
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2003**

CROS.25/03 EXTERNAL GRANT FUNDING PERFORMANCE REVIEW - UPDATE

Pursuant to Minute CROS.154/02, the Head of Economic and Community Development Services presented report ECD.01/03 concerning the External Grant Funding Performance Review.

The report provided an initial response to some of the procedural issues raised by Members and suggested areas for further discussion to achieve a more corporate approach to external funding.

She reminded Members that the Study had identified nine key areas for further consideration which had now been divided into two groups "Operational/Procedural" and "Developmental/Strategic" actions. She then outlined the initial proposals to develop the issues into action, which had been prepared in consultation with Financial Services and the External Funding Officer.

External funding had become increasingly important across all service areas for the delivery of a range of functions and, clearly, securing, spending and monitoring the impact of that funding was a shared corporate responsibility. The Study highlighted the need for development and improvement of both the success rate in funding bids and the subsequent management processes in respect of those bids which were successful. Business Unit Heads and the internal processes within Units had a vital role in identifying and responding to funding opportunities where these clearly contributed to achieving the objectives in the Corporate Plan relevant to each service. It was therefore important to improve the processes within Business Units backed up by Financial Services and the External Funding Officer.

It had not been possible to prepare a fully fledged Action Plan in the period since November, since clearly that would require further study of best practice elsewhere, more extensive consultation with Business Units and with key Funding Agencies, discussions amongst Project Officers and with externally funded partnerships and programmes and clarification of priorities. It would also require to be tied in with the process identified in the Chief Executive's report to the Executive on Integrating Strategic Planning with Three Year Budgeting.

However, at this early stage some key initial actions could be recommended:

- a) The updating of the draft procedure – Responsibilities in Respect of Grant Claims and External Funding (a copy of which was appended to the report) and endorsement by CMT and Business Units.
- b) Improvements to coding arrangements for funds from external sources by Financial Services in discussion with Business Unit Heads.
- c) Corporate discussions to commence on the development of a database to enable the effective management of external funding with detailed development and implementation, subject to the availability of staff and financial resources.
- d) Consider whether to purchase the Grantfinder system or an appropriate alternative.
- e) Further study of best practice in other Authorities and partnerships.
- f) Discussions amongst Project Officers and with externally funded Partnerships and programmes and consultation on proposed new procedures.

The Head of Economic and Community Development Services invited Members' comments for transmission to the Executive. Progress should be reviewed in six months time and, if the changes were not proving to be effective, alternative recommendations for more stringent improvements should be made at that time.

In considering the matter, Members raised the following issues to which the Head of Economic and Community Development Services responded:

A co-ordinated approach was required, together with sufficient supervision to ensure that all was put in place. What was the chain of command?

The External Funding Officer operated within the Economic and Community Development Services Unit. He had a feel for all available grant opportunities and was liaising with and helping Officers to go through the process. The Council did not have a team of people to police the exercise and that was beyond the role of the External Funding Officer.

We still have a system whereby Heads of Units are entering into the specialised field of submitting bids as a result of which problems could arise, and no system was in place to address that.

If basic triggers were in place that would go a long way to ensure that bids were not submitted without the appropriate authority.

Would the Grantfinder system make it more efficient?

The Grantfinder system itself would be relatively straightforward to operate in identifying the sources of external funding.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Executive be advised that this Committee endorses the approach detailed within report ECD.01/03.

(2) That the Head of Economic and Community Development Services be requested to submit a further report in due course, including an Action Plan related to the previous report on the External Grant Funding Performance Review Study (Financial Memo No. 87 refers).