

Transport & Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 12 January 2016

Water of Leith Conservation Trust - Third Sector Organisation Grant Award 2016/2017

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to recommend a third sector organisation award to the Water of Leith Conservation Trust (WOLCT) of £25,175 for 2016/2017.

This is consistent with the recommendation agreed by the Transport and Environment Committee on 17 March 2015, to seek a reduction from 2014/15 levels of 10% over 2016/17 and 2017/18.

This will enable the continuation of the collaborative approach between the Council and the WOLCT to the management of the Water of Leith, while ensuring that the level of award makes a contribution to the overall saving requirements of the Council at this time.

Links

Coalition pledges	P30, P48
Council outcomes	CO23, CO25, CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2, SO4

Water of Leith Conservation Trust - Third Sector Organisation Grant Award 2016/2017

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Approves the 2016/2017 third sector organisation award to the Water of Leith Conservation Trust.
- 1.2 Agrees that an overall reduction from 2014/2015 levels of 10% be applied and be spread over 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- 1.3 Notes that the award for 2016/17 will be £25,175.
- 1.4 Notes that these reductions support the Council's response to overall budget pressures, while enabling the continuation of a collaborative approach to the management of the Water of Leith.
- 1.5 Agrees that discussions be held with the Trust to identify likely funding and service levels over the three year period from 2018/19 onwards.

Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2014, the Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee agreed the transfer of responsibility for third sector organisation grants to executive committees and policy development sub-committees.
- 2.2 The Committee also agreed that third sector grants should be aligned with the strategic plan, commissioning and capital coalition pledge priorities, and that, ideally, programmes should be funded over a three period, to provide financial stability for recipient organisations.
- 2.3 The Better Outcomes Leaner Delivery (BOLD) workstream on third sector expenditure additionally recommended a reduction in third sector spend of 10% over three years.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 17 March 2015, the Transport and Environment Committee considered the grant application for the Water of Leith Conservation Trust and agreed that the grant would be approved and maintained at the previous level of £26,500 for 2015/16, but that savings would be sought from 2016/17 onwards.

Main report

- 3.1 A third party grant application for 2016/17 was received from the Water of Leith Conservation Trust by the closing date of 6 November 2015. It is now the responsibility of the Transport and Environment Committee to consider the application.
- 3.2 The Water of Leith Conservation Trust is a key partner in the sustainable management of the Water of Leith. Management of the river is guided by the Council adopted Water of Leith Management Plan 2010-2020. The Plan contains 83 actions for 11 statutory agencies and organisations. The Trust has responsibility for 59% of the actions.
- 3.3 The work of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust delivers:
- a co-ordinated and integrated approach to the management of the river;
 - biodiversity improvement projects;
 - volunteering opportunities;
 - promotion of responsible public enjoyment of the river;
 - provision of the Water of Leith Visitor Centre; and
 - an education and group visit programme.
- 3.4 These activities link directly to the delivery of the management plan and provide significant added value to the environmental and visitor management activities that the Council is able to deliver directly.
- 3.5 The Trust has applied for a grant of £26,500 for 2016/17. This is the same level of grant as approved for 2015/16. It is recommended however that a reduction be applied over 2016/17 and 2017/18, in order to meet the BOLD recommendation of a reduction of 10% over the three year period from 2015/16. This requires that a reduction of £2,650 is sought by the end of 2017/18. It is recommended therefore that award of £25,175 be made in 2016/17 and an award of £23,850 be made in 2017/18.
- 3.6 The grant awarded to the Trust had remained static since 2005/6. Over this period, the services and benefits provided by the Trust have increased significantly. The number of visitors to the Water of Leith Visitor Centre has increased from 7,166 in 2005/6 to 17,125 in 2014/15 and the Centre is now open seven days a week. There has been a 25% increase in the number of volunteer hours and the number of practical tasks, river clean-ups and patrols have all doubled.
- 3.7 The Trust has indicated that it will attempt to make up the shortfall through additional fundraising activities. However, should this not be successful, the annual reduction of service as a consequence of the grant reduction of £2,650 over 2016/17 and 2017/18 is forecast to be: opening the visitor centre 6 rather than 7 days a week with an associated reduction in annual visits from 17,000 to

15,000; running 10 rather than 14 children's events; running 3 rather than 4 guided walks; hosting 1 rather than 2 large public events; facilitation of 40 rather than 50 conservation volunteer tasks; 10 rather than 12 river clean-ups; 15 rather than 18 reactive maintenance activities; 15 rather than 20 non-native invasive species tasks; and 40 (2,000 hours) rather than 50 (2,500 hours) corporate / community practical activities.

- 3.8 It is recommended that in order to support financial stability, the Council works jointly with the Trust to identify likely funding levels and associated outputs over the three period from 2018/19 to 2020/2021. This exercise will need to be carried out with reference to the prevailing financial circumstances facing the Council at the time.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Each grant recipient is required to complete a funding agreement which details the outcomes, outputs and targets the recipient is required to achieve. The targets contribute to both service objectives and service plans, and in this case, directly to the implementation of the Water of Leith Management Plan.
- 4.2 Delivery of these targets is monitored throughout each financial year by a Grant Monitoring Officer.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The recommended grant award for 2016/17 is £25,175, a 5% reduction from the sum awarded in 2015/16.
- 5.2 The award is budgeted for in the Parks & Greenspace service budget.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 In February 2014, the Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee agreed to transfer responsibility for developing future grant programmes and making awards to executive committees and policy development sub-committees.
- 6.2 The Third Sector Co-production Steering Group has been set up to share good practice in the development of third sector grant programmes.
- 6.3 The work of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust assists the Council with meeting its statutory and regulatory duties with respect to biodiversity, outdoor access and public safety.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The contents and recommendations of this report do not detract from the delivery of the general public sector equality duties. The work of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust does not infringe upon the ten areas of rights and makes a positive contribution to 'age' (facilities, information and resources are provided to help people of all ages learn about and enjoy the Water of Leith) and 'disability' (buildings, events and activities are accessible to people of all abilities).

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The work of the Water Leith Conservation Trust has a significant positive impact on the natural and cultural heritage of the river. The Water of Leith walkway provides an opportunity for non-motorised transport, physical activity and recreation, supporting carbon reduction and health and well-being objectives.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 There was significant stakeholder engagement during the review of the third party grant process during 2013.
- 9.2 During 2015/16, engagement with the Water of Leith Conservation Trust has been maintained through the established grant monitoring arrangements.
- 9.3 Discussions were held with the Trust about the likely reduction in output arising from the proposed reduction in grant in 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- 9.4 The Council will work with the Trust to identify likely funding levels and outputs from 2018/19 onwards.

Background reading/external references

[Review of Council Grants to Third Parties 2013/2014, Communities and Neighbourhoods, 11th February 2014.](#)

[Services for Communities Grants to Third Sector Organisations 2015/16, Transport and Environment, 17th March 2015](#)

[Minutes, Transport and Environment Committee, 17th March 2015](#)

John Bury

Acting Director of Services for Communities

Contact: David Jamieson

E-mail: david.jamieson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 7055

Links

Coalition pledges	P30 – Continue to maintain a sound financial position including long term financial planning P48 – Use Green Flag and other strategies to preserve our green spaces
Council outcomes	CO23 – Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community CO25 – The Council has effective and efficient services that deliver on objectives CO26 – The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 – Edinburgh’s citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health SO4 – Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
Appendices	None