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**STRATEGIC GRANTS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Andy Scott, Health and Partnerships Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Catherine Whitehead, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To ask Cabinet to agree a way forward for the future of strategic grant to deliver savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MDFT).

**Summary**

2. The original timetable for the review of strategic grants assumed a saving of £100,000 in 2015/16 and a further £95,000 in 2016/17. The 2015/16 MTFP, currently out to consultation, anticipated a shortfall in the original savings with an anticipated saving of £50,000 in 2015/16 rather than the £95,000.
3. However if the proposals set out in this paper are agreed it is realistic to assume the full savings will be delivered and the 2015/16 MTFP will be amended in light of this.
4. To achieve these savings it is proposed to cease strategic grant funding Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) from March 2015. This is to seize the opportunity to bring together advice provided under the Social Fund, Community switching and other contracts. This commissioning activity will take place in the spring 2015. It is proposed that funding to CAB will be kept in place until the future commissioning arrangements are in place to maintain the current capacity and ensure that the needs of the residents of Darlington continue to be met.
5. Infrastructure support has been reviewed in the last year. It is proposed to continue funding Evolution, the current infrastructure provider, until September to allow for performance against the infrastructure action plan to be evaluated. Following this work options for the future of infrastructure support will be brought to Cabinet prior to September for decision.
6. It is proposed that funding for the other recipients of strategic grant (set out in the main report) will be extended for a further 12 months at the current level to allow for a review of these services. This will need to link to work across the health and

social care remit. This should take place in line with the development of well-being and prevention services and the intention to reduce demand on care services.

## Recommendation

7. It is recommended that:
- (a) Cabinet agree to fund CAB at the current level until new financial advice arrangements are put in place linked to the Financial Inclusion Strategy.
  - (b) Cabinet agree to fund Evolution for a period of six months whilst options for the future commissioning of infrastructure report are developed.
  - (c) Cabinet agree to fund Age UK Darlington, First Stop, DAD, Groundwork for a period of up to 12 months at the current rate to allow a review of these services to take place.

## Reasons

8. The recommendation is supported as it is important to understand the potential for improving delivery of services with the voluntary sector and to fully investigate options for financial advice, infrastructure and other frontline delivery

**Catherine Whitehead**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

## Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct benefits for crime and disorder but many of the issues of this report are of secondary benefit in reducing crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Many of the Strategic Grant outcomes support improved health and well-being.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impacts
Diversity	Some of the outcomes for organisations in receipt of Strategic Grant support access to services for protected characteristic groups
Wards Affected	All wards are affected by delivery funded through Strategic Grant.
Groups Affected	The whole population will potentially be impacted upon by the use of Strategic Grant
Budget and Policy Framework	Strategic Grants are part of the support given to the Voluntary Sector and are also part of the Medium Term Financial Plan budget proposals.

Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Strategic Grants support a number of vulnerable people in Darlington and will help to reduce inequalities.
Efficiency	This report aims to identify value for money.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

9. Work is ongoing to develop a Financial Inclusion Strategy and a key element of this is to ensure that there is a range of financial advice to help the people of Darlington. This will include debt advice, community switching which is currently provided as part of Strategic Grant delivery.
10. An infrastructure review has been carried out and an action plan is in place but it is important to have time to assess progress against this plan. Options for delivery of infrastructure will then be developed to ensure that the way this is delivered in the future is fit for purpose and the needs of both the sector and the local authority.
11. Age UK Darlington, First Stop, DAD, Groundwork are currently funded until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 through Strategic Grant. It will be important to review the way strategic grant is operating alongside currently commissioned services prior to making a decision to withdraw grant or incorporate activity into other service specifications. This will need to take place with partners who may also fund these organisations.
12. It is proposed to fund Age UK Darlington, First Stop, DAD and Groundwork for a maximum of twelve months whilst reviews take place.

### Financial Implications

13. Funding currently for Strategic Grant is as follows:

Evolution	£45,988
CAB	£50,000
Age UK Darlington	£18,966
DAD	£10,000
Groundwork	£10,500

14. There is currently an underspend on the strategic grant budget of £31,000 for 2014/15 as the Credit Union funding allocation as part of the original grant programme was for two years only and a small tactical fund set up in 2012 has not been spent this year.
15. The implication of this report is that savings of £81,000 MTFP savings will be delivered in 2015/16. Future savings will depend upon the outcome of the reviews that will take place in the next twelve months and also upon future commissioning activity.

### Consultation

16. Consultation has taken place with the organisations affected in the coming financial year and also more broadly as part of the budget consultation process last year.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

17. The consultation responses were that there was an understanding of the need to review budgets but that there would of course be a reduction in services if the overall amount of funding is reduced.