

Audit, Risk and Governance Committee
Meeting to be held on Monday, 28 January 2019

Electoral Division affected:
None;

Protocol for Grants to the Community and Voluntary Sector
(Appendices A and B refer)

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Executive Summary

At the request of the Committee, a protocol to cover the management and award of grants by the County Council to the voluntary, community and faith sector has been developed for consideration.

Recommendation

That

- i. the Committee approve the Protocol for the administration of Grants to the Voluntary and Community Sector, as presented at Appendix A
- ii. the constitution be amended to ensure that all grants schemes operated by the county council follow the Protocol, and that the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to approve the wording to be used in the constitution.

Background and Advice

At its meeting on 29 October 2018, the Audit Risk and Governance Committee considered the report of the external auditor on the Neighbourhood Wellbeing Grants awarded in 2016 and 2017, and resolved (in part):

"that the Chief Executive and Director of Resources be requested to:

- i) Report to a future meeting of this Committee setting out the responsibilities of Lancashire County Council's officers in relation to council expenditure and outlining a protocol to be followed when grants are awarded to community groups and other voluntary bodies with a view to reporting to Full Council in due course."

Attached at Appendix A is a summary of the key principles for operating grants scheme within the council. Appendix B is a full draft protocol. The protocol covers all aspects of developing grants scheme from determining criteria, through the application process, to approval and subsequent monitoring. It is acknowledged that the arrangements for the governance of grants should always be proportional to the amounts under consideration, whilst maintaining robustness and transparency.

At the same meeting of the Committee, it was also resolved to

"Report this matter to Lancashire Constabulary for investigation to determine if there has been any fraud, misconduct in public office or a criminal breach of electoral law."

A full copy of the letter from the Lancashire Constabulary has been provided to members of the Committee. In summary, the response of the senior Police Officer who considered the referral was that, whilst recognising that the report outlined elements of poor practice and a lack of transparency, he concluded that there is no evidence to suggest that any of the actions amounted to criminal conduct and it was not in the public interest for the police to pursue the matter further.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The report of the external auditor highlighted a number of areas of concern in the award of the Neighbourhood Wellbeing Grants, and the adoption of the protocol would help mitigate the risks to the council of future grants programmes by ensuring that members and officers follow established criteria and good practice.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A