

Report to Cabinet Member (Social Inclusion and Community Planning) and Advisors Group

Friday 17th September 2004

Review of CERB (Community)

Background

The budget that currently supports the voluntary and community sectors in Rotherham has traditionally been split into a 'mainstream' budget, and a 'fund'. The budget for the CERB fund has been gradually reduced, and during 2001/2 to 2004/5, it has been almost fully reliant on the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). It was not expected that the NRF would continue to be available to support the CERB budget in 2005/6.

It was also recognised that this budget had been used in a relatively ad hoc way, with no mechanisms to measure impact on Council priorities or to measure the outcomes of the activity. This has been addressed over the last two years, with a robust application process now in place.

As part of this review of focus and process, all organisations in receipt of the CERB fund in 2003/4, were informed in writing of a significant review, and that this would be their final year of funding in the current format. Each project was asked to submit a funding strategy as a condition of their funding, with a request to submit this by July 2004 in order for the final half of the year's grant to be accessed.

Following a reminder letter in recent weeks, a number of funding forward strategies are now being sent in. The information will help to identify where organisations have identified funding from alternative sources, and those who have either not attempted to identify further, or have been unsuccessful in their efforts. This can then be used to inform decision on funding which may need to continue in the short or medium term.

A lot of hard work has gone into reaching the point where the Council is now able to properly review the use of the two budgets.

Issues Driving the Review

- (a) Government Policy in relation to the strengthening of the voluntary and community sector and how best to ensure the sustainability of the two sectors. (This will also help us to maximise other available funding opportunities, as funding regimes are beginning to reflect the Government Policy)

Example: A key Government document has recently been released called 'Change-Up'. This focuses on building the strength of the voluntary and community sectors through development of a strong and supportive infrastructure (nationally, regionally and locally). The

Government is keen to see that the voluntary and community sectors can generate their own income through social enterprises or delivery of services through statutory agency contracts.

[see attached briefing note]

- (b) A close review of the types of activity currently being funded, and how they could be better co-ordinated and supported.

Example: The current budget has a wide range of projects that give advice and guidance to the community, but they currently run very separately and are not part of a wider, co-ordinated strategy for delivering appropriate advice directly into the community. This is an example of a group of projects that would benefit from a borough wide approach.

- (c) Identification of any currently CERB funded activity that is essential to Council delivery and opportunities for mainstream funding.

Examples: The new application process enables us to assess how some projects are helping to deliver Council priorities. This allows us to make a proper assessment of what is being delivered, what the outcomes are, and how the project is performing. This will be valuable in evaluating whether the projects are delivering the type of provision that the Council values.

Overall Aim

To use the CERB budget to help strengthen organisations that do, or can provide support to voluntary and community groups, and help them to become more sustainable.

To move from giving short term grants to a small number of Rotherham groups, and use the fund to provide information, guidance and support to a much larger number of groups through key agencies. This could include support and help with - accessing grants and funds, better project management, managing accounts, help with financial and administrative support, understanding quality and performance requirements, providing guidance on working with statutory agencies, tendering knowledge etc.

To support community partnerships to develop local activity as well as the traditional, mainly voluntary sector activities that have been funded to date.

To help investigate opportunities for social enterprises and service delivery through voluntary and community groups.

To move more towards the Council 'commissioning' delivery (i.e. specific about what we would like to see being delivered or investigated), rather than handing grants out with little guidance on what service we are 'buying'.

To have three year service level agreement (reviewed annually), with clear contracting arrangements and outcome requirements. (This will require a three year budget commitment).

Managing the change

CERB *grant* funded projects have been given over 12 months notice of the potential ending of their funding.

CERB *mainstream budget* funded projects have been given over 12 months notice that the CERB programme is under review.

All projects were asked to provide a forward funding strategy in order to support our decision around future funding of activity. Not all projects have met this requirement.

As all projects are aware that their funding has come to an end, or is under review, this gives us an ideal opportunity to make changes where appropriate, and take longer term view of the CERB fund and budget.

Future Report

A report will be produced in October which will set out options and recommendations to this Group on the future use of CERB. This report will incorporate analysis of currently funded activity, options for the future use of CERB and the maintenance and future size of the fund.

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'CHANGEUP' - BRIEFING NOTE

Background

The report, *'The Role of the Voluntary & Community Sector in Service Delivery 2002-A Cross Cutting Review'* (Home Office), recognised that despite the voluntary and community sectors' contribution to public service delivery, many frontline organisations are still unable to access the type of support they need. A series of recommendations were made for strengthening the capacity of the voluntary and community sectors to deliver public services, including the recommendation that voluntary and community sectors and central and local Government develop a shared strategy to underpin the capacity of the sector.

The 'ChangeUp' Framework

The 'ChangeUp' (ODPM) framework is the response. It sits alongside the forthcoming *'Community Building Action Plan'* which is being drawn up after the consultation document *'Building Civil Renewal'*.

The Framework provides an 'architecture' of how support should develop in the next ten years and highlights key strategic actions which will build that support. It is envisaged that at regional, sub-regional, and local levels infrastructure should gradually come together into geographic hubs of activity with services sharing premises, back office facilities or merging depending on needs.

Delivery

The Cross Cutting Review set aside £80m for investment during 2003-2006 in capacity building and infrastructure. £8m has already been invested in an Early Spend Programme, in Yorkshire and the Humber this has been managed and allocated to key pieces of work by the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (around £600 000 regionally).

The remaining £72m is to be invested during the next two years, primarily in developing a national and regional infrastructure which will provide support and guidance to voluntary and community sector organisations (national and regional Hubs). How it might support local infrastructure activity is being investigated through the Government Office work. The objective is to develop new infrastructure, and bring together and consolidate current infrastructure support.

The aim is to stimulate action over the next 10 years to ensure that voluntary and community organisations have capacity, skills and infrastructure to fulfil their potential role in delivering public services and building strong and active communities.

The Hubs are expected to be self-sustainable within 2 years, and the Change-Up funding is meant to 'pump-prime' this infrastructure. Future funding is based on the voluntary and community sector itself supporting this provision in the future through generation of income.

Local Benefits

The emphasis is on a sustainable range of national and regional Hubs that provide support to the voluntary and community sectors across the country. Whilst the access to this particular funding is not focused on local delivery organisations, the intention is that this infrastructure will enable local voluntary and community sector organisations to develop and strengthen in order to be able to help deliver public services and contribute to the building of civil renewal.

It is anticipated that small amounts of the ChangeUp funding may be made available to local voluntary and community sector support organisations.

This complements 'FutureBuilders' funding that is designed to support second tier infrastructure to assist exemplary front-line organisations and social enterprises delivering frontline services to increase the scale and scope of their service delivery.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN ROTHERHAM?

The scale of the contribution of the voluntary and community sectors to the quality of life in the Borough is not always recognised, and has not been quantified in the past. However, a recent research project began to assess the level of provision in the Borough, and the quality of support available. Some of the key findings about the contribution the sectors make in terms of income into the Borough, staff resources etc. are set out below:

- Main areas of work delivered by the voluntary and community sectors are leisure and recreation, welfare and social care, play and youth work.
- It is estimated that the sectors employ approximately 2 000 paid staff with a salary bill of around £20m
- The figures suggest that there are over 15000 volunteers (including committee members) who work nearly 73000 hours per months (at the minimum wage, this is worth £3,3m)
- A large proportion of voluntary and community sector organisations work in partnership with other agencies, the most common link being with the Council.