

AGMA STATUTORY FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

Date: 18 September 2020

Subject: Closedown of AGMA S48 Grants Programme

Report of: Alison Gordon, Assistant Director, Business, Innovation and Enterprise, GMCA

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To inform SFC of the closure of the AGMA-run Section 48 grants fund, in line with the legislative requirements concerning closure of the scheme as from the 1 April 2019.

RECOMMENDATION:

SFC is asked to note the closure of the AGMA-run Section 48 grants fund.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Reports to joint Greater Manchester Combined Authority and AGMA Executive Board 16 December 2016
Cultural Programme Consultation report GMCA 29 September 2017
Reports to the AGMA Exec Board 27 October 2017

1. Background

- 1.1 In December 2016, the Joint GMCA and AGMA Executive Board agreed to recommend to the ten Greater Manchester district councils that consideration be given to the closure of the Section 48 AGMA grants scheme and that approval be sought from the districts for AGMA to undertake a consultation on the formal closure of the Section 48 scheme. The Joint Board also asked for a report to be brought back to it setting out detailed proposals for a new funding programme for culture, to be operated under the GMCA.
- 1.2 The Greater Manchester Grants Scheme, known as Section 48, was established in 1986 and is administered by AGMA on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester district councils. Since the scheme was established priorities and criteria for the scheme have changed, but its core purpose - to support organisations to deliver cultural, social or community activity and services across the ten districts of Greater Manchester - has remained. Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 (the last three year funding cycle) AGMA invested, on behalf of the districts, £9.9m in the Grants programme.
- 1.3 A report to the GMCA on 29 September 2017 outlined the outcome of a consultation (which closed on 16 September 2017) into the creation of the new GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund. The creation of this new fund was agreed by the GMCA and the call for projects was launched on Friday 6 October 2017. The September report to the GMCA also provided interim results on the consultation on the proposed closure of AGMA Section 48 scheme.
- 1.4 On 27 October 2017 the Joint GMCA and AGMA Executive Board members recommended that Greater Manchester district councils should agree to close the Section 48 Grants programme, noting that it will be replaced by a new GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund from April 2018.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 By August 2017 AGMA had received approval from all ten Greater Manchester districts to consult on the possible closure of the AGMA Section 48 grants programme. As the both the potential closure of Section 48 and the establishment of a new GMCA fund were interlinked, consultations on both were aligned and opened on 9 August 2017.
- 2.2 A targeted consultation process was followed where Cllr Morris, GMCA Portfolio Lead for Culture, Arts and Leisure contacted current recipients of the fund and members of the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee. Cllr Morris also contacted lead cultural officers in all ten LAs asking them to respond and forward through their networks. This communication was followed up by further targeted communication from the GMCA who also promoted the survey through voluntary and third sector networks in Greater Manchester. Consultation took the form of an online questionnaire and four open events.

3. Consultation Summary and Responding Actions

- 3.1 There was general support for closure of the AGMA Section 48 grants, as long as it was replaced by a suitable alternative. Consultees considered the proposed GMCA Culture and Social Impact Programme to be a suitable alternative and this programme commenced on 01 April 2018.

4. Closure of the Section 48 Scheme

- 4.1 By December 2017, all ten Greater Manchester districts had agreed to the closure of the Section 48 scheme.
- 4.2 Section 48(8) of the Local Government Act 1985 provides that a grants scheme made by councils under Section 48 "...may be revoked by those councils (or, in the absence of agreement between all of them, by a majority of those councils) with effect from the end of any financial year after that in which the decision to revoke the scheme is made."
- 4.3 This meant that even though the ten Greater Manchester districts agreed to close the Section 48 scheme, it still technically had to continue to exist until the end of the 2018/19 financial year. However, as that year was also the initial year of grant funding under the GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund, the Section 48 Scheme was zero-funded for 2018/19 to avoid duplication of grant provision. It is to be noted that a precedent had already been set for potential zero funding of particular years of the Section 48 scheme, as the second and third years of the 2015/16 to 2017/18 Section 48 cycle of funding were not guaranteed and potentially could have been left unfunded (although this did not ultimately occur).

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the technical closure of the AGMA Grants programme, in line with the legislative requirements concerning closure of the scheme from the 1 April 2019.