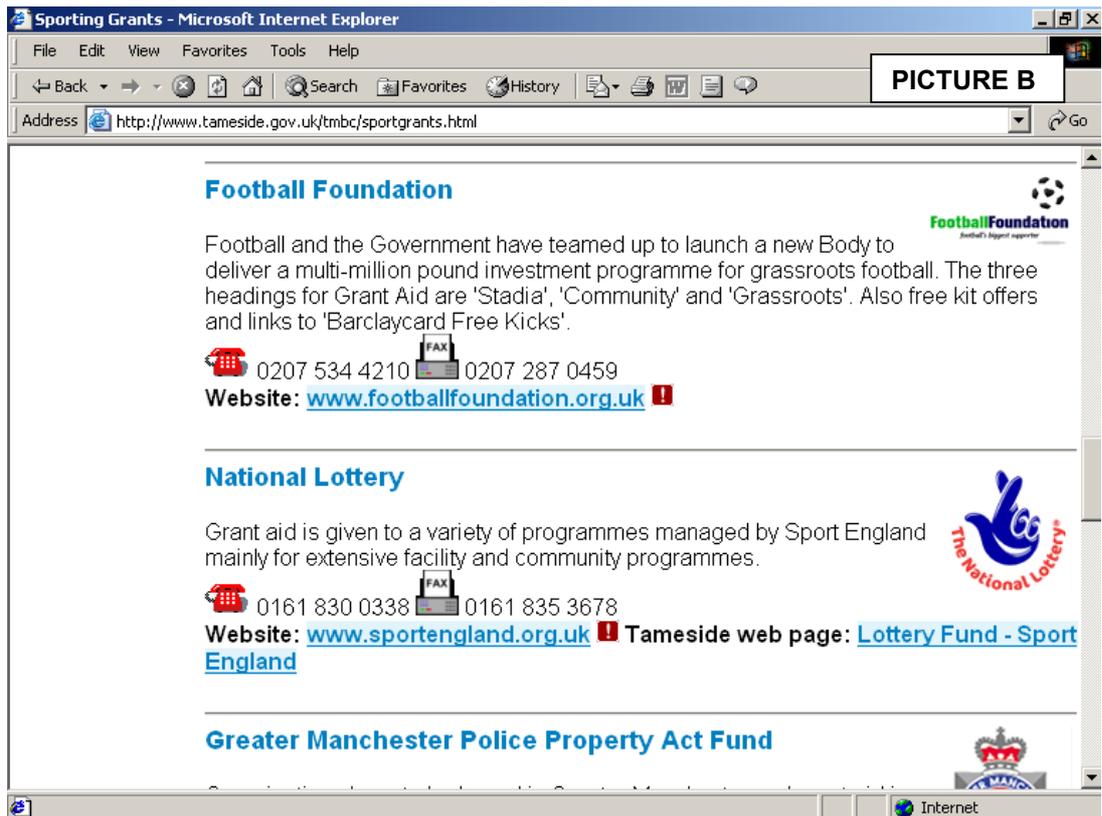
A Funding Guide for Sports Clubs and Individuals in Tameside

Awards For All

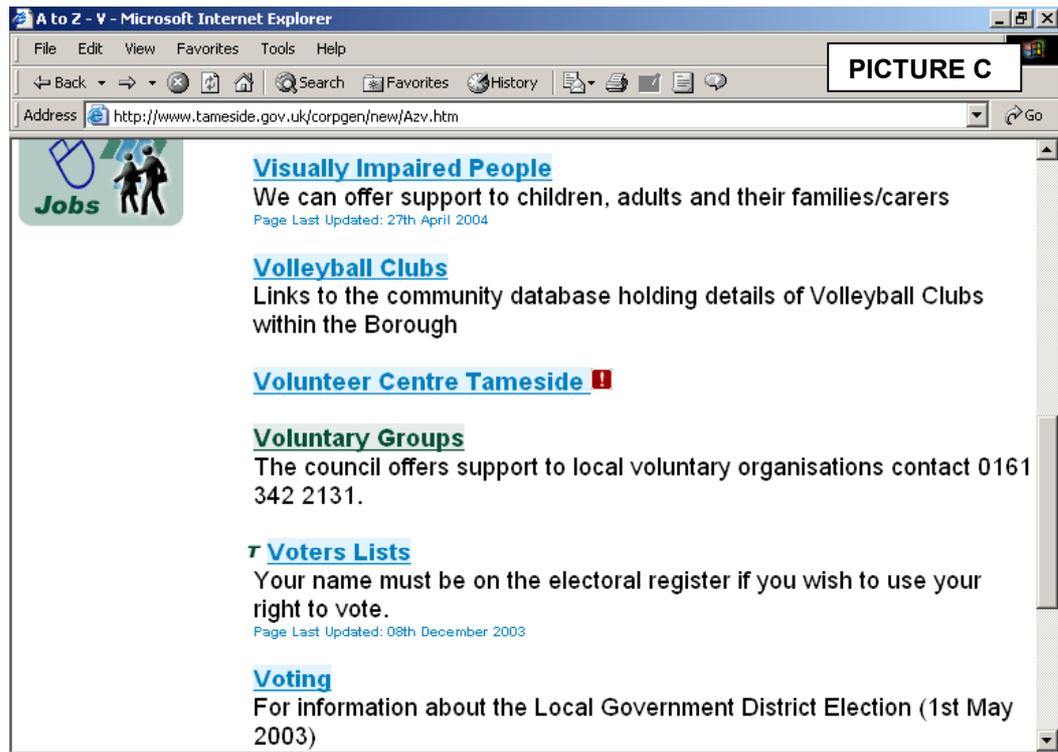
Awards For All is a Lottery Grants Scheme aimed at local communities. They award grants of between £500 and £5,000 in a simple and straightforward way. Many Sports Clubs in Tameside have gained grant aid from Awards For All.

01925 626800 (North West) 01925 234041

AWARDS FOR ALL

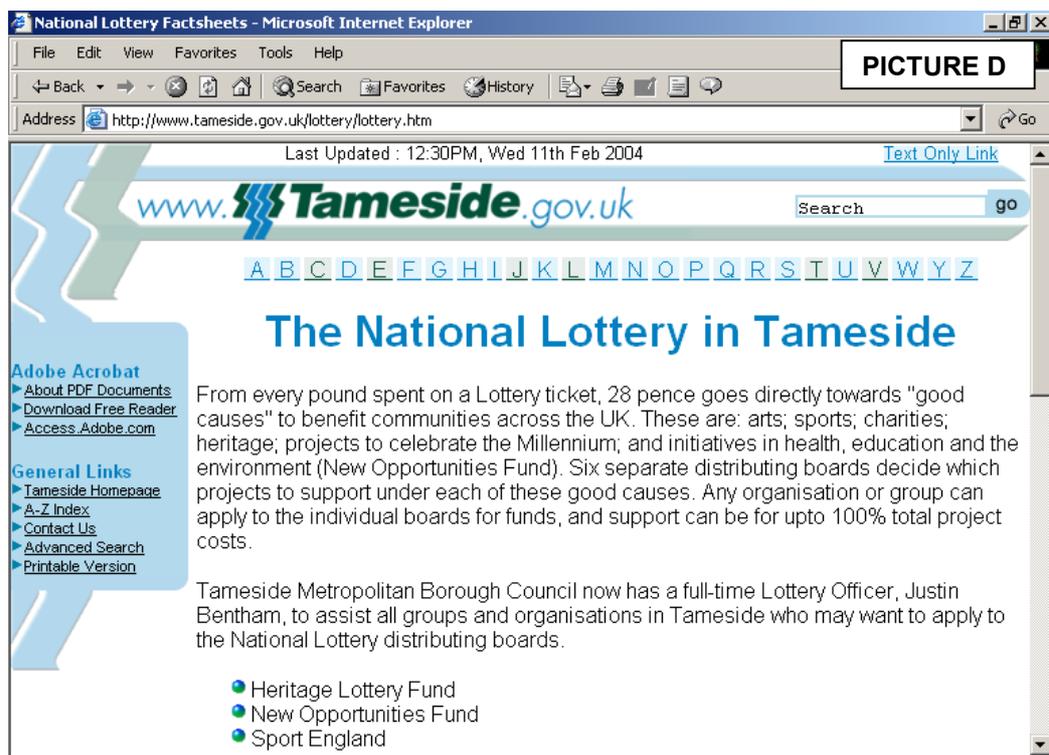


- 9.5 Information about District Assembly Discretionary budget, ward monies, and the Starter and Maintenance Grant is not available on the web pages.
- 9.6 The Panel visited the Council's website as part of a Scrutiny Panel Meeting. Panel Members toured the site acting as a voluntary or community group looking for help from the Council. The Panel found that it was difficult to find information relating to the funding and funding advice available to voluntary and community groups from the Council. Indeed it was difficult to find any information directly relevant and designed for local groups.
- 9.7 Below are the pages currently published on the council's website which were visited by the Scrutiny Panel during the Panel Meeting
- 9.8 Picture C shows out of date information. The telephone number no longer applies. The link takes visitors to the Community Library database, which contains information about individual groups, which whilst useful did not give information about help available from the Council.
- 9.9 The Panel found no listings on the website for 'community groups' in general.

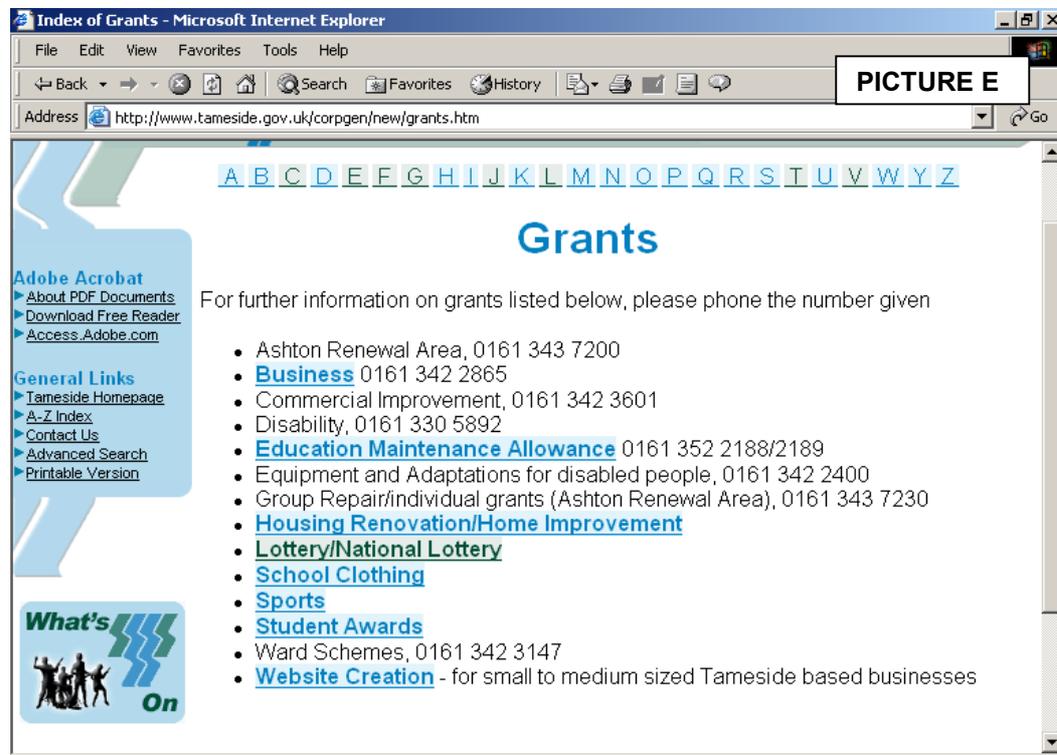


9.10 The Panel found good information listed in the A-Z about applying for Lotteries funding (Picture D). Visitors to these pages are also signposted to the Funding Advice Worker at the T3SC.

9.11 The Panel could not find any information about or links to the T3SC and other umbrella organisations such as TACO although both of these organisations have websites.



9.12 Picture E shows the main web page on the Council's website containing information about funding in general. Only some of these funds relate to voluntary and community groups.



9.13 The Panel found no overall message about the Council's policies for providing funding or assistance to the voluntary and community sector.

9.14 Council employees in the Customer Services Centres, the Call Centre and 'In Touch' Centres (libraries) access the Tameside Website and Intranet to help answer inquiries. The assistance frontline staff can give to voluntary or community groups is reliant on the information on the website and Intranet

9.15 It is the responsibility of service areas to ensure there is sufficient information on the website and Intranet to enable enquiries to be dealt with effectively. It is likely that frontline employees have individual knowledge of the best source of information and advice for particular issues but this is 'pot luck' and could not be expected of all frontline employees (information provided by the Service Unit Manager responsible for the Call centre, and Customer Services).

9.16 The Service Unit Manager responsible for the Call centre, and Customer Services agreed to carry out a response to a mock enquiry for funding information and advice from a voluntary and community group in order to assess the effectiveness of the council's web-based information systems. Feedback about the information available to answer such an enquiry was

generally negative and it was felt that improvements to the level and accessibility of information were greatly needed.

9.17 The Scrutiny Panel also visited the websites of other 'Excellent' and neighbouring council's and found the information available to voluntary and community groups on these websites to be far better than at Tameside.

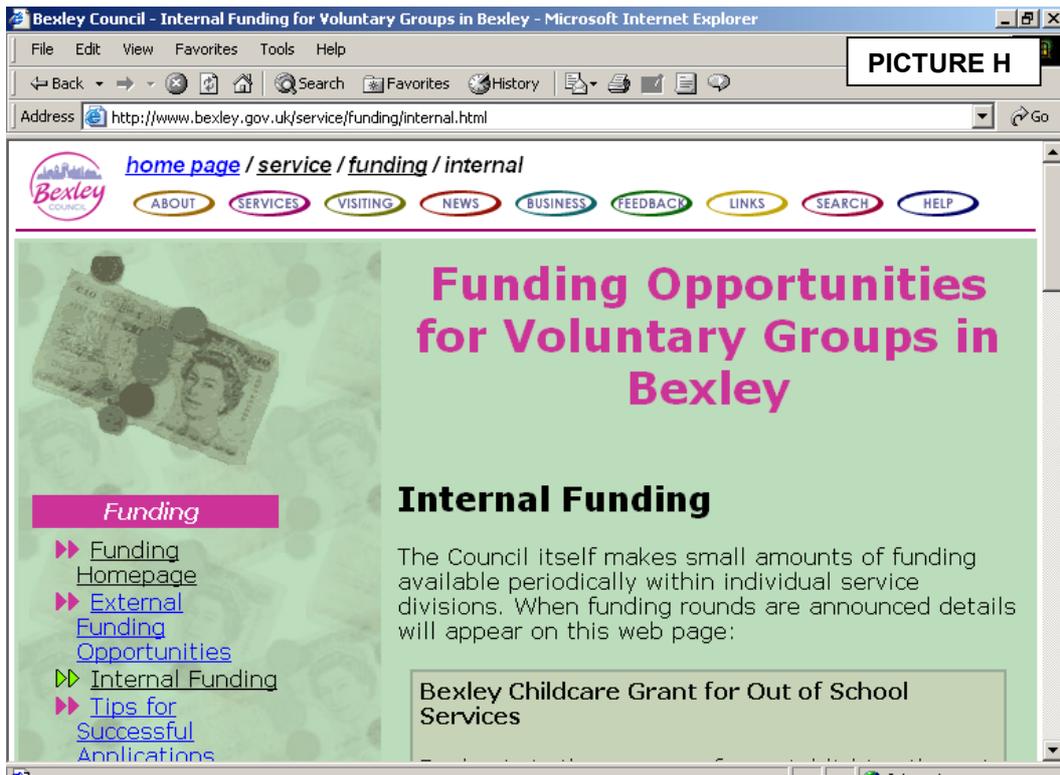
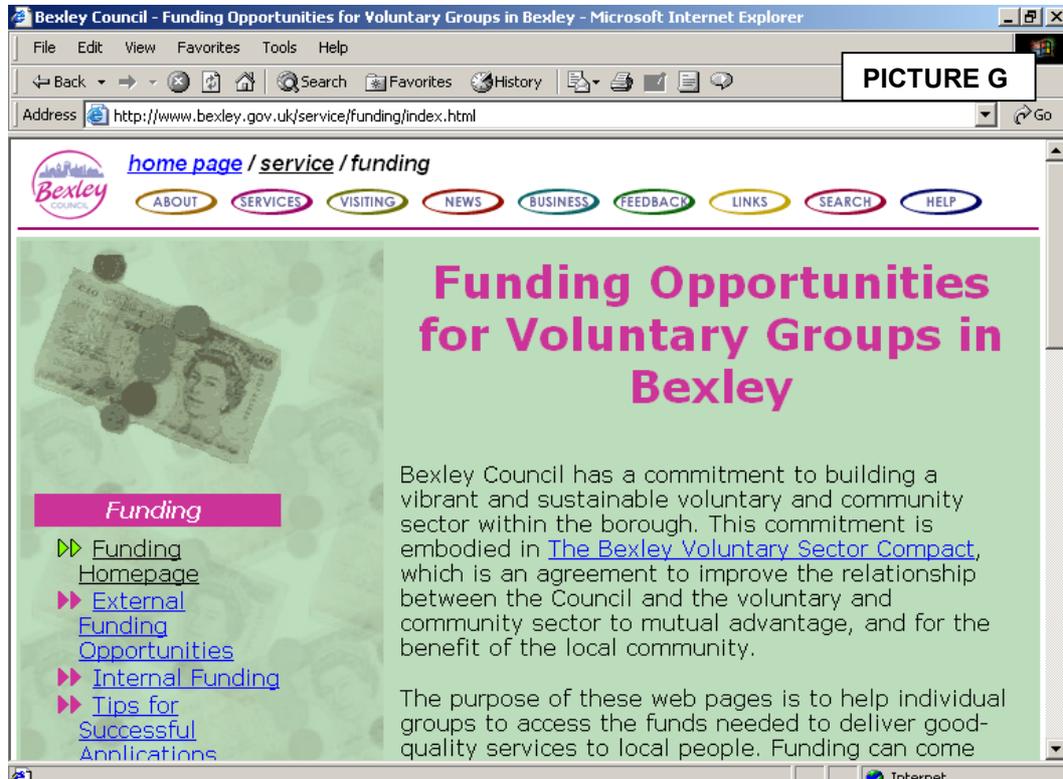
9.18 The Scrutiny Panel examined these websites in terms of accessibility and clarity, rather than comparing the grants available and the council's policies.

9.19 Picture F shows a page from the Bolton MBC website which was found easily. Although the grant arrangements are different to Tameside the Panel were interested to see that information about what was available and who to contact was clearly set out.



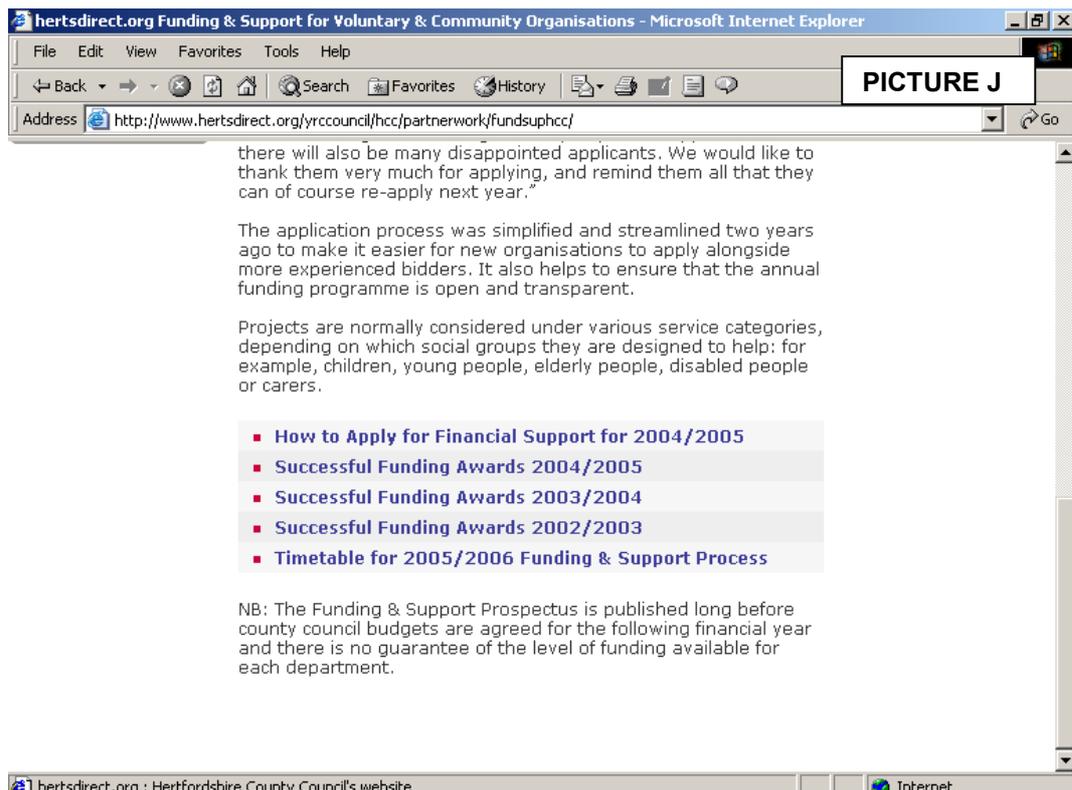
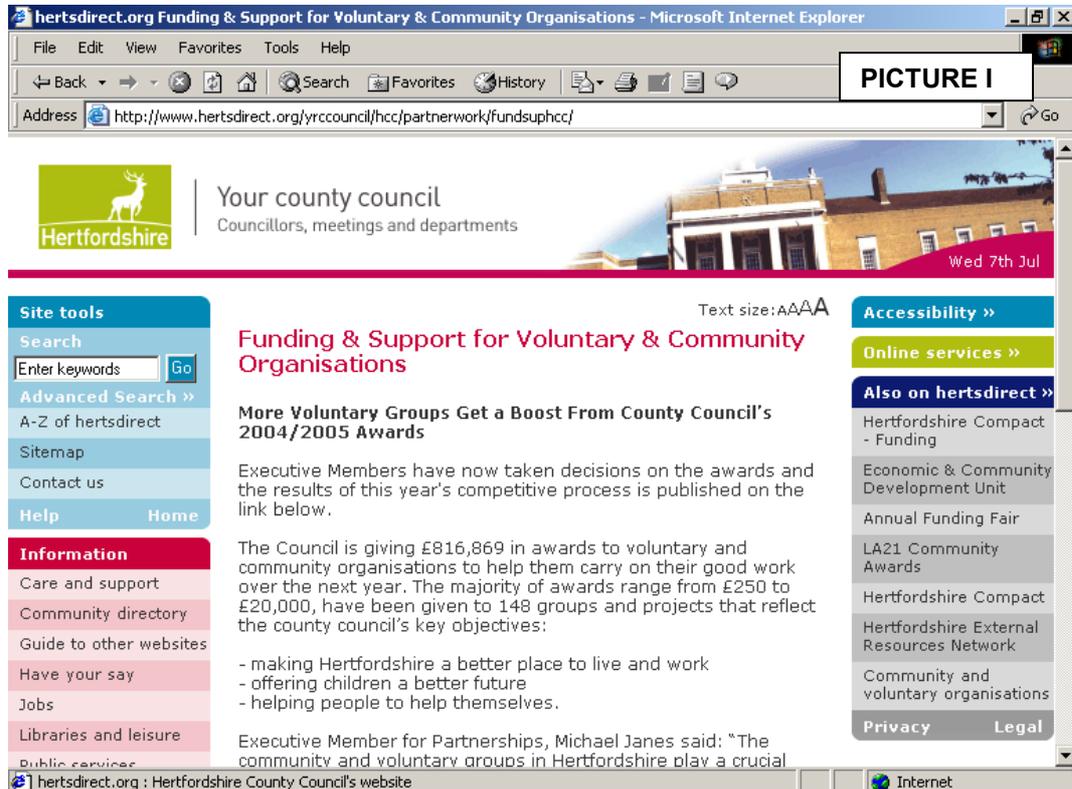
9.20

The Panel also visited another excellent council, Bexley Council (Pictures G and H). On this website information about funding opportunities was maintained in one place. Information was also available about external sources of funding and the local umbrella groups offering assistance to voluntary and community groups were also signposted.



9.21

The information contained on the Hertfordshire Council website clearly sets out why the council provides funding, what funding is available, and how to apply (pictures I and J). Whilst the information is extensive and the funding programmes are different to Tameside the Scrutiny Panel found the principle of clearly explaining council policy and the funds available beneficial.



- 9.22 The Council's ongoing aim is to create a culture across the organisation of employees dealing with any enquiry from the public either directly or by putting them in touch with the right person. Again the information on the website and Intranet is likely to be an important resource for the majority of employees attempting to signpost members of the public to the right information.
- 9.23 The Scrutiny Panel received information from key funding and advice providers from within the Council and relevant partnerships about the awareness of the Tameside Third Sector Coalition and the help available from the Funding Advice Worker. There is a general awareness of the umbrella organisation and the help available although more extensive consultation is needed to assess whether this knowledge is shared throughout all services and how actively signposting is occurring.
- 9.24 Throughout this review members of the Scrutiny Panel have expressed concern that as elected members they are not fully informed of the help and funding available to local voluntary and community groups. This is particularly important since local groups sited elected members as a key source of information through the consultation undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel.
- 9.25 Members of the Scrutiny Panel met with the Community Economic Development Manager. Members discussed at length the 'maze' of external funding sources available to the voluntary sector and the complexities of European funding in particular. This served to highlight the difficulties individual groups have in accessing the right funding and underlines the need for effective information and signposting systems. Members also felt that they themselves had difficulties accessing information and understanding the various funding options.
- 9.26 There are a number of ways in which information about available funding comes into the authority, including the 'Grant Finder e-bulletin' (Grant Finder is a research organisation which provides information and support to clients in the private, public and voluntary sectors about potential funding opportunities), but the issue becomes how this information is passed to those groups who would benefit the most.
- 9.27 The EDU has already begun plans to bring its separate funding web pages together under a 'funding portal', which would contain information about funding from a variety of sources including Council grants.
- 9.28 Other potential improvements were discussed which included:
- Create links across the Council to share information about groups that are seeking funding and the funding that is available.
 - Raise awareness of the role of the Economic Development Officer responsible for applications to the Lotteries bodies.
 - Increase Elected Members awareness of potential funding for voluntary and community groups in their area.

- Explore the value of large-scale publicity possibly a road show at District Assemblies.
- Raise awareness of how funding the voluntary sector supports council priorities.

9.29

The T3SC Funding Advice Worker suggested that the following would help improve groups' level of awareness and access to the Council's funds:

- Better marketing by the Council to advertise sources of funding available from the Council.
- Clear information about what is available, who to contact and how decisions are made.
- More two way sign-posting between the Council and the T3SC for to help voluntary and community groups access the funding and assistance they need.

Conclusions

21. Having visited a number of other local authority websites there is significant room for improvement of the Tameside web pages relating to funding and funding advice.
22. Throughout this review members of the Scrutiny Panel have expressed concern about gaps in their knowledge of funding issues and that other Councillors may also have a lack of awareness of funding options and sources of help.
23. The Council does not produce cohesive information about what funding and support is available both from the Council and from other agencies and sources.
24. The need for the improvements to the web pages highlighted above (conclusion 1) is especially relevant because this is the main source of information for the Call Centre and other frontline services.

Recommendations

8. That the web pages on the Council's website relating to funding and funding advice for voluntary and community groups be improved based on examples of good practice from both within the Council ('Guide to Funding for Sports Clubs' pages) and from other local authority websites.
9. That the information available on the website be reproduced in hard copy format for those who are unable or who prefer not to access the Council's website.
10. That information referred to in recommendations 7 and 8 be made available to all Elected Members.

10. Borough Solicitor's Comments

- 10.1 The Council is empowered to award grants under the "Power of Well-being set out in section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. However, this discretionary power is subject to all the usual requirements of decision making namely accountability, transparency and reasonableness. Accordingly, as the Council is a guardian of public funding, all criteria for awarding grants should be published together with information as to who was awarded a grant and for what reasons together with information relating to those applications that failed and why.
- 10.2 In respect of the new Scheme called the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme, it should be a mandatory requirement that relevant clubs should have to apply to the new scheme first before applying to the Council, if they have been refused, for Discretionary rate relief in order that the potential £40,000/year, which could be saved (see para 6.13 above) can be applied to other priorities

11. Borough Treasurer's Observations

- 11.1 The Council would also benefit from the adoption of a co-ordinated approach in the giving of grants and rate relief and that common criteria are applied on eligibility to ensure consistent treatment aimed at a common goal.
- 11.2 District Assembly grants from the discretionary budget (and ward money) need to have written criteria to ensure openness and transparency of the awarding of such funds.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 That the inclusion of other stakeholders in the decision-making process for sporting related grants be considered when the process is transferred to the Sports Federation.
- 12.2 That the Membership of the Starter and Maintenance Grant Panel be reviewed to include representation of Council Officers, Elected Members and other relevant stakeholders.
- 12.3 That grant providers aim to ensure that the total budget available is allocated each year to maximize the benefit to the voluntary and community sector.
- 12.4 That the Head of the Youth Service in conjunction with the Starter and Maintenance grants panel undertake a review of the grant and if necessary recommend any amendments to the Cabinet Deputy, Community Services.
- 12.5 That the Service Unit Manager, Exchequer and Community Services be recommended to explore with appropriate services, incentives to

encourage eligible organizations to take up the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme.

- 12.6 In the light of this consultation grant managers may wish to review the information available and how this is made available to potential applicants.
- 12.7 The consultation highlights a lack of clarity about the role of the Council as a provider of funding and funding advice. The Cabinet Deputy may wish to consider whether this should be clarified.
- 12.8 That the web pages on the Council's website relating to funding and funding advice for voluntary and community groups be improved based on examples of good practice from both within the Council ('Guide to Funding for Sports Clubs' pages) and from other local authority websites.
- 12.9 That the information available on the website be reproduced in hard copy format for those who are unable or who prefer not to access the Council's website.
- 12.10 That information referred to in recommendations 7 and 8 be made available to all Elected Members.