

EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORD SHEET

Name of decision maker: Councillor Colette Wyatt-Lowe

Portfolio: Community Services

Date of Portfolio Holder Decision: 15 May 2009

Title of Decision:

ONE-OFF SUPPLEMENTARY GRANT TO DACORUM CAB FOR EMPLOYMENT ADVICE

(Contact: David Gill, Extension 2511)

Decision made and reasons:

To approve payment of a one-off grant of £8,660 to Dacorum Citizen's Advice Bureau to run Employment Advice Sessions assisting local people during the economic recession.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to the payment of the grant as listed in the report

FINANCIAL

Provision is contained within the 2008/09 grants budget as detailed later in the report. The existing balances cannot be allocated within this financial year and so will remain unspent. A sum of £8,660 is requested

KEY FACTORS

- The Citizens Advice Bureau is under significant pressure from members of the community seeking support in the recession.
- CAB estimate that a sum of £8,660 would enable them to employ a specialist employment advisor to alleviate some of the pressure on CAB
- Grants that are identified within Council budgets are considered by a grants panel for approval. The final grants panel meeting in 2008/09 was held on February 27th. Any grant applications received after that date are not eligible for consideration in this financial year.
- The balances remaining in the grants budget for 2008/09 (after committed expenditure) stands at £8,660

BACKGROUND REPORT

1. The recession has impacted immediately upon the work of the CAB in Dacorum. They have reported that they are facing a big increase in demand for the service which was already over subscribed. Much of the increased demand is being met through improvements to their electronic access and through their Advisors working more voluntary hours.
2. The CAB have noted a very substantial rise in requests for help with employment advice in this current situation. They are able to meet some of the demand through their small contract with the Legal Service Commission however the criteria is very strict and only those people that have very low income or are on unemployment benefit can be seen. What is causing CAB considerable difficulty are the people who are just above this limit or are in work and need specialist advice. The only advice these people can access are Solicitors and they can often not afford those costs. CAB would be able to offer an appropriate service if they could employ a specialist adviser. They estimate that this would cost around £15,000 to organise and run this service for the next 12 months. This would have the effect of improving support to local people and keep them in work and

preventing further debt and hardship.

3. The Council has a dedicated grants budget which is a mixture of identified and non-identified aspects. Those organisations that are identified for annual support claim the grant each year via a grant application form. This is then considered at a grants panel meeting and sent to the Portfolio Holder for approval.
4. All recipients of Annual grants know the requirement to apply for the grant within the financial year they are operating and the majority of organisations apply appropriately. The organisations must apply in time for the application to be considered by the Grants Panel which meets on four occasions per year. The last occasion the panel met during 2008/09 was on February 27th.
5. Each year there are a small number of organisations that do not apply for their allocated funding. During this financial year some organisations have not applied for funding. In addition, alongside the Annual Grants there is a small discretionary grants programme for any voluntary and community organisation to apply. There is currently a balance of £9,520 following the final grants panel meeting of the year.
6. It is proposed that these remaining balances provide a one-off grant of £9,520 to Dacorum CAB for specialist Employment advisor services. This will alleviate immense pressure in the service and provide an important service to local people in this difficult financial environment.
7. The service will be subject to specific criteria around giving employment advice and will not form a part of CAB's annual Service Level Agreement with the Council. Monitoring of the service will be through the existing Liaison Officer arrangements in addition to a regular monthly report to the Dacorum Partnership 'Credit Crunch' sub group.

Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders Consulted:

Head of Finance
Liaison Officer

Monitoring Officer/Chief Financial Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer - No Comments to add

Section 151 Officer – This proposal will fully utilise the approved revenue grants budget for 2008/09.

Risk Implications:

Failure to allocate funding in this manner will seriously affect the ability of CAB to deliver the Employment Advice service to the people in Dacorum. This will inevitably result in further debt in the area.

Options Considered and reasons for rejection:

Not to award the grant

Portfolio Holder's Signature:

Date:

Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:

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Date Decision Record Sheet received from portfolio holder: 15 May 2009
Date Decision Published: 15 May 2009 Decision No: PH/030/09
Date of Expiry of Call-In Period: 22 May 2009
Date any Call-In received or decision implemented: