

Main Grants 2017-18 report

Name of organisation	Eco Communities (Eco)
Date of meeting	Monday 5 September 2016
Names and positions of attendees	Darren Taylor – Chief Executive Eco Communities Lucy Formolli – Development Officer Cultural Services, LBL James Lee – Head Culture and Community Development, LBL

Group Name:	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4					
Total funding received 2015-16	£30,000	N/A	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000					
Total funding to be received 2016-17	£40,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000					
Outcomes	Support									
	1. Reduced digital exclusion among people aged over 60 resulting to improved access to online advice and information									
	2. People aged 60 or over increase their fitness levels and reduced need for medical intervention									
	3. People aged over 60 feel reduced levels of loneliness and isolation. Attendees confirmed that they have benefitted from outings and have increased positive social interaction as a result									
	4. People over 60 to benefit from increased mental stimulation and improved feelings of wellbeing									
	5. People over 60 to improve their IT skills and confidence									
Outputs:	2015-16 Target	2015-16 Q2	2015-16 Q3	2015-16 Q4	2015-16 Total	% Achieved	2016-17 Target	2016-17 Q1	2016-17 Q2	% A
Seniors IT training including: Peer support Thursday IT digital inclusion programme. Three one hour rolling programme of IT support (10:30 – 11:30; 11:30 – 12:30 14:00 – 15:00) for a maximum of 12 people. 4 beneficiaries each quarter (Grove	24 beneficiaries	4	8	26	38	158%	48	12 – Grove Pepys still to report	N/A	25% Target on Track

Park.) 2 hour IT training and reminiscence sessions to be run from Pepys -4 beneficiaries per quarter											
Keep fit, sit down exercises and Thai Chi to be run from Pepys and Grove Park for 10 beneficiaries at each venue per week for 30 weeks	20 beneficiaries and 600 places - 300 places PA Pepys / 300 places PA GP	5 people (60 places)	4 People (48 places)	10 (120 places)	19 - 228 places	38%	52 Unique Users 13 users PQ	20 Grove – Pepys still to report	N/A	38% on t	
Art journaling, mindfulness 'So what and yarn', story-telling and 'Fibre Arts' at Pepys for 10 beneficiaries per week over 30 weeks .Grove Park Scrabble and knitting clubs to focusing on those members of our community that like to improve their Mindfulness and wellness. 5 beneficiaries each quarter	15 beneficiaries PQ (total 45) 600 places - 300 places PA Pepys / 300 places PA GP	14 (168 places)	7 (84 Places)	14 (168 places)	35 beneficiaries 420 sessions	70%	52 unique users 13 PQ users	23 – Grove, Pepys still to report	N/A	44% on t	
Social activities where over 60 users can get together, have outings, and fundraise for trips and general activities. Sheltered home scheme and up to 7 older people attending friends of grove park library monthly meetings, up to 7 over 60s represented at Hyde Housing meetings	16 sessions 128 participants PA	5 (only sessions reported)	69	96	165	128%	7 activities – No of participants benefitting from outings and activities still to be agreed	60 users – Grove, Pepys still to report	N/A	This app on t clar need num ses	
Four older people to be trained to bEcome Digital Champions (2 each at Grove Park and PRC)	4	0	2	2		100%	8	1 – Pepys still to report	N/A	12.5 still this the trac	

1. Remove funding from under-performing groups/those performing least well

Have you achieved at least 90% of the agreed reporting outputs and outcomes in all quarters since the start of the programme?

Eco are underperforming on 2 of their 5 outputs. The organisation have fully met one output and exceeded 2 of their outputs

Eco have not met 90% of target on 'Delivering Keep fit, sit down exercises and Thai Chi sessions' and 'delivering mindfulness and wellness sessions including knitting and storytelling etc.'

There was an in-depth discussion around the delivery of the outputs and outcomes with Eco. It was cited that the loss of the main Community Connections (CC) worker in the north of the borough had a detrimental effect on delivery at the Pepys Centre. There were also difficulties delivering session due to building issues – see section 1.c

Issues were raised around the quality of reporting of the quarterly targets. The monitoring returns were not clear as to which sessions were going ahead and which were well attended, there was also no clarity over which centre (Grove or Pepys) was achieving, or carrying the load.

It was agreed that Lead officer and Eco would work together to strengthen the quarterly reporting templates and introduce more robust way of collating the information for both centres accurately, and advise would be given to library managers in delivering these.

It was agreed that the digital sessions were going well.

Overall the outcomes are in general being delivered but due to issues at Pepys Centre, it is likely that these outcomes are benefitting people at the Grove Centre more than the in the north at the Pepys Centre, which is already a very isolated community.

Have you achieved all of the wider outcomes outlined in the initial grant application?

Eco's application detailed a number of additional elements of delivery in their application including developing 5 dementia friendly centres. While this is happening, it is unclear if Eco are taking any lead on this. The Purple Alliance and 10 Connect, whom are both networks for supporting organisations and centres working with people with dementia, are begin delivered through Community Connections. Eco are sending representatives to these meetings.

It was questioned if Community Connections were responsible for managing and delivering the sessions in the initial application. Eco felt that this was unfair and although Community Connections were very important to the organisation and success of sessions, they were not delivering them directly and that it was a key partnership as outlined in the application form. It was reiterated that the sessions were run in partnership, particularly in Pepys now that Community Connections have employed a new project coordinator in the north of the borough.

Eco Communities stated in their application that the organisation '*was seeking main grant funding for the first time in order to allow it to employ two operational staff based at Pepys and Grove Park Community Libraries who will have the task of working with the older*

persons groups based at the centres to generate the funds and form the partnerships to enable the centres to move towards offering a financially self-sustaining programme of activities'

Eco confirmed that they were using the grant fund to manage the libraries, Eco felt that by losing funding they would struggle to pay back the councils loan and manage building issues. Staff are paid by the grant, but they are paid to run the library not the older people's sessions, and managing the libraries is the priority for Eco.

It was clarified that the grant funding was to be delivering sessions for older people and not to supplement the library management, which they have an SLA from the Lewisham Library Service – however Eco were adamant that sessions were taking place and going well, this was confirmed by Lead Officer who has visited sessions as above the reporting processes need to be tightened up and figures more accurately collated and evidenced.

Eco also felt that the organisation had delivered more than their original application including the digital sessions and the support they have given to other organisations such as Go ON Lewisham, ESOL classes, the advice given to other community library organisations. They are a drop in zone for the Downham and Whitefoot Food Project

Eco felt that delivering a library service and the older peoples support as funded by main grant were intrinsically linked, that their managers and volunteers acted as an advice service for older people, helping with blue badge applications, freedom pass applications, that they were a community hub for older people to drop in if they had any problems. These were impossible to report on due to the drop in nature of the advocacy the managers are undertaking for older people.

The outputs and outcomes are as initially written at the beginning of the process. Eco have agreed to keep the outputs the same but to undergo a rigorous inspection on how these are reported and how they will be reported going forward. Lead Officer will facilitate this with Eco / Community Connections and library managers.

If no to either of the above:

- what are the mitigating factors?
- what plans are in place for improving performance?
- what progress has been made against actions agreed with your Development Officer?

What are the mitigating factors

Eco stated a number of mitigating factors around the delivery of 2 of their output targets, in particular issues around the Pepys centre.

Most notably the Pepys Centre was closed for a number of months due to a sewage flood. This meant that sessions that were unable to go ahead at this centre. This is a not insignificant issue. There has been a real issue with regard the buildings management and the costs and the state of the buildings when handed over to Eco from the Council, with regard managing the maintenance and repairs.

Eco were asked what contingencies they had in place to deliver these sessions in an alternative venue, Eco believed that as the applications was specific to delivering sessions in that area, to help the lonely and isolated at Pepys and that delivering them elsewhere

was not practical or sensible. Eco have tried to work in partnership with other local centres, in particular the 2000 centre, but that partnership was not in place when the centre was shut.

Eco also believe that staff sickness and problems, particularly from library manager at Pepys also led to issues around delivery. However they were keen to state that when their keep fit sessions were under threat and that the instructor was to charge after losing their funding, Eco absorbed that cost to keep the sessions going for their users.

Plans for improving performance

Pepys Resource Centre: there has been a meeting with Diana Hofler from Community Connections which was very productive, to get more sessions delivered at that centre. The drop-in digital help for 16 hours a week on a one to one basis is running well. Users wanted to be shown how to do council tax online and shopping primarily. Two over 55s were sent from the job centre to get help applying for jobs.

Pepys have now attended the local sheltered home schemes to see how Eco can support housebound residents. Eco have begun a befriending service with VSL which has just started and has about 5 people attend, this has since been promoted through the Positive Ageing Council newsletter. The manager of Pepys has been off due to stress, so figures have not been recorded for Pepys in the Q1 monitoring, however Eco are hitting quarterly targets without Pepys figures.

Grove Park Library: The biggest outstanding risk is to ongoing financial and volunteer resources to support Grove Park Library over the next two years of the Neighbourhood funding. Two table top sales occurred in Q1, which 38 seniors attended. These sales raised money for the local sheltered home. Only three users currently attend the Scrabble club, but seven users attend the knitting club. The keeps fit instructor has just lost her funding but Eco have continued funding this. 12 people attend the IT training.

Elsewhere Eco worked with Seniors to create some digital champions, which they are now having their own drop in surgeries. Eco are delivering some drop-in training at Lewisham Homes Office and for Phoenix in the foyer, with an average 10 people being shown how to use their devices in Q1

Eco appear to be improving with regard performance with a renewed focus in Q1.

Progress has been made against actions agreed with your Development Officer

The most pressing issue of action for Eco is to address the reporting systems. The sessions are happening and some are fairly well attended, however these figures are not being captured effectively by the library managers. Lead Officer will facilitate a new model to report into the Eco board for the library managers in partnership with all concerned with delivery – whilst maintaining the integrity of the outputs and outcomes as agreed in the initial application.

Promotion of services in the local area is an issue. While both centres are quite isolated there is very little in the way of footfall, so users must be encouraged to come in. Library managers are keen to work with Lead officer to be able to do this.

It is crucial that Eco utilise their main grant fund for the purpose of the funding stream – ‘supporting vulnerable older people’ and not paying toward other Eco library running costs. This will be monitored by Lead Officer going forward with chief executive and board

The delivery of dementia friendly centres will also be monitored for Eco involvement by Lead Officer

What local support/evidence of need can you identify for the work you are undertaking?

A key aim of the Eco bid is to provide a network of 'dementia friendly' centres around the Borough and to offer services for individuals suffering from the symptoms of early onset dementia. The geographic focus of the bid on Deptford and Grove Park is in part a response to local intelligence received from Eco partner Community Connections.

- Although part of the networks, purple alliance and 10 Connect, there is no evidence that Eco are taking any real lead in these initiatives. This will be monitored as an addition going forward

Community Connections Intelligence

There is unmet need among individuals with early onset dementia within the Deptford area (Cluster 1, in which the Pepys Resource Centre is located) as many of the organisations that provide services for this group are full and have waiting lists.

- This has not been helped by the centre being shut for many months, however they have recently set up a befriending group with VSL and are involved in a sheltered housing scheme at Conway Court. They are also at the beginning of a partnership with the community 2000 centre to bring that building to better use for older people

Another need identified by Community Connections is for affordable and accessible transport to enable individuals to participate in activities that are available. There is also unmet need in the second area covered by the bid (Cluster 3, Grove Park, in which Grove Park Community Library is located) and in addition, this area has the largest proportion of older people of any ward .

- Eco have now worked to deliver service in sheltered homes, reaching out to vulnerable people who cannot come out to their centres. Grove library does offer some transport for older people. Discussion around alternative transport provision with other local older peoples groups will be a part of an asset sharing meeting. The Library has set up a Friend's group for the over 60's, they also are trying to work in partnership with other local older peoples organisations such as the Ringway Centre, although there are issues of conflict with these partnerships in terms of personalities

2. Negotiate reductions and seek alternative funding streams

Are there any proposals that you can put forward that will deliver significant saving against current expenditure? This can include capital investment to change your delivery/business model.

There is no scope to deliver any significant saving through a change to business model. Eco emphasised the financial drain of running the library buildings and felt there was in no way they could find any savings. They initially were hoping to re-negotiate the grant for more funding, not less. Eco believe that significant investment is required in the libraries.

What alternative funding streams are you already pursuing?

It appears that internal fundraising happens through library table top sales and selling of crafts made at groups, but there is little evidence of additional funding happening from Eco around sustainability of the older people's sessions at the Grove Library and Pepys Resource Centre, in fact, Eco believe that the managing the library buildings for Lewisham is a financial and resource drain.

Fundraising on a local level, was not discussed fully in the Main Grant meeting, so should be explored further.

Eco as a company are spreading themselves quite thinly and have many facets to their community interest company, across many boroughs and services. There was a suggestion from Eco that the library buildings in Lewisham were some of the more difficult ones that they deal with.

Are there any other funding streams that you can identify that the council can support you to access?

As above. A more detailed analysis into funding streams should be had when a clarification on reporting methods are agreed.

It is clear that Eco are able to attract funding to deliver services across a number of boroughs, but there is little evidence of fundraising going on for the delivery of the older persons sessions in Pepys Resource Centre and Grove Park Library.

3. Work with groups to consider mergers or asset sharing

Are there any organisations doing similar work to you in the borough who you may consider sharing resources or merging with? Who have you considered/approached?

It was clear that Eco could and would, benefit from stronger partnerships that gave them more, rather than the partnerships they have embarked on that appear to be too heavily weighted on their organisation delivering for little return.

It is hoped that Eco would be a part of an asset sharing discussion with other older people's organisations to be facilitated by Lead officer.

There is also potential to work closer with groups such as Ageing Well who are hoping to increase their presence in the South of the borough or Deptford Methodist Mission who have waiting lists for their activities in the North.

These suggestions are yet to be taken forward but the Lead Officer will work with Eco to develop them.

Are there other groups in the local area that you could share resources with even if they are delivering a different type of service? Again, who have you considered/approached?

Eco have been working with the community payback service to help with some of their buildings issues, such as painting the Grove Centre and dealing with leaks from the flat roof.

Eco are always looking for opportunities to working different ways and have recently approached the Community 2000 Centre about a partnerships and are working in partnership with community connections.

There could be potential for Eco to work more closely with the local assemblies to raise their profile within the community, and get more support from the community activists in the local area who are perhaps able to give time and human resources to support the library offer more fully. There is evidence of success of this at Sydenham and Crofton community libraries.

What support might you need to move these suggestions forward?

To work with the development officers for New Cross, Evelyn and Telegraph hill Assemblies in the north and Grove Park, Whitefoot, Catford South and Downham Assemblies in the south to embark on some profile raising activities in order to garner community and potential volunteering support locally. There could also be potential to work with the Neighbourhood development workers, also funded by main grants, in those areas

Lead Officer will be facilitating an asset sharing workshop for older peoples organisations funded by the main grant to make connections and share resources. Meetings with Ageing Well in Lewisham and Deptford mission could be a part of these discussions

4. Pro-rata reductions across all groups

What would a 25% cut in your grants look like in service delivery terms? What are the wider impacts?

Eco stated that being defunded or even potentially taking a 25% cut in their funding could result in the organisations withdrawal from running some or all of the library buildings they currently manage for Lewisham Council.

Eco feel that the burden of the buildings and library delivery would not proportional to the level of benefit that the organisation gains if the grant were removed.

Have you modelled this cut and developed an action plan for its implementation?

Eco have not modelled a cut. The organisation were hoping to be able to negotiate more funding during this process although it was never suggested to them that this was an option and that they needed to model the 25% cut as a likely outcome.

Conclusion

Any other comments / areas discussed

There was significant discussion regarding ECOs general business model and the other facets of the company.

There was a feeling expressed by Eco that the management of the library buildings needed reviewing to ensure that everyone was happy with the current outputs for the grant funding.

Conclusion and recommendation

Eco have delivered on 4 of 6 outputs. They site mitigating factors of building closure and staff and support problems for being below on these. Quarter 1 of 16-17 appears that Eco have turned these issues around. However and an immediate action is to strengthen the reporting and evidence of the figures to LBL, as the activities are happening but the reporting is muddled and difficult to monitor effectively.

Eco are delivering on most outcomes, however there needs to be more evidence around their status within dementia friendly Lewisham community. Although the organisation are part of an existing network, it was implied in their application that Eco would be leads on this, and there is no evidence they are leading.

Although their application states they would be paying library staff to manage the grant funded older people's sessions, it appears after analysis that this fund is being spent on keeping the libraries open and paying back a council loan. It has been emphasised that this grant should not be used to pay to keep the libraries going but to improve the outcomes for vulnerable older people.

Progress is being made in both centres, but again this is with the huge support of community connections. It is unclear if there would be much progress without their involvement.

Eco are able to pull in funding for the wider activities of the organisation, however there appears to be no substantial fundraising happening to support the older people's sessions at Grove Centre or the Pepys resource Centre.

The organisation feel that merging is not an option but would be keen to be a part of an asset sharing discussion and need to work on raising their profile within the Grove Park and Evelyn Communities to strengthen the libraries community resilience

Due to mitigating factors being cited around the closure of a building and library manager sickness, with regard meeting target outputs and outcomes and that these figures are rebounding in Q1 of 16-17; being contingent of a detailed review of their monitoring processes and procedures, **it is recommended that Eco receive a pro-rata cut.**

It is recommended that this funding be initially only for 2017/18 while officers work with Eco to review the use of the grant and the future of the current library buildings that Eco manage.

