

Support for the Community & Voluntary Sector Consultation Results December 2008

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1. Background

Thanet District Council has been looking at its process for the future allocation of grants. Due to the current financial climate, the new policy was devised in comparison to the former Thanet District Council grants procedure in which the cost of administering the scheme was disproportionate to the funds available for grant giving.

As part of the consultation, Thanet's third sector were asked to comment on the proposed resources available through the new scheme, whether there was anything within the consultation document that needed to be clarified and for their overall comments.

The feedback from this consultation will be used to shape the policy further before it is formally adopted by Cabinet members in February 2009.

2. Methodology

In September 2008, Councillor Jo Gideon presented the draft policy at the Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum to begin the consultation process. At the Forum, questionnaires were given out and there was also a "breakout" session with Councillor Gideon for direct questions to be answered. Following this presentation, the draft policy and a feedback form were then sent to any organisation that had applied to Thanet District Council for grant funding in the last three years and all organisations that had requested the information.

All consultation documents were sent by post and were available on request from Sarah Phippin in Corporate Projects & Improvement; the consultation was also advertised on the Thanet District Council website, the Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum website and the CASE Kent newsletter. Consultation was given an eight week response period in accordance with the Thanet Compact Code of Practice on Consultation.

3. Responses

36 (19.4%) feedback forms were returned. All responses and our answers to them can be seen in Appendix A.

4. Summary of findings

- On the whole, feedback was very positive from all organisations that responded.
- The majority of organisations understood the limitations in the Council's current financial resources and believed that the resources that have been provisionally offered would be of use to them.
- There were questions regarding rental grants and match funding which will be answered in Appendix A.
- The consultation document on the whole was regarded as clear and concise, but there seemed to be confusion regarding the separation of events from the grants budget. This was because formerly organisations applying for events grants applied through the same programme, whereas under the new procedure there will be a separate procedure for applying for events funding which is still under discussion.
- It was also commented on that organisations were not clear what constituted an event, whether this was a single day or a series of days over a set period.

5. Next steps

- Results of the consultation are to be fed back to the public via the Thanet District Council website and via the next Thanet Voluntary Community Sector Forum in January 2009.
- The policy document is due to go to Cabinet on 12th February 2009 for approval.

Full results - Appendix A

Organisations that responded to consultation:

1 st Birchington Girl's Brigade	Birchington Village Centre
Broadstairs Open Bowls Tournament (Broadstairs & St Peters)	Bumps, Babes & Beyond
Carers' Voice	Citizens Advice Bureau (Thanet)
Cliftonville Residents Association	Cruse Bereavement Care
Dane Area Action Group	Drapers Windmill Trust
Dumpton Youth Project	East Kent Mencap
Elements Community Counselling	1 st Garlinge Scout Group
GAP – A Thanet Community Project	Help the Aged
Kent County Council Adult Social Services	Margate Sea Cadets
Margate Yacht Club	Minnis Bay Holiday Club
Northdown Primary School	Personalised Learning in Communities
Pie Music Factory	Sailors Church Ramsgate
Shaw Trust	The Spitfire & Hurricane Memorial Museum
St John's Neighbourhood Action Group	Thanet Compact Implementation Group
Thanet Community Development Trust	Thanet Fairtrade Initiative
Thanet Festival Choir	Thanet Judokwai
Thanet Pride	Thanet Volunteer Bureau

Please note, any information that was directly related to an organisation within their response has been removed for confidentiality purposes.

1. Very interesting scheme, would it be possible to do a pilot?

The first year of the Community Partnership Agreement will be regarded as a pilot. At the end of the year a review will take place with the community and voluntary sector, officers and members to determine its success.

2. Is there a limit to the amount of partners that the Council would agree to have?

There is no limit to the amount of partners that the Council will accept for Community Partnership Agreements. Acceptance of partnership applications will be determined on whether the criteria has been met fully by the organisation.

3. We are interested in the endorsement of funding applications – would Thanet District Council work with other organisations to help?

In terms of the endorsement of funding applications, Thanet District Council will give as much support as they can in order to support a bid for external funding.

4. KCC already give the third sector access to a grants database, is it a weighted expense if they already have this in place?

TDC already have a grants database (Grant Net) in place which is used internally so we do not consider this to be a weighted expense.

5. There is no clarification as to whether resources will be free to NFP's.

The resources offered through Community Partnership agreements will be free to not for profit organisations – there will be a capped amount available for resources for those with Community Partnership Agreements which will be monitored in house.

6. You have missed that by phasing out concessionary grants you have also robbed the tenant of considerable match funding.

A decision was made in 2007 to phase out concessionary rentals on Council-owned buildings and property used by the third sector; those organisations with agreements that had expired or were due to expire were written to in October 2007 and warned of the changes giving them an opportunity to get in touch with any issues they had, in line with the terms of the Thanet Compact. This decision was made so that the Council could meet its obligations to achieve commercial rentals and to ensure that a greater level of fairness was applied consistently.

7. Who will be paying for the CRB checks, health and safety training and child protection training that we require to be a potential partner?

As stated in the consultation document on the bottom of page six (footnote 1), if the organisation does not have their own policies in place they shall comply with Thanet District Council's policies and adopt them as their own. CRB checks are expected to be paid for by the organisation. CASE Kent run training programmes for community and voluntary sector organisations on health and safety and the Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum also run various training programmes.

8. What are the parameters that satisfy "sound financial footing"?

Sound financial footing is considered to be when an organisation is able to show statements of accounts which are not in debit, and they also have their own bank account.

9. We believe the resources that would be of value to us are – access to an officer, possible help in design and printing of posters etc, endorsement in funding applications and provision of meeting space. We would also be interested in transportation of staging equipment, is this possible?

Unfortunately, we would not be able to help with the transportation of staging equipment due to health and safety risks to our staff and insurance implications.

10. It sounds like a fairer system especially as there is so little funding.

11. We would like to suggest that there is the circulation of a list of other local organisations to assist in building partnerships.

This is a very good idea, and is something that will be explored further with CASE Kent. In addition, all groups and organisations have access to the Community Portal via the Thanet District Council website.

12. The named officer would be a good idea – how or when would we find out who the specific officer would be?

Once an application for a Community Partnership Agreement has been accepted, a designated officer would be put in place who has knowledge of the third sector or the specific area that the organisation specialises in.

13. When would the Thanet District Council Community Partnership Agreement logo be ready for the endorsement of the partnership and how and when can we apply for this?

This logo will begin to be designed once the proposal is formally adopted by Cabinet. It will be available to an organisation when a Community Partnership Agreement application has been accepted.

14. This is a big step forward and one that will benefit the third sector over time.

15. Will CASE Kent and the Thanet Voluntary and Community Sector Forum be offered Service Level Agreements? The sector needs their support and putting them at the heart of the process is important.

The Council already has a Service Level Agreement with CASE Kent in conjunction with Kent County Council and the Primary Care Trust. There are currently no plans to set up any further Service Level Agreements, but we enjoy a close working relationship with Thanet Voluntary & Community Forum.

16. We would find having the support of TDC helpful when applying for funding, and also for the designing and publishing of literature.

17. Would we be able to become a member of Thanet Compact?

All community and voluntary sector organisations are able to become a member of the Thanet Compact and Thanet District Council encourages this. If you would like further information about the Thanet Compact, please contact Sarah Phippin on 01843 577092 or sarah.phippin@thanet.gov.uk or Barry Coppock, Chairman, on 01843 864487 or barrycoppock@hotmail.com.

18. Is there a fee or charge for the printing of literature?

Each organisation that is eligible for a Community Partnership Agreement will receive an allowance for printing services, the use of meeting rooms and a proportion of officer time according to the funds available to the Council at any given time. Use of this allowance will be closely monitored to ensure consistent and fair use of this endowment across the sector.

19. Would TDC keep “partners” information on record so that they do not have to keep filling in long funding forms?

Once a successful funding form has been completed we would keep this on file and would consider it best to only adjust it where necessary in any future funding applications.

20. It is good that it is being reviewed so thoroughly.

21. Would it be possible for charities to have 100% rent rebates in Thanet?

Concessionary rents are being phased out for all organisations. Please see the answers to point 6 and point 23.

22. Will we lose match funding if we lose current funding?

Although there will be no cash grants available, as part of the Community Partnership Agreement, the Council would expect to provide support in the form of letters of endorsement to help organisations bid for funding from other providers.

23. The voluntary sector needs low cost accomodation rather than paying business or commercial rates.

You are entitled to claim charity rate relief if your organisation or business is any of the following – a registered charity, a registered community amateur sports club, a charity that is exempt from registration, a sports club or social club or a body connected with the arts or similar that is not set up to run for profit. Thanet District Council can give you up to 100% relief on your business rates under the 1988 Local Government Act. There are two different types of relief – Mandatory, in which 80% can be automatically given to registered charities and Discretionary – in which up to 100% can be given to organisations that qualify under the Council’s policy about this relief, this information can be found on the Thanet District Council website http://www.thanet.gov.uk/business/business_rates/rate_relief.aspx. For more information please contact the Revenues team on 01843 577557 or business.rates@thanet.gov.uk.

24. We think it is a big challenge to streamline the voluntary sector in Thanet as charities missions and motivation are unique to the individual organisation.

25. We think that it is unusual for a council not to have funding available in one area of social regeneration.

There are a number of other funding sources available to organisations such as the Big Lottery Fund, who have already expressed a concern that very few applications are received from the Thanet area.

26. Is all the European money going into the Turner Contemporary or are there any community initiatives?

Turner Contemporary is being funded predominantly by SEEDA, Arts Council England and Kent County Council.

27. We would find the following invaluable – printing, free meeting areas, access to a named officer (preferably one that didn’t keep changing).

28. It needs to be re-emphasised that you will only be funding events. Perhaps clarify the meaning of “events”. Would an AGM for instance be an event?

An AGM would not be considered as an event. An event would be a one day or series of events that the community could participate in.

29. You should clarify the organisations that already have service level agreements and what sums are involved.

We are happy to clarify the organisations that have service level agreements with Thanet District Council. Please contact Sophie Chadwick on 01843 577631 or sophie.chadwick@thanet.gov.uk for further details.

30. Not everyone is on email, to receive something by post has more impact than downloading. Is it possible that the Community and Voluntary sector leave copies of letters in the TDC mail room to be included in mailings that TDC do as newsletters would be more widely distributed?

As part of the Community Partnership Agreements we would be able to allow postage for mailings if the organisations required this.

31. I do think that there should be some safety net where grants of less than £500 can be given to organisations who do not have a constitution or bank account so all can benefit.

Unfortunately, the Council are not able to provide any cash grants to any organisations.

32. Organisations need to identify other potential sources of funding from other public agencies.

33. We think that this could be a sensible way of using scarce resources and help “in kind” would be invaluable – so long as it doesn’t involve groups in more paperwork.

34. TDC needs to be sure that other funders will recognise the Community Partnership accreditation otherwise there will be no benefit or point for groups.

After speaking to The Big Lottery Fund, they have said that this would be an acceptable form of endorsement for a Community Partnership organisation applying for funding.

35. Would there be a possibility for an affiliated status if we only wanted some of the suggested benefits?

This could be discussed on application. If an organisation only required certain resources then they are welcome to use their allowance solely for these resources.

36. The knowledge hub cannot come soon enough.

The Knowledge Hub is now available on the Thanet District Council website. http://www.thanet.gov.uk/council_democracy/thanet_knowledge_hub.aspx

37. The Margate Gateway needs better promotion.

If any organisations are interested in using the Thanet Gateway Plus as an occasional base for meeting their clientele please contact Customer Services on 01843 577000 or customer.services@thanet.gov.uk. We are always looking to extend the services that are available to residents through Thanet Gateway Plus and would like to hear any ideas that you may have.

38. Does TDC host an online forum for the community and voluntary sector.

Currently, there is the Community Portal available via the Thanet District Council website. Organisations are able to register information of their services, add details of events, news and job or volunteering opportunities. For more information on the Community Portal please contact Paul Lawes on 01843 577035 or paul.lawes@thanet.gov.uk

39. This appears to be a better way of funding.

40. We have been hoping that some financial assistance would be available, but in lieu of this we would welcome a Council officer's attention and the possible use of the Gateway for meetings.

41. The presentation of the document was excellent and we wish you luck in presenting it to the Council.

42. Would facilities such as this be available to schools?

These facilities are only for community and voluntary sector groups, and would not be able to be used to support schools for their primary purposes.

43. The consultation document was clear and concise.

44. For smaller groups it may be useful if there were a standard Health and Safety policy, Equalities policy and Child Protection policy made available that could be adapted for individual groups.

This is a very good idea and will be something that will be looked into as a definite possibility.

45. Good overall proposals that broadly cover what we currently do. We support and meet all these criteria currently and would be willing to join in.

46. There was nothing missed and the proposed resources would be of great help. There was nothing unclear and we have been so appreciative of the grants which have benefitted us in the past.

47. We are unclear about the CRB checks. Can this be clarified as it would represent a major expense to a group which is only just self-sustaining. At present those in contact with children on a regular basis are covered.

As stated earlier, CRB checks would need to be paid for by the organisation. If your organisation does not have it's own Child Protection Policy, it will adhere to Thanet District Council's policy. This policy would apply to all staff and volunteers who may come into contact with children or young people in the course of their activities.

48. We would be interested in all that is being offered, we would also be interested in the provision of stands, marquees or gazebos for events, storage facilities and transportation.

Thanet District Council do not have equipment such as stands, marquees and gazebos at their disposal and therefore would be unable to offer this as a resource to our Community Partners. As stated earlier, transportation would not be offered due to health and safety risks for our staff and insurance implications.

49. It would be advantageous if the nominated officer could offer or arrange guidance on public relations/projections and also to arrange publicity for events.

Within reason, the nominated officer will aim to provide guidance and help wherever they can.

50. The proposed resources detailed in the consultancy policy would not be of value to our events.

Events will now be funded seperately from community grants. This process is being looked into at present. Please contact the events team on 01843 577167 or gillian.shepherd@thanet.gov.uk

51. The consultation draft is a very good report and would benefit the community and voluntary sector but we do not consider our event to be part of that.

52. A positive contribution to the efforts of third sector agencies. Will any funding be available at all?

Unfortunately, due to current financial pressures there will be no cash grants available. Funding for events is to be considered separately.

53. We would find the provision of a suitable room for our meeting to be of great help and in addition, the printing of newsletters and flyers of our activities would also be welcome.

54. Where would meeting rooms be situated?

Meeting rooms would be on council property, although we would also encourage the use of village halls and community centres as possible venues.

55. Would a TDC officer assigned to our group be available outside of office hours?

Officer time will be limited to each group for the equivalent of half a day per month. If an officer is required outside of the Council's usual working hours of 8:00 a.m – 5:30 p.m it would be at the discretion of the officer and in agreement with their manager.

56. The continuation of small cash grants from TDC funds would be of great help.

57. I think that the offer is very good but we would probably not need to use the services very often as we are set up to deal with most things on offer ourselves. It would be great for those organisations that don't have facilities though.

58. Who can go for what level of support in terms of service level agreements or community partnership agreements? I think that this is a good process to put in place and a fair way of doing things.

The organisations that we have Service Level Agreements with are on a three year funding basis and have been considered because they are providing services either on behalf of Thanet District Council or that are complimentary to services that we already provide. Service Level Agreements are given when a service has been put out to tender by the Council or when the organisation has been contacted directly due to the services that they supply to the public.

59. I am not clear on what is meant by the statement that cash grants are no longer available. I am unclear what constitutes an event.

As stated above, cash grants will no longer be available due to the current financial climate. Also, an event would be a one day or series of events that the community could participate in.

60. We are in agreement with the aims and philosophies behind the proposed changes set out in the consultation document.

61. We are always seeking to develop local partnerships with other voluntary sector organisations to open up opportunities for our clients. The proposed annual conference would provide an excellent networking opportunity as well as keeping us up to date with new developments across the sector.

62. It is unclear as to whether the existing support with rentals would continue under the proposed model. Given the reference to providing "funding in kind" and no mention of support with rentals under the resources section it would appear that rental costs would no longer be covered. While the other resources provided would be a useful addition, the loss of a grant to cover the full cost of rent would put our project at risk. This is of serious concern to us as KCC are not willing to increase our funding from them to pick up a cost previously covered by TDC.

A decision was made in 2007 to phase out concessionary rentals on Council-owned buildings and property used by the third sector. This was in order for the Council could meet its obligations to achieve commercial rentals and to ensure that a greater level of fairness was applied consistently. Please refer to point six and point twenty-three for further information.

63. The proposal seems fair as does the criteria to qualify.
64. Many people in the voluntary community sector are naïve when it comes to applying for funding and they are not happy at the bureaucracy and form filling required. Help in this area would also be beneficial.

CASE Kent are available available to help community and voluntary organisations write funding bids to external organisations. Please call them on 01843 588780 or email on thanet@casekent.org.uk for further information on this. The Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum are also available to help organisations on these matters. Please contact the Forum on 01843 843222, lm@tvcsf.org.uk or visit their website at www.tvcsf.org.uk.

65. I believe that a clear monitoring criteria should be provided to groups to ensure that any funds allocated be utilised in a clear and transparent manner. I have found that often voluntary and community groups fall down in this important area through lack of business skills and knowledge, they need help to master this.

All organisations use of resources through the Community Partnership Agreements will be monitored carefully in house and they will be advised of what resource they have left at any time they require.

66. I believe that the help/support offered should be offered in plain English and presented in a fun way with the ultimate objective of “empowering” the individuals and giving them new skills and abilities.

The primary purpose of the Community Partnership Agreement policy document is for adoption by Cabinet and for information for the third sector as part of the consultation process. Once it has been agreed, the resource will be advertised to the third sector in plain English as will the criteria. We are happy to explain anything that is not understood within the policy document, please call Sarah Phippin on 01843 577092 or Michael Gilbertson on 01843 577717 for further information.

67. There is an element of duplication as KCC already provide printing, supplies and web based grant finding also, CASE Kent are funded by TDC, KCC and the PCT to provide help with funding applications.

As far as our investigations go with this, KCC do not provide free printing services or supplies to third sector organisations, and we have been advised that if some organisations have had this then it has been at the discretion of the KCC officer or manager that they have been liaising with. If anyone would like help with completing funding applications we would encourage them to contact CASE Kent on 01843 588780 or thanet@casekent.org.uk or The Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum on 01843 843222 or lm@tvcsf.org.uk.

68. Most voluntary groups do need a certain amount of core funding to provide services. Staff salaries and rent have to be found to enable the service to survive; at the end of the day, local authorities need to decide if they want the services to continue. In the past, the voluntary sector has filled the gaps and supported the statutory sector. I also note that the need for quality accreditation is no longer in the criteria.

69. Partnership Agreements provide clear lines of accountability and responsibility. It would be worth making clear what Thanet Compact is and what organisations have to do to sign up. There should be an inclusive principle i.e. open to diversity.

The Thanet Compact is a written agreement that has been devised between the voluntary and community sector and statutory organisations to improve working relationships between the two. Through codes of practice that signatories commit to, it establishes a framework which guides behaviour by setting out what each side can expect from the other. If you would like more information on the Thanet Compact please call Sarah Phippin on 01843 577092, email sarah.phippin@thanet.gov.uk or visit www.thanetcompact.org.uk or contact Barry Coppock on 01843 864487 or barry.coppock@hotmail.com.

70. Do we know how much money has been set aside for this initiative? Is it a fixed amount and therefore will require some form of competition or is it based on criteria being met, leading to allocation of monies/resources?

All potential partners will be required to meet the criteria that is stated in the policy. At present there is no definite amount put aside for the scheme, but it will be a capped amount for each organisation and once they have used all of their resource for the year they will be notified and will not have access to the resources until the following year.

71. What would be the role of the named Thanet District Council officer?

The role of the named officer would be to provide support to the organisation however necessary and within their capacity – for example, helping to organise events and PR would be within this remit. Secretarial services are excluded from the arrangement.

72. Would attendance at the annual conference be compulsory – could a nominee attend on behalf of the organisation?

Attendance would not be compulsory, and if necessary a nominee would be welcome to attend.

73. Can we please clarify what is meant by “community partnership agreements will not be available to religious groups for their primary purposes?” Does this mean that if the provision is open to all, then the agreement is possible? However, if it is a Sunday school/Islamic study group for Christians/Moslems then these groups would not qualify?

The term “primary purposes” means the function for which the organisation runs. For example, a religious group would not be able to use the agreement for the promotion of their beliefs, or meeting rooms as a place of worship.

74. Would marquee hire come under the same arrangement as “room hire”?

The Council does not have access to the equipment first hand and therefore does not have this type of equipment available as part of the agreement.

75. If the proposals go ahead in their present form I can see a lot of organisations such as ours struggling very badly and maybe some will not be able to continue, despite the need for children to be given safe freedom. Our leaders and committee give freely of their time but there is a limit as to how much that they can do.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide any organisations cash grants due to the current financial climate but we are happy to endorse the application of funding bids to external organisations and CASE Kent or The Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum are available to help organisations write these applications.

76. Our organisation found a small grant very helpful as “pump primino”. Several hundred pounds has purchased good tools and will save large bills for contractors. I’m not sure that the proposed system will help us, but they are clear.

77. We understand the reasons but regret that discontinuation of small grants. The system was clear and simple to use.

78. How many applications can we submit?

If you are not successful in the first instance, we are happy for you to apply again – please note that applications will be refused if the criteria is not met fully, so if this is the case for your organisation, please ensure that you have rectified the situation before re-submitting.

79. How will the scoring system work?

There is no scoring system for this policy. Applications will be considered and accepted on the basis of the qualifying criteria being met.

80. Will there be lots of paper work?

No.

81. Personally I believe that the Council is being prudent but I'm not quite sure that all groups within Thanet agree. Is there a way for similar community groups linking – I also think that the Council should have made it clear that groups should reach certain criteria and must be able to explain their work fully and commit to work in full partnership with Council if accepting funding. I cannot help thinking that there ought to be some funding available for very special one off projects – that's not clear to me – have I missed something?

Thanet District Council will always encourage organisations who work towards similar goals to work in partnership where applicable but this would be a decision for the organisations involved. In terms of the funding for special "one off" projects, please contact us regarding this matter as if it would be an event then it would be considered by the events team via an application by your organisation.

82. I'm not sure why the importance of support from parish councillors is as valid as ward councillors in order to qualify for the Community Partnership Agreement.

Our intention is to not exclude Parish Councillors from the process as they have an important role to play at a parish level.

83. It seems to me, by the Council's information of stating that grants would be available for events at this stage has prompted people to set up groups ready to apply for funding for events whether needed or not for our area. These groups should provide information on need for the area.

Applications for events will be considered separately this year and will be run under a different scheme that is currently in the process of being drafted. There will be a marking criteria, and if organisations apply for funding for an event then the grant must be used for this purpose. Please contact the events team for more information on 01843 577167 or gillian.shepherd@thanet.gov.uk.

Useful Numbers

- Business Rates – business.rates@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577557
- CASE Kent – thanet@casekent.org.uk 01843 588780
- Customer Services/Thanet Gateway Plus – customer.services@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577000
- Community Portal – paul.lawes@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577035
- Events Team – gillian.shepherd@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577167
- Grants Team – sarah.phippin@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577092 or michael.gilbertson@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577177
- Service Level Agreements – sophie.chadwick@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577631
- Thanet Community & Voluntary Sector Forum – lm@tvcsf.org.uk 01843 843222

- Thanet Compact – sarah.phippin@thanet.gov.uk 01843 577092 or barrycoppock@hotmail.com 01843 864487