

MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND CABINET

Wednesday, 27 March 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Damien Egan (Mayor), Councillors Chris Best, Paul Bell, Kevin Bonavia, Joani Reid and Jonathan Slater.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor James Rathbone.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brenda Dacres, Councillor Sophie McGeevor, Councillor Amanda De Ryk and Councillor Joe Dromey

421. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

422. Main Grants Programme 2019-2022

1. Comments from the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Main Grants Programme

Councillor Rathbone, the Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee presented this report.

The SSSC recommended that organisations seeking main grants of £100,000 or more, a total of 5 organisations, be subject to more rigorous monitoring and scrutiny.

It appears that such organisations have had more problems with governors over the last 7 years in Lewisham, for example the closure Lewisham Sub-living Coalition has revealed where those failings are.

Organisations which have not been recommended to main grants funding due to governance problems, or organisations which just got recommended due to very recently urgent changes due to their governance structures- Voluntary Services Lewisham; The Albany; Lewisham Local; Advice for Lewisham Partnership and Age UK, total £1.85m of third sector funding per year. The smallest of these being 5% of the main grants programme and the largest is 29%.

The feeling from the SSSC is that the kind of scrutiny the smaller and larger organisations should be under is not the same. There are informal procedures in place for some of the larger organisations but these should be put down officially in agreement rather than adhoc agreement.

A review of the organisations' governance and auditing arrangements can be done by the time of implementation of the main grants. Any changes can be made or at least requested by the Council before the new scheme comes into place. In regards to the partnership organisations, receiving money via an

incubator organisation, but what is being funded is not a formally constituted entity. This will need to be reviewed to see if it is still an appropriate governance arrangement.

2. Appeals- Main Grants Programme

Representatives from organisations presented their appeals against the draft recommendations of allocation of the Main Grants Programme 2019-22 as follows

Voluntary Action Lewisham

VAL provides information, support, training and specialist advice on topics ranging from governance and fundraising to safeguarding and GDPR, with over 900 people and organisations on their database. VAL received criticism in the assessment for not creating a thriving hub for the Mulberry Centre, to which they respond that without accessibility to the building for vulnerable users and a licence to rent the spaces are both required to do this, but are impossible without support or funding from Lewisham. Since the submission of the Main Grants application, a 2 year grant of £100,000 from City Bridge to extend the impact programme has been confirmed which may be withdrawn without core funding from LBL.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that they are having discussions with Lewisham Local about merging. Merger discussions have also been had regarding Community Southwark who have experience in running the infrastructure services other boroughs. A minimum of £50,000 is required for core funding. The strategy for the future on income generation is ineffective without funding.

Evelyn 190

The centre provides specialist face to face advice and advocacy. Services include representation in court and tribunal, employment and debt. Over £190,000 was secured in financial outcomes in 2017/18, through benefits from the DWP, council tax, housing benefits, employment etc. In the last year, funding has been secured from Deptford Challenge Trust and Trust for London. Five further funding applications have been submitted since.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that the face to face work, appeals and representation, is not provided by any other service in the borough so this support would be needed when considering partnerships. Evelyn 190 have considered merging with other organisations such as the 170 Community Project and other groups within the community for collaboration.

Sydenham Arts

£16,000 has been secured in 2019 so far for project costs. The programme and outreach has had powerful impact in many communities including BAME, women and LGBT artists. Core funding is critical in ensuring the most disadvantaged could benefit from Sydenham Arts programmes with reduced prices and free events. Cutting this funding will require increase tickets prices to cover cost, hurting the target audiences.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that other ways the Council can support aside from funding, would be endorsement. If the organisation becomes commercially led the emphasis on using the Sydenham Centre increases because partnerships with other organisations become more affordable. Use of the centre has the potential to increase with help through funding.

Montage Theatre Arts

The organisation provides 39 weekly classes for schools, providing the opportunity to learn dancing and acting, for primarily 2-18 year olds. The cut in funding effects the outreach of the programmes and funding from other funders, who are likely to retract their contributions, without status from the borough. The classes and programmes have been most effective for disadvantaged children and those that are looked after, and there has been proven success with 8 students going to Brit school.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that schools and libraries have expressed reluctance to advertise the work of the organisation without the Lewisham logo. A token level of funding, that would give Montage Theatre the endorsement, would be of help

Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre

GLYPT believes in partnership working and has been a strong partner to LBL. GLYPT feel they have an ambitious and dynamic vision and while they expected a cut, the scale of the cut is what is being appealed. GLYPT has invested in its relationship with Phoenix Housing and Electric Star. Receiving 50% of funding would have a seismic impact on what can be offered to the public and the Council in terms of additional leverage and the breadth of work that is offered. The reduction of participatory programmes including mental health programmes, for example, will damage opportunities for some of the needier communities in the borough.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that funding from Greenwich has increased due to the development of a model around community engagement based in that borough. The focus is developing a cultural hub in both boroughs.

Eco Communities

The organisation has provided support to local community members particularly those who are vulnerable, isolated and alone. Therefore the organisation relies on methods, through schemes highlighted in the business plan, grants and fundraising, to generate income to pay for spaces where these services can be delivered in such high demand. The funding requested could be used to alleviate a percentage of the building and staff costs which will enable the continuation of services and also provide more time to explore ways to become fully sustainable in the future.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Responding to a questions regarding plans for income generation e.g. renting

out hire space, the appellant stated that due to maintenance and repair works continually needing to be done on the building, this option is limited.

Ageing Well

The service users are people with cognitive and visual impairments and so through long term partnerships with other organisations, Ageing Well are able to reach these people. Financially, staffing has been severely reduced- the organisation has been able to develop and grow stronger programming, which is not possible without paid staff. Over the last year, there has been focus on training volunteers by a paid worker, which is crucial to the group. Getting grants and training volunteers is only possible with a paid worker.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Appellants responded that through fundraising they have been able to attract more grants and they believe that partnership working could be beneficial.

The Grove Centre

The grant is to pay for the lunch service the Grove Centre provides and has been providing for the last 50 years. The grant does not financially support the church or centre- the church subsidises the lunch service. The centre would actually be financially better off without the service, however, this will be of detriment to the community as it is a valuable local resource.

Church members do volunteer, as well as from Voluntary Services Lewisham, but in a non-church related capacity. Users of the service also volunteer as a way of giving back.

Responding to questions from Cabinet, appellant responded that the Grove Centre is entering into partnerships with other local groups and has applied for less funding deliberately as they are working towards the service being self-sustaining. It is foreseeable that after one more round of funding the centre will be fully independent. Outreach is done through leaflets and face to face invitations, at lunches for example, as this is most effective for the target community.

Noah's Ark Children's Venture

Generations of Lewisham residents have benefited from the resource of visiting Macaroni Woods, which, without subsidised costs, would be unable to use every year. The charity's relationship with the borough has brought the countryside to inner city children and positively impacted disadvantaged children. There are strong contingency plans in place to move forward without the funding, however, the cut is a huge loss to negotiate from. The group are also concerned about the possible unravelling of their relationship with the Council.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. Some good support could be, as well the monetary value which enable subsidisation from Lewisham groups, is charging Lewisham groups £100 per night. If the funding was decreased to £20,000 then this charge could be increased to £150 per night then to £200 over time to draw down funding.

Lewisham Community Transport Scheme

The service supports the local community by transporting the disadvantaged members to and from activities safely and affordably. The financial projection indicates that to enable the group to develop the service to its potential LCTS would need core funding assistance from LBL in the short term to ensure they meet the growing demands of providing a more environmentally friendly, passenger-led transport service

In relation to partnerships, LCTS has already developed links with other vehicle owning organisations in order to maximise the availability of minibus transport in the borough.

The Mayor invited members of the Cabinet to ask questions to the appellant. In response to become financially independent, it is the plan to become sustainable in the future and LCTS will apply for funding for core and capital costs to reach independent. The group also want to approach more local businesses in order to promote their service and create more funds. The extra funding applied for is to employ 2 full-time members of staff- the minimum amount of funding needed is £35,000.

The Mayor thanked the appellants for their time after each appeal.

The Executive Director for Community Services noted that most organisations had stated the need for core funding to increase/receive funding from other services. The Council should therefore endeavour to support these organisations in other ways, if not through the Main Grants, but making it clear to external funders that the Council understand the need for core funding while each of them work towards self-sufficiency.

The meeting finished at 12.25pm