

MEETING 28/11/2019

Ref: 15455

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support

Brent Irish Advisory Service

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Brent

Amount requested: £198,509

Benefit: Brent

[Revised request: £243,605]

Amount recommended: £243,600

The Applicant

Established in 1978, Brent Irish Advisory Service (BIAS), provides two main services, an older people group and advocacy to the Irish and Irish travellers community on welfare and other advocacy areas. The weekly pensioners group aim to reduce isolation and improve health and welfare by running a range of activities. Last year the advice service supported over 800 clients – some on a one-off basis with others who have more complex cases. The organisation are part of Brent Advice Forum and networks with key organisations, locally, regionally and nationally.

The Application

The level of demand for the advice service has been increasing over the last few years, with people presenting at a time of crisis with multiple and complex advice needed. Funding is sought for a Poverty Worker and associated costs to enable BIAS to respond to those clients presenting with complex cases.

The Recommendation

The organisation has a good track record for providing quality advice to the Irish and traveller communities and are a well-respected partner of Brent's Advice Forum. This post will enable the group to take on the more complex cases and support clients to tribunal level. In discussions with your officer, the organisation revised the budget to reflect the true costs, without using up their reserves.

£243,600 over five years (£49,600; £47,300; £48,100; £49,200; £49,400) towards the costs of a full time Poverty Worker and associated running costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

The organisation currently has two FTE advice workers and with an increase in demand, particularly with the introduction of Universal Credit, it has meant that BIAS has not been able to fully meet demand. With this post taking on the more complex cases, and offering an outreach service, this will enable the organisation to move towards meeting local demand for their services. The advice workers will triage clients and where appropriate refer them on to the Poverty Worker. It has been identified that they will provide support for at least 8 people to tribunal level. They will also provide a service to those that are unable to attend the drop in through home-based outreach.

Financial Information

BIAS have shown a deficit position for 2018 and 2019. The deficit in 2018 was due to the costs of closing a dementia respite day centre that was operating at a loss. The 2019 deficit was due to not including previously deferred income relating to an Irish

Government funded programme, who operate a July-June financial year, however the expenditure was included. Going forward, this has been rectified for 2020.

Whilst the level of free reserves held is below target the shortfall is decreasing and the organisation is working towards increasing its free reserves.

Year end as at 31 March	2018 Audited Accounts £	2019 draft accounts £	2020 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	150,164	131,781	149,883
- % of Income confirmed as at 22/10/2019	n/a	n/a	93%
Expenditure	(173,978)	(149,706)	(149,500)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(23,814)	(17,925)	383
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(4,338)	(1,380)	(67)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(19,476)	(16,545)	450
	(23,814)	(17,925)	383
Total expenditure	173,978	149,706	149,500
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	63,596	62,216	62,666
No of months of total expenditure	4.4	5.0	5.0
Reserves policy target	86,989	74,853	74,750
No of months of total expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(23,393)	(12,637)	(12,084)