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REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF GRANTS IN LIEU OF RENT

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Report 0 SB/12/04 to the Executive

September 2004

1. Report 0 SB/5/04 containing the recommendations arising from the review of the provision of grants in lieu of rent was presented to the Executive at its meeting held on 30th March 2004. Consideration of the Report was deferred at that meeting and the Overview and Scrutiny Board were requested to consider widening the scope of the review to take account of the matters raised at the meeting.
2. In order to progress the Review, the Panel invited the Executive Members for the Environment and Finance to meet with it to discuss the concerns of the Executive. A further meeting of the Panel was then held in order for the Panel to determine how it would wish to progress the matter.
3. The Panel believe that it has met the request of the Executive to draw up a policy for determining the level of grant to be offered to organisations to offset the market rent of premises let to them by the Council. It therefore confirms its recommendations to the Executive as set out in Report 0 SB/5/04.
4. However, the Panel feel it would be inappropriate at the present time to continue with the additional review agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board of examining the processes and procedures in place to determine applications for grants across the Authority. Given this conclusion, the Panel would like to draw to the attention of the Executive to a number of points which were raised during the review but which were not included within the report as they fell outside of the scope.
5. There is a need to raise awareness within the community of Torbay of the availability of grants from a wide range of non-Council sources. Awareness could be raised by holding an open day or seminar for voluntary and community organisations.
6. Further, if all Council grants were to be administered from a single point within the Authority, this would enable a knowledge base to be established so that, if the Council was not able to offer a grant in particular circumstances, the applicant could be signposted to other possible sources of funding.
7. It is suggested that all applications for Council grants should be determined by a sub-group of the Executive. This would mean that consideration could be given to the number of grants which organisations were receiving from the Council.
8. On a wider point, the Panel feel that when the Executive asks the Overview and Scrutiny Board to undertake policy development work on its behalf, it should be clear about the objectives and the scope of the work.