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Dear Mark

### **Bedford Borough Council Budget Consultation 2011-12**

As you are aware, a special meeting of the Bedford Borough Third Sector Assembly was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. 72 delegates from 56 local voluntary and community organisations attended the meeting. On behalf of the Assembly I have prepared a summary of the key points made by delegates:

#### **Voluntary Sector Grants**

- Delegates had concerns regarding the lack of transparency as to how the 'core partners' were selected. There was general consensus that other organisations should have an opportunity to become a 'core partner'.
- Delegates felt that the criteria for selecting the 'core partners' should be clearer, and what those partners would do on behalf of the council needs to be widely published. Some delegates expressed confusion as to why the 'core partners' were a mix of infrastructure and front-line delivery organisations.
- Delegates were concerned about the limited amount of funding available for small grants once the 'core partners' had been supported. There was general uncertainty about what levels of funding were involved in supporting the core partners and the wider sector.

#### **Commissioning**

- Delegates wanted more information about how to get services commissioned. Many delegates expressed concerns about the lack of a clear process for approaching commissioners with proposals and how they are assessed. It was felt that smaller organisations would be disadvantaged in securing commissioned work if it were done through partnership meetings, as they do not have the resources to attend numerous meetings.

The above points are distilled from the extensive notes and comments made during the round table discussions and the workshops. I have enclosed a full copy of those notes so the council can consider all the points and concerns as part of the consultation response.

Best wishes

Martin Trinder  
Chief Officer

## **Serving the Local Voluntary and Community Sector**

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

Core Partners

No transparency on:-

- Where they came from
- What was the criteria
- This was not put out for views on core groups
- What will core groups do to support others?

Energy Efficiency

- Planning should insist on developers making all new sites/housing energy efficient
- Start by example at the town hall/borough hall to save expenditure

Town Centre Parking

- Getting into town at busy times is time consuming. Many rubbish shops when you do visit
- More park and rides running at appropriate times to railway/bus station (6.00am-10.00pm)

Collaborative/Joint Applications

- How does one know what other organisations really do?
- I think the whole consultation needs to look at the expansion of core groups raising them to 8
- Get people into Bedford via bypass

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

Inadequate Information

- How were the core partners chosen?
- Is it limited to 4?
- Were organisations informed and asked? (What does it mean?)
- Discrepancy between large sums to be paid to core partners but others maximum £5,000
- What is the CVS is doing for the third sector (or indeed all the core partners?)
- 2 years = short-term
- Details we need!
- Sectors could work better together (e.g. advertising, back office)

Positives

- More sharing
- Opportunity for partnership
- Closer and smarter

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

- How were core partners chosen/why not transparent process?
- What were the criteria? (One comment was it could be voted/chosen openly and that it could be smaller group?)
- Hard to know how to comment because so little information about the process will be
- How will smaller groups get voice heard?
- Thinking even 'smaller' groups should be able to win contracts – that the process and criteria should be very open
- It seems sometimes people have to read between the lines/work it out/know the right people to know how to approach it, or to win contracts
- Concerns: infrastructure of small organisations not always able to cope with the process
- Why were housing providers now in the core groups?

Other proposals:

- Concerns over E3 – needing to maintain access
- Have 'co-operatives' been considered e.g. parks, play areas etc?
- Involving locals – not just left, but working together – getting people participating
- Just wanting to check equality and diversity record of the core partners – that they have a good track record and this is evidenced e.g. race/impact assessments/disability – the council needs to ensure performance on these
- Concern over lack of consultation of service users before changes and information to service users being clear

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

a) Core Partners

- Question if funding agencies, how?
- What is link to other organisations?
- Clarity required on operational capabilities
- Why no consultation?

b) Community Chest

- Where to go for say £5,000 to £10,000

c) Commissioning

- Any proposal to cut commissioning budget?
  
- Where does sport fit in as part of the community?
- In regard to the funding proportion:- **a** = 35%, **b** = 5% and **c** = 60%

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

- Figures? Current funding to VCS?
- Proportion of funding commissioning/community chest and core partners?
- Why 2 infrastructure and 2 delivery?
- How decided on delivery organisations?
- Who involved in decision making?
- Can core partners also receive commissioning funding?
- How have % cuts in each directorate area been decided?
- Vision? Future? Big Society?
- Future for voluntary sector vs. pulling things 'in house'?

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

- Every organisation here delivers 'across the council's corporate aims' surely? Therefore that justification doesn't seem good enough for those decisions
- Discussion/consultation as to the purpose and then choice of 4 core groups seems to have passed us by; where were 'we' asked about the contribution of selected core groups to council's priorities?
- Bit bland and fluffy to say/identify 'aims' (see above)
- 2 are infrastructure organisations and 2 are service organisations
- How can you claim that there will be no overall reduction?
- Need a clear route for enquiries and referrals squeezed timescale
- Unequal relationship – should be two-way – we deliver what the council wants
- No reduction in spend but this means some organisations are going to miss out
- What is the difference (criteria) for organisations who are going to receive grant funding and those who are going to be commissioned?
- Are/is the grant funding on the way out? Small local voluntary groups are highly effective and cheap; do they have the capability/capacity/training/knowledge to compete?
- Consortium – Consortico aims to bring groups into joint framework – to bid on their behalf
- Regulation of and accountability of small groups can be counter-productive
- Where are the EIAs?

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

1) CFC Core Funding –

- Commissioned contracts
- Grants for statutory delivery

Core funding needs to contribute to statutory criteria for core funders

- Qu – why need for core funders/partners?
- What does it achieve?
- Where is independent third sector?
  
- Clear aims and objectives around statutory obligations
- Mapping the sector – how does it sit with LA needs?
- Statutory delivery – where does the VCS fit?
- What are the aims and objectives of core partners?
- What is the purpose of core funders?

**Idea** – Put money to Beds and Luton Community Foundation with criteria

2) What would a core partner look like?

- Offers equitable service to VCS
- Manage funds
- Commissioning VCS organisations to deliver against agreed criteria = LA key outcomes
- Mapping exercise – use BB Children's Directory/Information Service
- Need to include adult services
- The core partner funding idea feels elusive
- The sector needs to agree with process for core funding partners
- Community chest two-year funding
  
- Need to know figures:-

Funding to partners – what does this buy? (SLAs)  
Community chest total  
Keep criteria for core funds

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

For clarification on points below, please contact: Angela Murphy – Children's Services

- 4 core partners – is this strategic or tactical?
- How does the council enter into partnership to find new money (from outside sources) who can access such as 'Big Lottery'/ESF to complement council resources (council money provides the leverage to generate money from other sources)
- Why have 4 core groups? It's a contract or a grant! Should be open to all – equality
- In favour of simplifying process and transparency
- Risk to preventative services – longer-term impact of cutbacks
- More join-up with council contracts between directorates - 'category management' approach from children's (adults and health)
- Equality impact assessments – 'consequences'
- Right services, right people, right cost
- Needs to be a clear criteria – about outcome trying to achieve
- For smaller groups who are not 'core', can the council look at longer term contracts?
- Transformation agenda – not clear how this is working
- When reviewing each service, can we ensure we include VCS sector as they contribute to new ideas?
- Can the council help third sector with 'raising money'?
- Social enterprise models

Feedback from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Assembly table discussion

### **Cuts**

Devil is in the detail? How will they impact VCS?

e.g. E25 – how will reduction in accommodation impact on VCS? Back to putting people in B&B?

e.g. Community transport – how will this cut impact VCS?

Many of the cuts look like things any good council should already be doing  
e.g. Reviewing contracts

Is there any expectation that VCS will take up the slack – step in and cover service gaps?

Will cuts adversely impact most vulnerable?

Lack of confidence in equality and impact assessment process – transparency?

Want to see equality and impact assessments go to diversity network for scrutiny – need independent people to be involved

Too late to ask us to challenge decisions re core partners

'Listening' – some concern whether challenging decisions or process 'marks your card' for future funding?

### **Grants**

Local information re what core partners will be for? Why are BREC not core? Expectations? Feel decision already made on this issue – where is equality impact for those decisions? Published?

Community chests – how will they judge how to reject applications to keep £ for later in year. How will it be divided over the year?

What are the criteria against which to judge the applications e.g LSP priorities?

Why £5k limit? What size is the pot?

How will they decide how much to spend in each round of applications? Evenly over 4 quarters?

Administration function/core organisations. Issue is a 'smoke screen' to get us excited meanwhile the cuts are the real issue for many CVS organisations (not all agree on this?)

**Criteria**

Small charities feel quality mark and certification of accounts cost them money with no guarantee of funding. Simplify process and admin relative to amount e.g. requirement to carry logos when £5k small proportion of some organisations'P turnover

If money left at end of year will it be rolled forward?

## Adult Services

- £78,000 cuts from Adult Services
  - Working with NHS Bedfordshire unlikely to form partners (no pool budgets)
- 1) How will we know that you have been fair in making your funding decisions?
    - A. We will be asking provider groups to fill in forms to give us answers that we will then evaluate your bids
  - 2) Almost all grant funding from government is not 'ring fenced!' – How will this affect us?
    - A. The priorities will be set
    - B. The councillors who will prioritise their spend ... we cannot therefore guarantee level of spend
  - 3) Can we (third sector) work more closely to raise money jointly ... see this problem as an opportunity
    - A. Personalisation will bring us to a point where people buy their own services. We want the council and local third sector to work together more
  - 4) Services for people from the BME communities ... Need to make sure 'we' all are inclusive in our service delivery ... They have some different and more acute needs
    - A. Equalities impact assessment must be undertaken – CVS and BREC can help
  - 5) Personalisation and 'market creation'
    - A. Block grants versus people purchasing their own services from a personal budget ... People can get better value for money
  - 6) What is happening with adult service contracts ... We need to make savings of £
    - A. These are publicly funded contracts ... address all sectors private, third etc but contracts will be prioritised
  - 7) SLA's – Are they disappearing beyond March 2011?
    - A. £3/4 = SLA's – they will be wrapped up through contracts ... It's in your pack – contracts that will be 'let' beyond 31/3/2011

Third Sector Assembly Special Event 15.11.10  
Adult Services Workshop Feedback

- 8) Budget process ...
  - A. Elected members have yet to vote on their 'budget' for 2011/2012 (8/12 = Meeting of members – Feb)
  - B. Final budget will be Feb 2011 ... We will not be letting of contracts ... Aim to roll over contracts where it is legal into 2011/2012
- 9) Leeds City Council have researched LP client interventions – costs ... have made considerable savings
- 10) Adults – will pick up tendering also for leisure, arts etc
- 11) We all knew it (cuts) was going to happen ... it has hit us over 2 week period
  - A. We can plan together – we know what the level of cuts are now
12. We are facing costs at a time of increasing need for third sector services ... cut prevention at the costs of more acute needs ... and costs later
  - A. We must provide 'more for less' – it's our only option
13. Fundamental that we deal with the 'fall out' of your decisions
14. We (third sector) can see ways of providing services more cheaply - can we bring these proposals to you? Where is the table I can get around?
  - A. Outsourcing services ... can be just moving costs around without - so must only be done where there is cost/quality of service advantage
15. Thematic partnerships of the LAC is the place to go ... but organisations do not know where to make contact with the third sector representatives on these

## Children's Services

1)

- 16% reduction in funding
- 20-25% staff reduction
- 2011-2012 category managed commission
- Reduce number of contracts to deliver services
- Improve outcomes:-

I.A.G

Family Support

Allocate School Provision

Health and Wellbeing

Therapies

- Add joined up approach

Benefits

- Improved quality
- More time
- Less management cost
- Better market understanding
- Focussed approach

2)

Better knowledge of needs and the voluntary and community sector

VCS coming up with innovative ways of delivering against the themes

Partnership working

VCS to inform what can be delivered

BB identifying the resources envelope

Documentation – on website

From VCS

Consider draft document

Feedback about process

Any additional service areas

How is VCS going to work to respond?

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Children's Services Workshop Feedback

Not duplicating services

Working in partnership

3)

1. Proposed cuts short term against long term impact

Answers

- Impact assessments
- Family support – vulnerable families – up to high end/balance cuts but not in areas that affect statutory service
- FIPS's grant funder finishes March 2011 – from core budget small team, could use volunteers – need to look at different ways of working
- What are opportunities with VCS – mentoring volunteers

2. Where is the child poverty agenda?

Answers

- CS + council agenda: holistic approach
- Reduction in benefits big impact
- Cuts will increase child poverty – family break – LAC
- Child poverty – Katie Williams
- Strategy – send out

3. 16% - What are the cuts in other areas?

- No knowledge of % cuts in other areas
- Impact comes from reduction in grants i.e. Area based grants
- If it goes, what can be put in place?
- Need to fill picture of grants available
- 12/13 there will be more cuts
- Services need to be sustainable
- VCS can access other pots of funding which LA can't

4) Phase 3. Children's Centres

Answers

- No longer offering universal offer
- Government looking at more vulnerable families
- Look at a 'family centre'
- Wider range of activities
- Government branding could

5) Look at common process

Answers

- Needs analysis – C&YP Plan
- Have LA achieved what is needed for CS?

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Children's Services Workshop Feedback

- What is the outcome to be achieved?
- VCS can be creative to deliver what is needed
- Was the outcome achieved?
- This will allow for flexibility within the contract
- Outcome focussed – less performance management focussed

Shape

- Group of volunteers could deliver
- Could bid for 1 part, 2 parts whole contract
- Effectiveness in less contracts

Qu – What is happening to YS?

- Large cuts
- Work in schools will be picked up by schools
- YS will do more specialist services
- Colin Foster

Qu - £10's risk of redundancies  
1/4/11 reduction will be known

Qu – Schools IAG. What is happening to ES?

Colin Foster

Qu – How will the LA ensure that specialised needs are protected in the contracts?

- Services will need to be more targeted
- Asking service used – YP participation and exit

Questionnaires:

- This will be part of
- Providers can feed in with local groups and feed this into the contracts/tender documents
- Tender documents will contain LA needs identified
- Volunteers can conclude their identification and needs

Qu – Smaller groups - Community Chest?

- Harder to get into contract arena
- Small groups may be reduced?
- Could be smaller group participation in the contract tender

Qu – Will LA pay on results?

NO