

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee			
Title	Main Grants Programme Consultation		
Contributor	Head of Culture and Community Development	Item	Supplementary
Class	Part 1 (Open)	03 November 2014	

Reason for Urgency

The report has not been available for 5 clear working days before the meeting and the Chair is asked to accept it as an urgent item. The report was not available for despatch on Thursday 23 October because the consultation the report is based on was still underway. The report cannot wait until the next meeting due to a decision being taken at Mayor and Cabinet on 12 November.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Council commenced a three month consultation in July 2014 on proposed changes to the main grants programme. The consultation had not closed at the time of despatching this report so the information contained in the report provides a draft response to the consultation feedback. Officers will be able to provide an oral update at the meeting on 3rd November as the consultation closes on 30th October.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on responses to the consultation and invite members of the select committee to add any additional feedback prior to the consultation outcomes being reported to Mayor and Cabinet on 12th November 2014.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee are invited to add any additional feedback in advance of the consultation outcomes being reported to Mayor and Cabinet on 12th November 2014.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a commitment to creating a borough that is “Empowered and Responsible: where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities”.
- 3.2 This is reflected in Lewisham’s corporate priorities: “Community leadership and empowerment: developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community”
- 3.3 Lewisham has a strong history of working with the third sector and empowering residents and communities. Lewisham is fortunate to have a strong and thriving third sector which ranges from very small organisations with no paid staff through to local branches of national charities. The third sector includes charities, not for profit companies limited by guarantee, faith

organisations, civic amenity societies as well as social enterprises. What all these organisations have in common is their ability to bring significant additional value to the work that they do through voluntary support and raising funds from sources not available to other sectors such as charitable trusts.

- 3.4 Although the third sectors role within the commissioning of local public services has grown, the council recognises that there continues to be a need for grant aid investment for the following reasons:
- A recognition of the importance of maintaining an independent sector that can act as a critical friend to challenge public sector policy and delivery.
 - A recognition of the key role that the sector plays in building civic participation, providing a voice for seldom heard residents and providing community intelligence.
 - A recognition of the great diversity of the sector and the need to engage with small and emerging groups as well as large established organisations.
 - A recognition of the sector's potential to take risks and innovate which does not sit easily within commissioning frameworks.
 - A recognition that third sector organisations have been key delivery partners within Lewisham, including for a wide range of targeted short term initiatives. Grant aid provides a level of security for organisations ensuring that there is a strong sector able to address local need, attract additional resources and be ready to work in partnership with us.

4. Background

- 4.1 The current main grants programme was agreed by Mayor and Cabinet Contracts in July 2011. Funding was awarded for two and a half years from October 2011 to the end of March 2014 to 73 organisations. Funding was provided over four themes; Children and Young People, Building Social Capital, Gateway Services and Communities that Care. An extension to the programme for a further year was agreed in December 2013 taking the current funding to 31 March 2015.
- 4.2 In addition to the £5.9 million grants budget Lewisham Council has contracts to a value of over £20 million with voluntary and community sector organisations to provide a wide range of services. These include youth activities, children's centres, supported housing and public health initiatives. The types of organisations that Lewisham is contracting with ranges from large national charities to small local community based organisations.

5. Content of Consultation

- 5.1 In July 2014 Mayor and Cabinet agreed to consult on proposals to change the main grants programme and reduce the budget by £1.5m. The consultation document is attached at Appendix A. It outlines the approach to the consultation, the proposed overall approach to the main grants

programme, proposed new grants themes and criteria and the application process.

- 5.2 In light of the intense pressure on our shared resources it is proposed to take a more active collaborative approach with grant funding. The intention is to fund a group of organisations that are committed to working with each other and the council to ensure the best possible outcomes for Lewisham's residents with our shared resources. The intention is to take a dynamic approach to grant aid that allows for flexibility over the period of funding to ensure that funded organisation can work with the council to respond together to changing needs and priorities. The main grants programme is designed not just to fund organisations but to enlist active partners who are passionate about Lewisham and have the drive and capacity to make a difference to people's lives.
- 5.3 In assessing applications to the grants programme it is proposed that organisation's readiness to work with the Council as active partners and what they can bring to such a partnership will be considered using the following categories:
- Local Intelligence; the level of understanding of local need.
 - Transformation; the ability to transform the ways of working to better meet needs.
 - Collaboration; track record of working in partnership.
 - Resources; track record of attracting resources both financial and volunteer time.
 - Shared Values; commitment to London Living Wage, Equality, Environmental Sustainability
- 5.4 In establishing the priority themes for the grants programme the following factors were considered:
- The level of need locally
 - The contribution the third sector can make to meeting the priority
 - The availability of other sources of funding locally
- There are four proposed themes and full details of each theme's proposed criteria are included in Appendix A.
- 5.4.1 **Strong and Cohesive Communities** – this theme seeks to develop and maintain strong communities and build a more inclusive and cohesive borough. It is divided into two strands, one to support Borough Wide provision and the other to fund a network of neighbourhood community development projects. With the reduction in statutory resources, residents and communities are being asked to do more for themselves. This theme seeks to ensure that there is an infrastructure across the borough that can encourage and capitalise on active citizenship, supporting grass roots activity. The theme will also fund services that provide equalities support to ensure equal access to services.
- 5.4.2 **Communities that Care** – the overall intention of this theme is to fund a range of organisations that together provide support to vulnerable adults to assist them in accessing services, prevent their needs from escalating, reduce the burden on statutory services and provide links between statutory services, VCS and communities in relation to working together to support vulnerable adults. The activities funded through this theme form an important part of the borough's preventative strategy.

5.4.3 Access to Advice Services – the advice sector provides an essential service to some of the borough’s most vulnerable residents. Advice organisations provide independent, high quality advice to individuals to ensure that they receive the benefits they are entitled to, are supported to manage debts and address financial exclusion and deal with housing issues. Statutory services work closely with the advice sector as addressing these issues are of mutual benefit.

5.4.4 Widening Access to Arts and Sports – this theme seeks to ensure that the rich and diverse contribution that the borough’s Arts and Sports organisations make to the quality of life of residents is maintained. The Arts and Sports sectors are adept at attracting resources from external funding, earned income and volunteers. However, the sectors still require a level of core funding to enable them to continue to attract these resources that would otherwise be lost to the borough. The focus of our support will be on increasing participation particularly by those who are less able to participate due to disability, economic disadvantage and age.

6. The Consultation Process

6.1 Following agreement by Mayor and Cabinet to consult on the revised framework for the Main Grants programme, a comprehensive range of consultation events has been undertaken. In line with the Council's Compact with the voluntary and community sector, a three month consultation period was agreed. Consultation took the form of two formal information-sharing meetings with voluntary and community sector organisations. These meetings took place in July and September and were led by the Cabinet Member for the Third Sector and the Executive Director for Community Services. 120 individuals attended the two meetings in total, consisting of voluntary sector organisation senior officers and trustees.

6.2 In addition to the two general meetings, specific themes within the Main Grants programme were discussed with organisations in the following areas:

- the advice sector
- Communities that Care
- transport
- organisations undertaking investment funded projects, focusing on the integration of community-based social care support
- organisations expressing an interest in contributing to the Neighbourhood Community Development Strand
- sports organisations
- arts organisations

6.3 In total there were 173 attendees at consultation meetings organised by the Council and a further 60 individuals were involved in the consultation at meetings organised by the VCS and attended by council officers. Officers also met with a number of organisations individually during the consultation. In addition to these discussions, two articles on the consultation were included within Voluntary Action Lewisham's magazine, Grapevine. The consultation was also available on the Council's online consultation portal.

6.4 Feedback from the 233 attendees at the consultation meetings and individual written responses received at the time of despatch are included in Appendix B.

7. Consultation Outcome

7.1 At the time of writing feedback received showed that members of the Voluntary and Community Sector generally welcomed the consultation on Main Grants and the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

7.2 The key elements of the feedback include:

- a general welcoming of Lewisham Council's continued commitment to investing in the voluntary and community sector through grant funding;
- a welcoming of the opportunity to comment on the proposed revised framework for Main Grants;
- acknowledgement that the proposed partnership framework provided a means to achieve effective delivery of services to residents;
- a welcoming of the opportunity to highlight the strengths and achievements of individual organisations and their approach to service delivery.

7.3 There were a number of reservations expressed, including:

- A concern about the impact of the proposed £1.5m reduction to the budget on the viability of organisations and services to vulnerable and excluded residents, particularly BME communities.
- A concern about the time required to build effective partnerships.
- Concern about there not being a dedicated children and young people theme.
- Queries about how the council can use its assets to support the VCS

7.4 A number of comments were made that have led to proposed changes to the criteria including:

- A recognition of the need for a coordination function for equalities work across different protected characteristics.
- More emphasis on quality and the track record of organisations within the criteria.
- A recognition of the need for support from borough wide infrastructure organisations around new ways of using and sharing premises.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The main grants consultation engaged more than 200 people. Respondents understood the need for the council to make reductions to budgets but a number of arguments were put forward as to why the reduction to the voluntary sector should be limited. The overall feedback was positive in relation to the proposed new criteria. Some suggestions have led to minor amendments to the proposed criteria which will be reported to Mayor and Cabinet on 12th November to seek approval to open the programme to applications.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Liz Dart, Head of Culture and Community Development on 020 8314 8637 or liz.dart@lewisham.gov.uk