

# AGENDA ITEM 16

## A Discussion Paper on Chichester City Council Grants System

A few of the 'older' councillors have some memory of how the City Council's grants system used to be run, and I would like to compare this with the present system as it has become. There are advantages and disadvantages both ways.

There used to be a very small budget for local grants. This money was dispersed to various local Chichester charitable groups, mainly for pump priming, and to either set them on their feet or for a piece of equipment which would help their cause.

There were a few exceptions, some of which were ongoing, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Festival Theatre, Chichester Festivities and the City Band (to my memory), but these grants were distributed by the Finance Committee, not Community Affairs. However, some time ago it was decided that CA would give all grants from their budget – which was greatly enhanced - and that all would be considered separately each year, as opposed to the former system where the 'specials' did not have to apply each year, but were almost automatic. This 'newer' way has worked well.

Some years ago it was felt that the total amount should be increased in order to help more groups. The purposes were still basically pump priming for new or reviving local charities and small capital projects. Specifically it was stated that it would not be for personal projects or one person wanting to raise funds, neither would it be for ongoing revenue to pay salaries.

Rightly or wrongly this has changed in fairly recent years, and more and more groups (some of whom are not strictly local to Chichester) are asking every year for money to pay salaries to professional organisers. (As I serve on other bodies which give grants, I am aware of one or two who apply each year to the City Council for salaries, as well as other bodies, and are receiving from more than one). The amounts requested and granted are becoming larger and larger. Also, maybe a decision should be made as to what proportion of the budget be used at each grants meeting, thus leaving something for the second tranche.

Also some applicants are not adhering to the deadlines set for the half-yearly consideration, which are clearly publicised, and are asking at any time as 'special favours' – we have two such at this meeting. We appear to be allowing this. In my view this is not sustainable, and leaves almost nothing for the second tranche later in the year. If we look to the District and County grants systems (which of course should not rule the City's one) a deadline is a deadline, and anyone who misses it has to wait or go without. Also in other councils there is a cap of the amount which it is possible to grant to any one organisation.

It may of course be that the committee would be happy to look at applications at each meeting instead of a special meeting twice each year. This was done in the past for a short time, but proved to be time-consuming at each meeting, so that the twice-yearly practice came into being.

I consider that it is time to have a look into all this to ensure that we are helping as many local groups as we can and that any guidelines are practical. Maybe a small working group could look into it and make recommendations to the main Community Affairs Committee?

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