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**Guidance - Role of Council Grants Monitoring Officers**

**1. Purpose and Context**

1.1 Sandwell Council provides funding to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations where this is considered the most effective way to deliver services to local communities. This guidance outlines the framework within which Grants Monitoring Officers (GMOs) operate to support effective relationships with funded organisations.

1.2 Funding may be awarded through various mechanisms, including direct grants, competitive application processes, grant agreements, and contracts. This guidance applies to any Council officer responsible for liaising with and overseeing organisations in receipt of Council funding, regardless of the funding route.

1.3 In awarding funding, the Council recognises the value of the organisation’s work and places trust in its independent management to deliver agreed outcomes.

1.4 The Council and its Grants Monitoring Officers will respect the independence and autonomy of funded organisations.

**2. Role and Responsibilities**

**2.1 Accountability and Advisory Function**

* Grants Monitoring Officers are formally accountable to the Council but also have a duty to provide constructive advice and support to funded organisations.

**2.2 Performance and Compliance Monitoring**

* GMOs are responsible for reporting on organisational performance and compliance with grant conditions, with particular focus on delivery against agreed outcomes.
* They may consult with other Council departments to inform their assessments.

**2.3 Funding Recommendations**

* GMOs advise the Council on the release of funds, based on their judgement of the organisation’s performance and adherence to funding conditions.

**2.4 Communication and Relationship Management**

* GMOs serve as the primary communication link between the Council and funded organisations.
* They provide updates on Council priorities, policy developments, and available resources.

**2.5 Access and Oversight**

* GMOs should be granted reasonable access to the organisation, including its management committee and staff, to assess performance and compliance.
* They may attend management or subcommittee meetings as observers (without voting rights), particularly when relevant to monitoring duties. Attendance should be occasional and not the sole method of engagement.

**2.6 Boundaries and Governance**

* GMOs must avoid acting as “shadow directors” or trustees by influencing decisions that are the responsibility of the organisation’s management.
* They may offer advice on Council policy and practice but must not direct or interfere with internal decision-making.

**2.7 Legal and Regulatory Assurance**

* While legal compliance is the responsibility of the organisation, GMOs should be satisfied that appropriate systems are in place to meet obligations around finance, health and safety, employment law, and governance.

**2.8 Financial Reporting**

* GMOs should receive audited accounts and the auditor’s management letter within six months of the organisation’s financial year-end. They may seek internal advice where necessary.

**2.9 Compliments, Comments, and Complaints**

* All funded organisations must have a formal procedure for handling feedback and complaints. GMOs should ensure this is actively monitored and reported to the management committee.
* Complaints received by the Council, especially from service users, should be referred to the organisation’s internal procedure in the first instance.

**2.10 Councillor Involvement**

* Since April 2000, the Council no longer appoints councillors to serve on management committees of funded organisations. Where councillors choose to participate, they do so in a personal capacity and do not represent the Council.
* The GMO remains the formal representative of the Council in all dealings with funded organisations.

**2.11 Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

* GMOs will have access to sensitive and confidential information. Relationships with funded organisations must be built on trust and professionalism.
* Information should be shared internally only when necessary and externally only with legitimate stakeholders, with the organisation’s awareness and consent.

**3. Conclusion**

3.1 This guidance is not an exhaustive list of duties but provides a general framework for the role of Grants Monitoring Officers. Given the diversity of the voluntary sector, flexibility and professional judgement will remain essential.

3.2 The document is not confidential and may be shared with funded organisations to promote transparency, accountability, and effective partnership working.

**4. Review**

4.1 This guidance will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and reflects best practice in grant management and sector engagement.

Reviewed September 2025