



**IPSWICH**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Ipswich Borough Council

## Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy

(18th September 2012)

Current edition for the 2022-23 Community Cash Grants Process

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Bryony Rudkin

Title: Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy

Contact: Deborah Carr, Community Support Operations Manager, [deborah.carr@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.carr@ipswich.gov.uk)

Head of Service: Ian Blofield, Head of Housing and Community Services

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## **Section 1: Introduction.**

The Council acknowledges that Ipswich has a strong, diverse and active voluntary and community sector.

The Council is keen to work in partnership with the sector, to meet the needs of local people, and to deliver the best services possible. The Council shows this commitment, and its value of the sector, by providing both direct and indirect financial support.

There will never be enough money to fund everyone's projects or meet everyone's needs, but by being clear about the principles and priorities that are most important to the Council and our duty to promote equality the Council will be able to invest public money effectively and maximize the value of the support the Council provides.

This document sets out how the Council sees its role in providing financial support for voluntary and community sector organisations in the Borough and its processes for awarding grants

The Policy aims to ensure that the Council's voluntary and community sector funding helps to deliver the council's long-term vision of sustainable improvements for the benefit of the people of Ipswich

## **Section 2: Purpose of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy**

### **2.1 Purpose.**

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the Council's approach to providing direct support grants for the voluntary and community sector.

The Council provides two distinct types of financial support for the district's voluntary and community sector - direct support grants (in various forms) and indirect support (concessions).

The overall Policy Objectives in respect of voluntary and community sector grants are:

- To target financial support to those groups providing services which closely match current council priorities.
- To maintain a corporate overview of the total amount of financial support provided for the voluntary and community sector.
- To ensure that the application and awards processes are fair and transparent.

- To develop and maintain annual performance monitoring data setting out achievements and activities delivered with Council funding.

At present concessions on rent and rates are decided on a case by case basis<sup>1</sup> but it is intended that a supplementary policy regarding concessions be also introduced shortly.

Other grants or funding sources are available for community improvement schemes e.g. traffic calming systems, bus shelters etc.; Area Committee grants; Economic Development, Arts and Culture projects and Community Safety projects. Supplementary policies will be introduced for these other types of grants in a phased manner.

## **2.2 Aims.**

The aims of this Policy are to:

- Improve communication, understanding and trust between all partners on funding issues.
- Clarify the funding relationship between the council and the voluntary and community sector.
- Support the accountability of the council in terms of spending public money more effectively.
- Demonstrate the council's commitment to the COMPACT (see 3.7).
- Work towards the voluntary and community sector's wish for greater financial security and ability to plan ahead.

## **2.3 Who is the policy for?**

It is for the benefit of the voluntary and community sector, the Council, and the people of Ipswich.

- For the voluntary and community sector it will set out how the council proposes to provide support.
- For the council's members and officers it will set out clear principles and priorities used to allocate funding in order to best meet the council's long term vision.
- For the people of Ipswich it will ensure that public money is spent wisely, and achieves the maximum benefit.

## **2.4 Consultation on this policy**

The draft policy was subject to a six-week consultation period involving local voluntary and community sector groups ending on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2009. The

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<sup>1</sup> Community Use of Council Assets Policy was agreed by Executive 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012 E/11/69

policy was adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and in 2012 some minor revisions to the policy were consulted upon internally within the Council. Internal consultation took place with the Council's Corporate Management Team, the Communities Working Group and council officers involved in the process. In August 2013 the text was updated to identify appropriate corporate and staffing changes.

This document was prepared taking into account the feedback provided by the consultees.

### **Section 3: Background Information and Context**

#### **3.1 Scope of the voluntary and community sector.**

The scope of the sector ranges from small local community groups to large national voluntary organisations, with all sizes in between. Public donations, charitable grants, the Lottery and government or Local Authority funding, are examples of their main sources of income.

There are about 169,000 general charities within the UK employing 839,000 paid charity workers. There are a further 750,000 unpaid trustees and 13.2 million unpaid volunteers (volunteering at least once per month). This equates to a very real saving of taxpayers money in terms of delivering services.  
(Source: *Working For A Charity*)

The Government also uses the term the 'Third Sector' to cover the wide range of voluntary and community organisations that exist. This definition also incorporates social enterprises, and co-operatives. However, the same broad definition applies, that is; *'Organisations that exist principally to reinvest surpluses to further their social, environmental or cultural objectives'*

Source: *'Partnership in Public Services: An Action Plan for third sector involvement'*.

#### **3.2 Sustainability of the Voluntary and Community Sector**

There is increased pressure on the sector to be 'more professional' or 'business-like', meet quality standards, and achieve sustainability. These factors combined with fewer numbers of volunteers, has led to groups needing to employ paid staff who are highly trained, and able to meet higher expectations and standards. Paid staff are often needed to deliver specific skilled roles such as fundraising, project management, finance and administration.

The Council believes that voluntary and community sector organisations should develop a range of income streams, from donations and external grant sources to delivering contracts and generating income through trading, to become more financially sustainable.

Sustainability requires several income streams, so that if one source of income dries up, others enable the valuable work of the organisation to continue and/or provide a cushion while new sources of money are sought.

### **3.3 The Voluntary and Community sector in Ipswich.**

Ipswich has a vibrant voluntary and community sector that is important to the council, as it is a major partner in promoting active communities and providing services, activities and facilities.

The council acknowledges the value of the sector and invests a considerable sum each year by way of direct and indirect support grants.

Local infrastructure organisations work behind the scenes to ensure that local voluntary and community sector groups and organisations get the support they need. They provide their members with a range of services and development support, and represent the voice of the sector. Not all voluntary and community groups deliver services directly to the public; some organisations are referred to as 'infrastructure' groups. These exist to provide representation, support, training, and advice or key information to front-line groups, helping to make them 'fit for purpose' (as part of the Government's 'Change Up' agenda).

The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) is a national organisation that provides key support for the voluntary and community sector. In Ipswich, Community Action Suffolk provides such support.

### **3.4 The role of Infrastructure organisations.**

Local infrastructure organisations help the voluntary and community sector in a variety of ways. The Council expects infrastructure organisations to deliver services against the following set of NAVCA standards:

#### **3.4.1 Identifying and filling the gaps.**

By monitoring the services provided by the voluntary and community sector in its local area, a local infrastructure organisation is able to easily identify where the gaps are. It can then work with new groups to address unmet needs and ensure that existing groups are equipped to tailor their services to the changing needs of the community.

### **3.4.2 Raising standards.**

Local infrastructure organisations are key to a fully-functioning, high quality voluntary and community sector. By providing access to information on anything from funding and legal advice to training and quality assurance standards, they ensure that local groups and organisations have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to support the local community.

### **3.4.3 Enabling communication and collaboration.**

Encouraging local groups to share resources and to work collaboratively creates a more efficient way of working and helps to build a stronger local sector. Local infrastructure organisations provide local groups and organisations with a forum for networking, enabling them to share good practice and expertise to form partnerships which can bid for public service contracts.

### **3.4.4 Providing a voice.**

Local infrastructure organisations act as a conduit, representing the diverse views of local groups and organisations to agencies such as the Council and other public bodies. They also promote two-way communication, so that the local sector is consulted on policy developments and can contribute to discussions and decision-making at a local level.

### **3.4.5 Promoting strategic involvement.**

The voluntary and community sector has a vital role to play in local policy-making and planning. Local infrastructure organisations make sure that the sector is represented and involved in strategic partnerships and other influential planning groups, and actively work with representatives to ensure they keep on top of key local issues.

*(Source NAVCA – what is local infrastructure: [www.nacva.org.uk](http://www.nacva.org.uk))*

## **3.5 Infrastructure provision in Ipswich<sup>2</sup>.**

The Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector in Ipswich is very diverse. It sees Community Action Suffolk as the main infrastructure organisation providing generalist support for voluntary and community organisations based in and/or working in Ipswich. When a need for specialist knowledge or expertise is necessary, Community Action Suffolk will be required to access this support from communities of special interest using their networks and membership database as a resource to identify the appropriate consultees.

Nationally the Government is encouraging growth in the voluntary and community sector increasing opportunities for groups to deliver public services and partnerships between statutory and voluntary sectors. In reality, at a local level, the Council is often one of the key funders of organisations, and one of the few bodies who fund core-running costs.

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<sup>2</sup> Community Action Suffolk (CAS) is the infrastructure organisation for Ipswich. The services and support previously with ICVS are now available via CAS.

The County Council is also another key funding provider for local Ipswich groups, where funding tends to be either in the form of contracts, cash grants or via their member locality grants.

The funding made available to support voluntary and community sector activity is limited and continually oversubscribed. It has become increasingly important to direct funding in a more appropriate and effective way, rather than based on 'historical' approaches to allocating funds.

### **3.6 The Council's links with the voluntary and community sector.**

Across the Council there are many examples of links with voluntary and community organisations of all sizes. These links range from formal partnerships through to informal contact. Joint working includes service delivery, joint fundraising, volunteer activity, events, and community involvement.

The Council also supports the sector by appointing elected Members or council officers to outside bodies.

### **3.7 The COMPACT.**

The COMPACT and its Codes of Practice is a written agreement [dated November 2007] between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector, and sets out how they can work together for mutual benefit.

This policy ensures that grant funding is allocated in line with the COMPACT principles.

### **3.8 Key challenges for the Council.**

The Council's role is to govern Ipswich on behalf of its people. It has many plans and strategies that aim to reflect local people's needs, and show how they can be met effectively. The Council has its Corporate Plan that sets out a shared vision and priorities for the future of the Borough.

This policy will ensure that voluntary and community sector funding is used to help deliver needs-led services or activities that contribute to the vision.



### 3.9 Other Policy issues <sup>3</sup>

This policy reflects the Council's and the Government's current policy objectives and community development ambitions, and seeks to ensure that our financial relationship develops in line with good practice. The following influences support the need for this policy:

- **“Building a Better Ipswich”** – the Council's corporate plan February 2017.
- **‘Strong and Prosperous communities, Local Government White Paper 2006-** this states that the voluntary and community sector's expertise and enterprise should be *‘harnessed and developed to enable local authorities to fulfil their place-shaping role’*. The White Paper also identifies the need to provide *‘fair, sustainable and stable funding for the third sector’*.
- **‘Improving financial relationships with the third sector: Guidance to funders and purchasers’-** issued May 2006 by HM Treasury
- **‘Comprehensive Spending Review 2007: Review of the role of the third sector’-**this review coincided with the setting up of the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office.
- **‘Closer to People and Places’ 2006-** report by the Local Government Association which called for longer term funding and suggested three-year contracts to allow the voluntary and community sector to plan ahead.
- **Gershon Review (2004)** - the effect of this review is that all local authorities are under financial pressure, to make efficiency savings in terms of their long-term budgets and resources.
- **Ipswich Borough Council Environment Strategy 2010** – this strategy and action plan sets out the Council's aspirations to transforming Ipswich into a low carbon community. Voluntary and community sector organisations are invited to pay regard to this strategy when applying for a grant.

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<sup>3</sup> An up-to-date list may be obtained from the Gov.uk website.

## **Section 4: The Council's Commitment and Grants Decision Making Process.**

- 4.1** The Council is committed to ensuring that it:
- Operates a clear and transparent decision-making process for the allocation and award of grants and concessions to the voluntary and community sector
  - Has an overview of the financial support provided
  - Targets support to groups who provide services that meet the council's priorities
  - Has one application form and contact point for the voluntary and community sector to access direct support grants
  - That it assesses and identifies need and collects and adequately monitors outputs and outcomes to ensure that it complies with its duties under equalities legislation

### **4.2 Funding and Budget setting Process.**

The annual budget for direct voluntary and community sector support grants is set by the Council in February each year as part of the Council's overall budget. The grants application period normally falls in September/October in each year and in November each year, the Communities Working Group<sup>4</sup> assess the applications that have been correctly submitted, and provisionally recommend the organisations and amounts to allocate.

The availability of funds to support this policy is dependant upon the Council's overall financial position including other economic constraints upon it and the choices it makes when allocating its resources.

The Council's own financial position will continue to be challenging with the Government imposing constraints upon the funding that the Council receives and with pressure to keep council tax increases as low as possible.

### **4.3 Decision Making on Grants**

The responsibility for making decisions relating to the October voluntary and community sector grant applications remains an Executive function. The Executive will take into account provisional recommendations from the Communities Working Group.

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<sup>4</sup> This is now the Communities Working Group.

## **Section 5: Types of Community and Voluntary Sector Grant funding available.**

**5.1** The Council provides direct and indirect support to the voluntary and community sector through different categories of funding mechanisms. These categories are:

**Competitive Community Grants:** The Council will designate an amount from the total grants budget for this purpose which will be the subject of a competitive application process. One-year funding will be targeted either by way of investment in the core running costs of an organisation **(a Community Investment Grant)** or to fund new or innovative projects, one off activity or services that deliver one or more of the Council's grants priorities **(a Community Project Grant)**.

The threshold for these applications will be:

**Community Investment Grants - for funding up to a maximum amount of £20,000 (covering 1-year period):** – community investment grants in respect of core funding for running costs or pump priming for an organisation to build its capacity

**Community Project Grants for funding up to a maximum amount of £20,000 (covering 1-year period):** – community project grants are suitable for applicants wanting to try something new but where the scheme requires 'pump priming' or a cash injection. These projects are required to have clear objectives and a clear plan with a defined start and end point and clearly defined outputs and outcomes.

The Council does not offer support in the form of loans or emergency grants because the administrative burden is considered to be disproportionate to the benefit.

**One-Off Capital Grants:** The Council may make one off capital payments outside of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants bidding process towards a capital scheme that does not meet the criteria for existing capital budgets. Organisations will need to complete a request for funding using the grants application form. Applications for one off Capital Grants will be considered by the Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> for recommendation to the Executive. Decisions will be made by the Executive on a case-by-case basis. Organisations requesting a one-off capital grant will still be required to complete a grant application form in the first instance.

**One-off capital grants are not available currently.**

**Community Partnership Agreements (covering up to 3 years - with a value up to £100,000 per annum).**

The Council will designate a significant proportion of its voluntary and community sector grants budget to be allocated via 3-year Community Partnership Agreements with the Council. The purpose of these agreements is to provide voluntary and community organisations who meet the criteria with a stable funding base that gives them the freedom and flexibility to plan ahead and meet agreed shared objectives. Community Partnership Agreements recognise that the day to day work of the organisation meets the objectives of the Council and helps it save money in the long term. These arrangements will be used when it is not appropriate to create a market using procurement and tendering processes.

All Community Partnership Agreements will set out:

- the general terms and conditions of the funding award
- the outcomes and outputs to be delivered for the funding;
- performance measures;
- payment arrangements
- timetable of review and reporting arrangements and
- termination/decommissioning provisions.

A supplementary policy setting out the Council's termination/decommissioning process may be produced shortly.

Where possible Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk County Council<sup>5</sup> will work together to put in place Joint Community Partnership Agreements to reduce bureaucracy and minimise the monitoring requirements on the voluntary and community sector.

**5.2 Indirect Support (Concessions) is also offered through:**

- Concessionary Rent
- Concessionary Rate Relief
- Other contributions i.e. care and repair schemes

A supplementary policy for concessionary rent exists. Supplementary policy for other forms of indirect support grants may be introduced shortly.

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<sup>5</sup> IBC will also work together with other agencies to put in place Joint Community Partnership Agreements.

## **Section 6: Eligibility for a Community and Voluntary Sector Grant.**

- 6.1** Subject to availability funding support will be made available to voluntary and community sector organisations that are:
- Based in the Borough and delivering activities or services to the people of Ipswich;
  - Based outside Ipswich but are providing activities or services not otherwise available to the people of Ipswich;
  - Not for profit or they recycle profits or income for the public good<sup>6</sup>;
  - Working for the benefit of a community of interest or geographic community, especially where this aligns with the Council's statutory equality duties;
  - Independent and determine their own aims and objectives;
  - Formally constituted, either as an unincorporated association under the management of a committee made up of volunteers, or as a charity or a company with charitable aims, social enterprise<sup>7</sup> or community interest company;
  - Either a small local self-help groups or a branch of a larger national or regional charity;
  - Operating either entirely through volunteers or have a small number of paid workers<sup>8</sup>.

### **6.2 Eligibility for access to a Community Partnership Agreement**

In addition to the above criteria set out in paragraph 6.1 the Council through its Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> will apply the following criteria to assess whether an organisation will be eligible for a Community Partnership Agreement<sup>9</sup>:

- Does the organisation provide advice, guidance and support to other voluntary organisations or community groups?
- Does the organisation offer support, advice or guidance to other voluntary organisations or community groups working with specific client groups?
- Does the work provided by the voluntary organisation or community group support, or contribute to, or enhance delivery of IBC priorities?
- Does the work of the voluntary organisation or community group promote partnership working and help groups to network, communicate and work together effectively?

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<sup>6</sup> The emphasis is on supporting work undertaken by not-for-profit organisations.

<sup>7</sup> The emphasis will be for organisations with a legal status and governing documents that include specific objectives to achieve the awards criteria set out in this policy.

<sup>8</sup> The emphasis will on those organisations that operate with voluntary workers to a meaningful extent.

<sup>9</sup> Service Level Agreements may also be agreed by Executive.

- Does the organisation have a wide influence as an advocate for the 3rd sector?
- Does the organisation act as a consultation point for IBC?

**AND**

- If the service delivered by the voluntary organisation or community group ceases, will its removal have a high, impact, including equality impact, on existing or future users or beneficiaries of the service or on the people of Ipswich or the voluntary and community sector generally?

**Section 7: Key Priorities and Award Criteria**

**7.1 The Key Priorities:**

The Council has identified the following key priorities to govern its Community and Voluntary Sector Grants allocation process:

- Promote community safety.
- Improve health and well-being.
- Promote learning and skills development.
- Making Ipswich a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable place.
- Enhance leisure and cultural activities.
- Work with individuals and groups who experience disadvantage.
- Promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations in communities.

**7.2 The Awards Criteria**

Award Criteria will be established by the Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> each year to:

- Ensure that the limited available resources are allocated against clear and consistent criteria that identify which schemes meet the key priorities.
- Assess how best the applicants achieve quality and effectiveness of services to meet the key priorities of the Council.
- Take into account the objectives of the grant applicants.
- Consider the requirement for grant recipients to have high standards of governance, financial probity and conduct.
- Consider the value of long-term, multi-year funding, where appropriate, to assist longer term planning and sustainability.
- Recognise the importance of infrastructure support for the voluntary and community sector and promote its development in the Borough.
- Allocate a mixture of types of funding support to the voluntary and community sector, in support of the council's key priorities.
- Assess how outcomes will be monitored to identify the changes and benefits that should happen as a result of the proposed activities.

- Establish clear performance measures setting out the outputs and outcomes.
- Consider how the community and service users will be engaged and involved in the scheme.
- Assess whether there is a clear exit strategy indicating how the service or project will be sustained once Council funding ceases.
- Assess the arrangements for carrying out equality monitoring of beneficiaries of the grant.

The Award Criteria to be used by the Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> to assess and score the grant application forms against the key priorities which will be established as part of the timetable each year. The timetable will also set out the deadline for submission of applications and timescale for decisions.

The Council will provide reasons why a grant application has been unsuccessful and will monitor any negative impact on those organisations and their service users who are refused a grant.

The Council will use the feedback from the voluntary and community sector and use the learning from each grants round to make improvements to the grants process as necessary.

## **Section 8: Equal Opportunity Monitoring.**

- 8.1** The Council wants to deliver a grants and funding regime that is responsive to different community and individual needs. One of the ways of doing this is by monitoring groups who apply for funding.
- 8.2** All applicants will be required to complete the Equal Opportunity Monitoring Sheet and submit this with their grant application form when they apply for funding.
- 8.3** The information provided will be used by the Council to assist us in complying with our statutory duties in respect of equalities legislation, namely to
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between different protected groups\*;
  - Foster good relations between different protected groups.

\*Protected groups cover people with the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

- Religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

This Policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.4** This Policy will be made available in other formats or languages on request where feasible

### **Section 9: Performance Management methodology.**

- 9.1** Successful applicants will be required to complete a **Funding Agreement** which will set out the performance data required; payment arrangements; outcomes and outputs; timescales and other relevant terms and conditions necessary to safeguard the allocation of public money.
- 9.2** The Council will require submission of annual accounts; (provisionally supported by interim trial balance if financial accounts are not finalised in the same year as the grant award;) an annual report; completion of a further equalities monitoring form and any other monitoring information as set out in the Funding Agreement.
- 9.3** Where appropriate the Council requires all relevant child protection and vulnerable adults' policies to be in place in respect of the applicant's organisation.

### **Section 10: Conditions of Funding.**

- 10.1** The Council will require the grant funding to be used for the purpose set out in the approved application or as amended with the agreement of Ipswich Borough Council and the applicant organisation.
- 10.2** The Council will not increase any grant in the event of an overspend.
- 10.3** Any request for any variation in the level of support will be subject of a revised application and re-assessment by the Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> and subsequent approval by the Executive.
- 10.4** Successful applicants will be required to acknowledge the funding as an Ipswich Borough Council grant and must comply with any reasonable requests relating to publicity.
- 10.5** Organisations who are awarded a grant shall be subject to monitoring, which could involve site visits and the collection of statistics.



- 10.6** The Council will require performance information, accounts, and if end of financial year accounts are not available, trial balance information within **12 weeks** after the grant period has ended, with final accounts being submitted as soon as possible thereafter.
- 10.7** All proposals should comply with the principles laid out in Ipswich Borough Council's Equality Scheme and Environmental Strategy.

**Section 11: Claw Back and consequences of default by the grant beneficiary organisation.**

The Council will reserve the right to claw back all or part of a grant that has been awarded or allocated or withdraw a grant offer if:

- A misleading, incorrect statement, or fraudulent action or statement has been made at any stage of the application process, whether deliberate or accidental.
- The organisation is not complying with its charitable aims or objectives.
- The governance of the organisation is not compliant with the law or other quality standards.
- The Council is not satisfied with the Grant Recipient's financial accountability arrangements or financial accounts are not submitted on time.
- Any term of the grant agreement is breached<sup>10</sup>.

**Section 12: Appeals and Complaints.**

Decisions made by the Executive on voluntary and community sector grants are final. The Council does not operate an appeals process for its voluntary and community sector grants process but any complaint will be dealt with under the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

**Section 13: Other Council Grants**

Community Safety, Arts and Culture, Economic Development Community Improvements and Area Committee grants are dealt with outside of this process.

The Communities Working Group<sup>5</sup> will be responsible for taking a strategic overview of all grants awarded by the Council to assess how they are meeting corporate objectives and identify any duplication in funding. This will then be reported to the Executive.

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<sup>10</sup> The timely reporting of quality monitoring data in a suitable agreed format is an essential term of the grant agreement.

## **Appendix 1 – List of Respondents to the Consultation on the Policy<sup>11</sup>**

Bob Blyth – Citizens Advice Bureau

Elle Lamb – Ipswich Council for Voluntary Service

Liz Louch – Ipswich Council for Voluntary Service

John Booty – Ipswich Blind Society

Keith Whitton – Anglia Care Trust

Mojlum Khan – Bangladeshi Support Centre

Sally Glen – Ipswich Women’s Aid

Simon Attwood – Ipswich Borough Council

Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Management Team

Ipswich Borough Council Heads of Service

Julius Oyebade – Suffolk County Council

Lara Uzokwe – Karibu

Andrew Soltysik – Ipswich Polish Club

Greg Cooper – Ipswich Borough Council

Tibbs Pinter – Ipswich Borough Council

Laura Hack – Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations

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<sup>11</sup> This list refers to the original consultation in 2008