

**REPORT TO:** Grants Advisory Committee 28 February 2020

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER:** Councillor John Williams Lead Cabinet Member for Finance

**LEAD OFFICER:** Kathryn Hawkes, Programme Manager

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## **Idox Open4Community Renewal**

### **Executive Summary**

1. The purpose of this paper is to enable Grants Advisory Committee to review the Council's IDOX Open4Community contract renewal which is due to expire 31 May 2020.

### **Key Decision**

2. No

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Grants Advisory Committee:
  - a. terminates the contract between SCDC and Idox for the provision of the GrantGrabber (Grantfinder) service; and
  - b. increases the Service Support Grant allocated to 'Support Cambridgeshire' by £4,000.00 for the provision of grantfinder services to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across South Cambridgeshire.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. South Cambridgeshire District Council currently has a contract with Idox which provides the GrantGrabber (Grantfinder) service. This tool is hosted on the Council's website and is invaluable in enabling the VCS across South Cambridgeshire to apply for additional external sources of funding and provide added value to projects and schemes across the district.
5. VCS organisations also have access to this service via the various websites of the Support Cambridgeshire Partnership; a group of VCS infrastructure organisations including Cambridge CVS, Cambs ACRE and Hunts Forum.
6. Given that groups and residents can access the service through the websites of the Support Cambridgeshire Partnership, it is felt that SCDC's offering is now a

duplication of the service. Resources could be streamlined, and a contribution made by this Council to that work instead of supporting a separate contract. Guidance from the Council's procurement team is that this Council should increase the grant funding it already gives to Cambridge CVS by £4,000 in order to contribute to the Support Cambridgeshire Partnership's collective costs for the Grantfinder contract.

7. This change would mean a cost saving to the Council and a return to a previous arrangement whereby the Council contributes to the cost of providing a grantfinding service for the VCS by the VCS.

## Details

8. Open4Community is a software that is supplied by Idox which is available as a self-serve facility for any voluntary and community groups and Parish Councils wishing to search for funding opportunities for community projects.
9. The tool is available on the community pages of the SCDC website and is known as GrantGrabber. It enables users to search online for a wide range of funding sources and other information at any time of the day through the Council's website. Anyone who visits our website and finds GrantGrabber can access the service. You do not have to be a South Cambridgeshire resident to register.
10. Between October 2017 and September 2018 there were 419 fund views by 48 different viewers. Between October 2018 to September 2019 there were 797 fund views (a 90% year on year increase) by 73 different viewers (a 52% year on year increase).
11. Since November 2015 the total amount of funding voluntary groups have disclosed to have received via GrantGrabber is £183,372. Allocations include £10.7K for Hale Road Allotment and Gardening Association in Swavesey, and £45K for Cottenham Parish Council.
12. Although we have statistics on the number of fund views it is not so easy to establish whether or not the searches carried out have resulted in funding being secured. Groups do not have to disclose how much funding they have received. It is likely that groups have secured more than £183K through the GrantGrabber service.
13. In their annual report Hunts Forum, the named lead for the Idox contract with the Support Cambridgeshire Partnership, identify South Cambridgeshire as the most successful district with voluntary groups receiving £253,171 between September 2018 – August 2019. Hunts Forum are much more proactive in promoting the service than the Council, which is likely to explain why groups secure much more funding through their site than ours.

## Options

14. The Grants Advisory Committee is asked to consider the following options:

### Option 1

15. The Council could renew its current contract with Idox. The cost of this would be £6,630 (for a 1-year contract), £12,730 (2 years), £18,300 (3 years).

### Option 2

16. The Council could increase its Service Support grant to Cambridge CVS by £4,000 and require CCVS to pass this grant on to Hunts Forum so that it can continue to direct South Cambridgeshire residents and groups to the service at a reduced cost.

### Option 3

17. The Council could discontinue its contract with Idox and provide no alternative funding for the provision of this grant finding service for the VCS.

18. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

## Financial

19. There are financial implications as detailed above of continuing or of changing the way this service is provided. Option 1 results in continued costs to the Council. Options 2 & 3 result in reduced costs to the Council.

## Risks/Opportunities

20. The options above provide the Council with the opportunity to:

- a) reduce its expenditure in this regard; and
- b) ensure a continuation of the grantfinder service, which is supported and promoted by VCS infrastructure support organisations.

21. If Option 1 were the preferred option, given there are now other possible companies that have developed similar applications to Idox, the Council would need to obtain 3 quotes to comply with the Council's constitution.

22. The risk of changing the way the Council funds this service may lead to a negative impact on Idox's business model. Grants can sometimes be considered contracts if they are structured inappropriately which would trigger the Council having to undertake a procurement exercise. However, to avoid this situation when providing grants, SCDC officers do not detail how those grants are provided and instead the service delivery is determined by the grant recipient.

23. The Service Support funding agreement states “Both parties may jointly agree to omit any part of the service, or provide additional services or vary temporarily or permanently any part of the service but any such Agreement must be in writing and signed by both parties”. If we follow our grant process and do not structure the grant as if it were a contract it is felt that this is an acceptable way of ensuring continuity of the service and of reducing the cost to the public purse of supporting the VCS in this way.

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **A modern and caring Council**

24. The recommendation at point 3 contributes to the above Priority Areas for the Council by ensuring a vibrant VCS and demonstrating the Council’s support for the sector.

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Report Author:**

Ellen Bridges – Project Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713294