

| Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee | | |
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| Title | Developing the capacity of the community and voluntary sector: scoping report | |
| Contributor | Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager | Appendix D |
| Class | Part 1 (open) | 15 September 2016 |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14 April 2016, the Committee agreed to hold a short review of the support offered for organisations in the community and voluntary sector. This paper provides some background information about support for the sector and suggests some key lines of enquiry for the review.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- consider the content of this report
 - agree the key lines of enquiry and timetable – set out in sections 8 and 9.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee acknowledges the contribution of the community and voluntary sector to public life and discussions at committee have demonstrated councillors and officers recognition of the importance of the sector in the delivery of public services.
- 3.2 Significant and sustained reductions in funding from government, alongside the continual demand to provide public services, present a significant challenge the Council. As part of the organisational approach to make savings, the Council is shifting from its position of always being principal provider of services to a commissioner, facilitator and collaborator in shared arrangements. It is in this context that the Committee has decided to carry out a short review of capacity of Lewisham's community and voluntary sector.

4. Policy context

- 4.1 London Funders is an organisation that represents a network of fund giving organisations in the community and voluntary sector. Its recent report: 'the way ahead: civil society at the heart of London' is an overview of their work with Greater London Volunteering and the London Voluntary Service Council. The report sets out a vision for civil society in London and it establishes principles to help develop this vision.
- 4.2 The report emphasizes the importance of carrying out needs assessments in collaboration with communities using relevant data and it highlights the need for

stakeholders in the sector to provide each other with support and challenge. The report sets the context for the future funding of the community and voluntary activity in London and it begins to describe the future role of local authorities as equal partners with the sector.

- 4.3 Lewisham's partnership approach is reflected in the Sustainable Communities Strategy priority- '*Empowered and Responsible*', which describes a borough '...where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities.' This is reflected in Lewisham's corporate priority: '*Community leadership and empowerment*', which commits the Council to '...developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.'

5. Background

- 5.1 Lewisham has a long history of engagement and collaboration with the community and voluntary sector. In 2001 Lewisham was one of the first local authorities to develop a compact with the sector, which established shared understandings about roles and responsibilities and set out commitments for working together.
- 5.2 Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL) has a longstanding partnership with the Council. Its remit is to provide leadership for the sector and to help build organisational capacity and capability. Led by the Council and VAL, stakeholders carried out further work to develop the Lewisham compact in 2010, with the addition of guidelines for commissioning with the sector in recognition of the important contribution that it should play in identifying needs as well as delivering services.
- 5.3 Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee has a responsibility for engaging with the sector. Alongside regular scrutiny of the main grants programme, the Committee has heard from a range of community and voluntary sector organisations for in-depth reviews, policy development and scrutiny of decision-making. The Committee has also considered the development of policy in relation to volunteering and time banking, social enterprise and community led projects.

Community and voluntary sector review

- 5.4 In 2011/12, the Committee carried out a year long review into the the capacity of the community and voluntary sector. The Committee gathered evidence across on three key themes:
- Establishing the capacity of the voluntary sector
 - How to build capacity of the sector
 - The future role of the voluntary sector
- 5.5 Members found that support for the sector in Lewisham was good and that much of the Council's work with the sector reflected good practice elsewhere. The Committee recognised that grant funding by the Council played a key part

in sustaining the sector and that funding enabling organisations to access support and funding from a wider range of sources than they would, otherwise.

- 5.6 Safer Stronger submitted a final report and recommendations from the review to Mayor and Cabinet in May 2012. A specific recommendation relating to support for the sector was included:

Organisations that support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Lewisham, such as Voluntary Action Lewisham, should review the support that they offer to the sector especially in relation to capability and capacity building. The Committee feels that provision of more intensive and individual support including advice, training and guidance would create better results for organisations.

- 5.7 In response to the recommendation, Council officers supported Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL) to carry out a strategic review of its services. The review also recognised that in the climate of reducing resources and increased demands for the delivery of more complex services, organisations might need to merge, collaborate or share facilities.

The main grants programme

- 5.8 Mayor and Cabinet (Contracts) agreed the current main grants programme funding at its meeting on 13 May 2015. Funding was provided over four themes:

- strong and cohesive communities
- communities that care
- access to advice services
- widening access to arts and sports

- 5.9 Support for building capacity of the sector is funded through the 'strong and cohesive communities strand of the programme'. The programme also places an emphasis on collaboration and the sharing of resources. In addition to the themes outlined above the Council committed to funding:

- Organisations that are committed to working with each other and the Council to ensure the best possible outcomes for Lewisham's residents with shared resources.
- Active partners who are as passionate about Lewisham as the Council is and have the drive and capacity to make a difference to people's lives.
- Organisations that understand the level and profile of local need and have the ability to transform the way they work to meet that need.
- Organisations with a track record of adding value to Council funding through attracting resources both financial and volunteer time.
- Organisations that share values with the Council as well as commitment to the London Living Wage, equalities and environmental sustainability.

- 5.10 The Council is in the midst of a decade long reduction in resources, which will reduce the funding available for services by £200m in 2020, compared to

2010/11. Therefore, Mayor and Cabinet has agreed to reduce the funding to the grants programme by £1m from 1 April 2017, which equates to just over 25% of the overall main grants budget of £3,985,600.

5.11 In July 2016, Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee scrutinised the outcome of a consultation with the community and voluntary sector about the reduction in funding. Officers proposed that the reduction be made by:

- Remove funding from under performing groups/those performing least well
- Negotiate reductions and seek alternative funding streams
- Work with groups to consider mergers or asset sharing
- Pro rata reductions across all groups

5.12 Officers have committed to further discussion with affected organisations over the summer and autumn; to encourage collaborative working, sharing resources and identifying alternative funding streams. As outlined above, infrastructure support for the sector is primarily funded under the 'strong and cohesive communities' theme of the grants programme. Officers have begun discussions with organisations providing this support under the themes identified by London Funders:

- Volunteering
- IT support
- Finance support
- Service development support
- Strategic representation and development
- Identification of needs

5.13 The Committee now has an opportunity to scrutinise this process through this short review of developing capacity in the sector. Officers will ask Mayor and Cabinet to make a decision on funding for the next two years of the main grant programme at its meeting in December 2017.

6. Meeting the criteria for a review

6.1 A short review into building capacity in the community and voluntary meets the criteria for carrying out a scrutiny review because:

- The issue affects a number of people living, working and studying in Lewisham and it might disproportionately affect smaller groups of people.
- This issue is of concern to partners, stakeholders and the community

7. Key lines of enquiry

7.1 As part of the review, the Committee will need to establish:

- The Council's principle means for providing support to the sector
- The budget available to carry out this work
- The process for assessing the support needs of community and voluntary sector organisations

- 7.2 After this, the Committee can consider the following review questions:
- What forms of support should be a priority for the sector?
 - What form should support arrangements for the community and voluntary sector take?

8. Timetable

8.1 The Committee is asked to consider the outline timetable for the short review:

8.2 Evidence session - 19 October 2016

- Lewisham's Head of Community and Cultural Development
- Representatives from Voluntary Action Lewisham, Volunteer Centre Lewisham, Rushey Green timebank

8.3 Report to committee: 28 November 2016

- This will coincide with the report on the saving being made to the main grants programme for 2017/18.

9. Further implications

9.1 At this stage there are no specific financial, legal, environmental or equalities implications to consider. However, each will be addressed as part of the review.

Background documents

London funders report, the way ahead, civil society at the heart of London:

<http://londonfunders.org.uk/what-we-do/london-funders-projects/review-londons-civil-society-support/way-ahead-civil-society>

Main grants programme 2017/18: recommended approach: Safer Stronger 04 July 2016:

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s44444/SSCSC%20%20July%202016%20Main%20Grants%20Programme%202017-18%20FINAL.pdf>

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee: Community and Voluntary Sector Review: <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/overview-scrutiny/Overview-and-Scrutiny-Reports/Documents/Communityandvoluntarysectorreview.pdf>

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