

MAXIMISING GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES K07

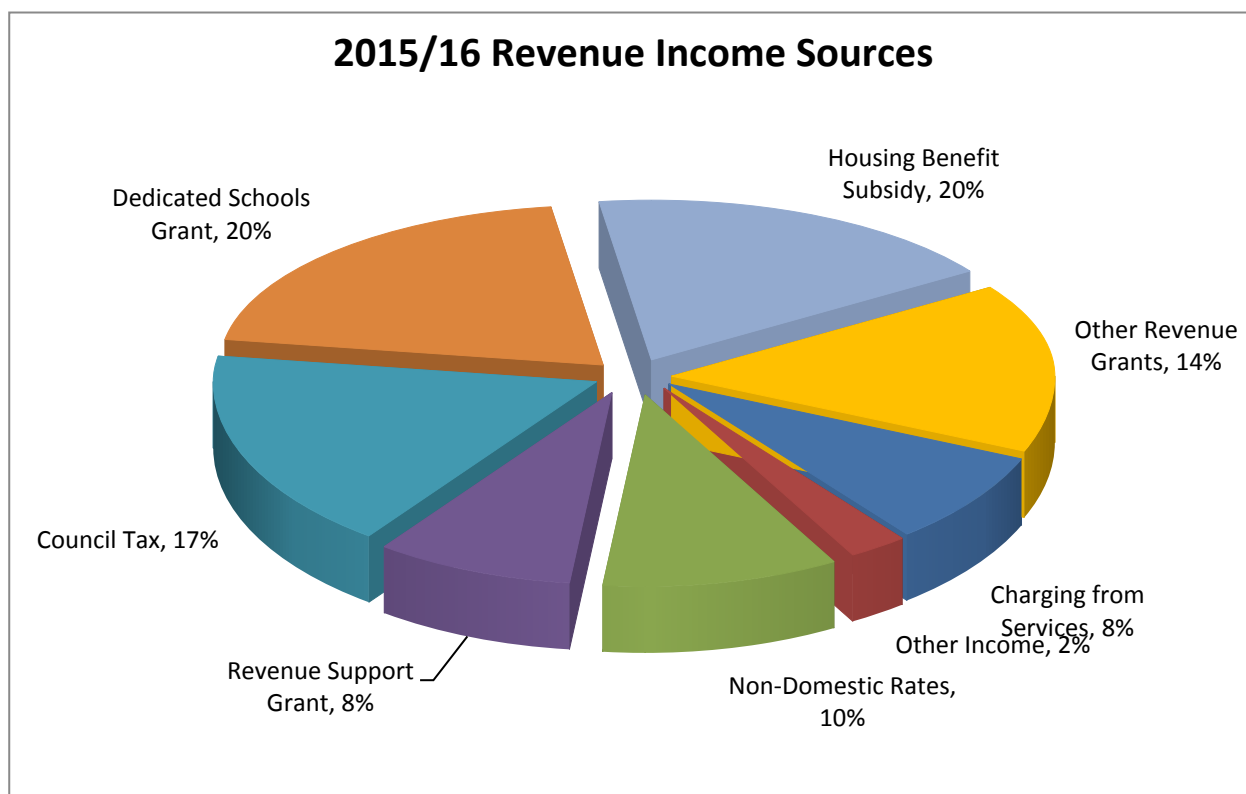


1. Introduction.

The purpose of this report is to set out Plymouth City Council's current position and approach being developed to maximising grant funding opportunities in line with the Corporate Plan objectives

2. Current Position.

In 2015/16 grant funding (excluding RSG& DSG) contributes 15% of the Council's gross revenue budget and 60% of the Capital Programme, and is therefore an important income stream that needs to be both maintained over the current medium term financial forecast and also increased as the level of core funding declines.



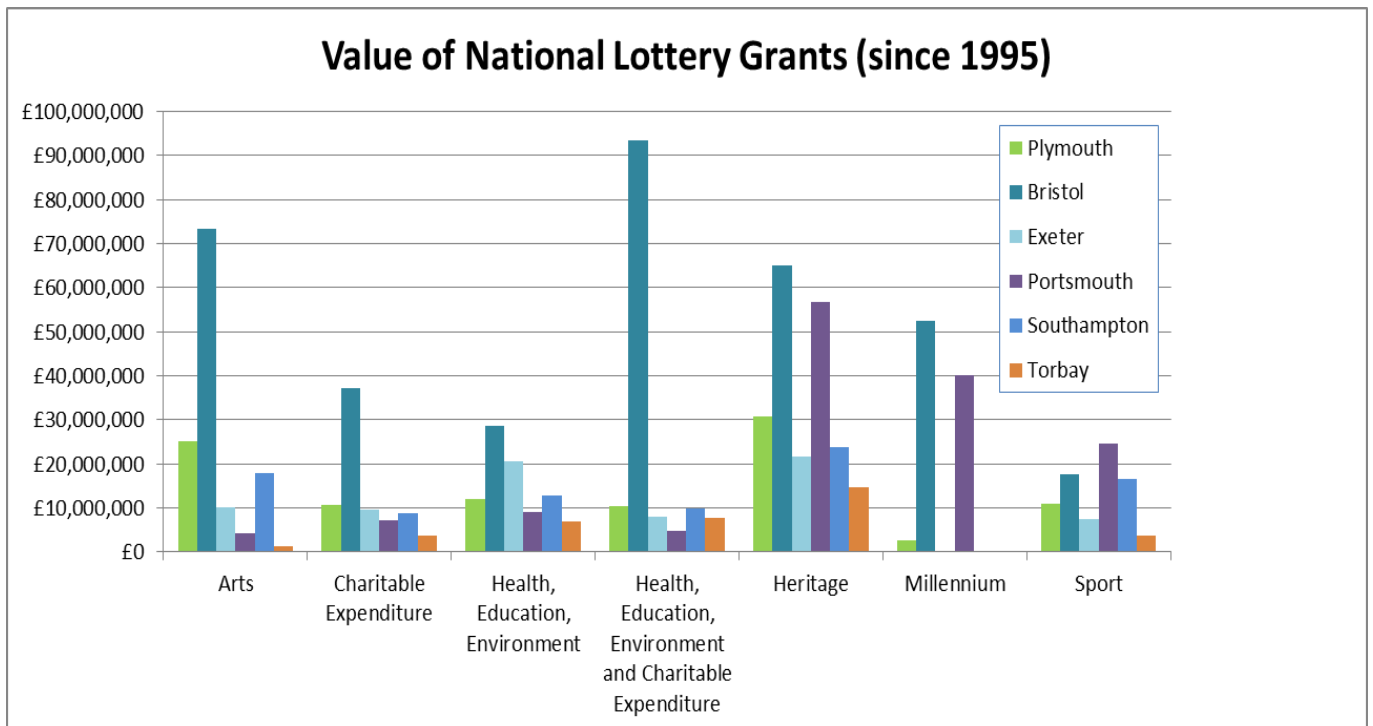
As the Public Sector continues to go through austerity measures, maintaining this level of funding will no doubt be a challenging task and requires thought and planning to deliver further funding to the Council.

Using lottery funding as a comparator, it is clear that Plymouth has had more success than some comparable Local Authorities, but it is obvious that Bristol City Council has utilised this source of funding more than others.

No of grants received and value (since 1995)

Authority	Total Grants	Total Awarded
Plymouth	1367	£102,882,672
Bristol	3398	£368,041,083
Exeter	1080	£77,975,014
Portsmouth	835	£146,994,824
Southampton	921	£89,837,652
Torbay	733	£38,345,588

Value of National Lottery Grants (since 1995)



In the main, specifically for revenue grants, service managers are responsible for identifying and acting upon grant opportunities that have arisen in their service area, and this information has usually been received from grant funders direct or through service managers own initiatives. This can lead to reactionary bid submissions for grant funding, with little time or resources applied to ensure that the best possible bid has been submitted, or worse competitive bids being submitted against other departments.

There are pockets of expertise across departments within the Council, with experience of successful sourcing and applying for grant funding, for example within the Inward Investment Team and the EU/Funding and Strategy Officer in the Place Directorate. However there is currently no support or training in place for less knowledgeable members of staff or evidence of working across Directorates.

Plymouth City Council, via the Finance Service, currently subscribe to GRANTfinder, a powerful search engine that collates potential funding opportunities from both the Public and Private Sectors into one database that subscribers can search for funding solutions. It is clear that the Council's subscription to GRANTfinder is not widely known about and underutilised.

The Finance Service also holds and maintains the Council's grants register. The grants register was intended to be a central point to record details of all bids submitted, success rates, expected income to be received and many more pieces of information. The Council, via the City Capital Investment Board (CCIB) have a detailed approval process for Capital Projects to adhere to when initiating projects and bidding for external funding.

3. Advocacy and Lobbying

The development of an accurate record of external funding available to and received by Plymouth City Council will also ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to communications with funding bodies and the ability to lobby appropriately for other funding schemes to ensure Plymouth gains its fair share.

4. Way forward

In order to maximise grant opportunities a way forward is mapped out below within three key themes; developing appropriate tools, improving coordination and maximising limited capacity.

Develop appropriate tools

- Promoting utilisation of grant finder software by appropriately designated officers within departments, with utilisation measured and reported to the external funding working group.
- Publish grant opportunities on document library for all service managers to have sight of.
- Refine the grants register to make more user friendly and extend usage beyond finance. Grants register will also record details of applications submitted and record KPI data as required.
- Publish grants register on the document library so all staff can view the grants currently received and applications in progress.
- Develop a grants management framework to assist officers over the life of a grant funded project, including sourcing funding, and early bid process to exit strategies.
- Develop an appropriate approval process for revenue external funding streams ensuring limited time consuming processes but appropriate controls to enable service managers to act upon opportunities. Approval process will also ensure activities linked to Corporate Plan to ensure resources focused on key objectives, Pioneering, Growing, Caring and Confident.

Improve coordination

- Establish cross-department external funding working group to provide advice/support to officers and assist in developing external funding framework.

Maximising limited capacity

- Utilise subject matter experts and external funding working group to develop reference materials and self-help guides for officers involved in external funding bids/projects/schemes
- Ensuring grant finder software access is targeted at the correct officers and utilised
- Promoting usage of the external funding framework to ensure best practice adopted
- Potentially providing training courses for officers, classroom based and/or e-learning packages.