

Classification: Open	Date: 23 October 2012	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Development
Report title:	Community Capacity Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan 2013/14	
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All	
From:	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Development approve the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2013/14 for allocation of grants to be awarded under the Community Capacity programme attached as Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The corporate and departmental arrangements for managing the council's funding of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations require annual commissioning plans to be produced for each separate programme of activity resourced by departments. These plans set out the business case for seeking voluntary sector service providers, expected links between the council's policies and priorities and the outcomes that are to be delivered by the voluntary organisations which receive grant aid. The plans also make reference, where appropriate, to the contracting of organisations (via Contract Standing Orders) to deliver services.
3. Approval of the commissioning plan for the Community Capacity Programme and individual grant approvals over £2,500 is a matter for individual cabinet member decision making. The matter will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Community Engagement (Constitution: Clauses 2 and 5 Part 3D).
4. Oversight of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector, the council's conditions of grant aid and the overall processes for commissioning services from the VCS also comes within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Community Engagement.
5. The process for commissioning grant aided voluntary sector service providers for 2013/14 involves 3 key stages:
 - Development and agreement of the commissioning plan
 - Advertising and assessment of applications
 - Report & final decisions.
6. A draft indicative timetable for this process is as follows:

Action	Date for completion
Community Capacity consultation process with the voluntary sector	20 September – 30 October 2012
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Development	Early November 2012
Advertisement of Community Capacity programme and any other available departmental funding	Second week of November 2012
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	Monday 17 December 2012
Assessment of applications	December & early January 2013
Inform groups of recommendations and advising of their right to make representations to the decision maker	January 2013
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	January/February 2013
Notification to groups of IDM decisions	February 2013

7. For 2013/14 the Community Capacity programme will be openly advertised in November with the exception of the element which supports the Council for the Voluntary Sector (CVS) functions for the borough. These services are currently delivered by Community Action Southwark (CAS), the borough CVS. CAS is currently contracted as a preferred supplier via contract standing orders for 2011 - 2014 in order to ensure effective services are available locally. This service was re-commissioned in 2011 by way of separate gateway reports.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Community Capacity Programme

8. The purpose of the corporate Community Capacity voluntary sector funding programme is to assist the council in meeting its statutory and policy objectives for eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and good community relations, and for tackling poverty and social exclusion. The aim is to fund organisations whose core activities do not fall within service-specific departmental programmes.
9. The objectives of the Community Capacity programme are to fund organisations that:
- **Engage with diverse local communities** including older people, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and disability in order to redress imbalances in quality of life outcomes.
 - **Build capacity within the voluntary sector** to enable it to play a full and effective role in the development and delivery of the priorities and objectives of the Council's Plan.
 - **Develop and sustain multi-purpose community bases** aimed at tackling social exclusion in deprived areas and neighbourhoods.
10. These objectives fall within the Council's Plan and the ten Fairer Future promises to create a fairer future for all in Southwark.

11. Facing an unprecedented cut in its budget settlement from Government of £34m on 22 February 2011 the Council Assembly agreed the revenue strategy for the period 2011/12 – 2013/14. Despite this unprecedented reduction the budget for the Community Capacity (formerly Community Support) programme for 2011/12 stayed at the same level as the previous year. The strategy also set out a reduction of £204,000 to the Community Support programme for 2012/13. This reduction was to be met through £45,000 reduction in administrative costs and the balance to be met from the Community Support programme. However, after careful consideration a decision was taken to offset part of the reduction by taking £123,000 of the savings from 2011/12 from the London Council's levy agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 January 2012.
12. On 23 July 2011 the council launched a consultation process with the voluntary sector in Southwark to elicit their views and explore ways in which the Community Support programme could be re-configured in order to achieve the original proposed savings. The findings of this consultation were fed back to the sector and representatives from Southwark Voice were involved in 2 half day workshops with the objective of revising the commissioning plan and funding priorities. Whilst some reconfiguration was achieved due to the reduction to the programme being offset by savings from London Councils levy the previously anticipated impact on groups funded via the programme was considerably eased.
13. For 2013/14 until the settlement from Government is announced and the council agrees its budget the extent of any reduction to be applied for 2013/14 is not known. Officers have been working up proposals for possible reductions of 5% 10% and 15%. On this basis a decision was taken to build on this consultation from the previous year, to reiterate the conclusions drawn from the responses and to seek to further revise the criteria required to be met. Officers attended a meeting of Southwark Forum on 19 September to present these conclusions and invite further comments. Discussion also took place at the Council/VCS liaison meeting on 19 September 2012 where it was agreed that nominated representatives would attend 2 half-day workshops with officers from Community Engagement to further comment on and feed into a revised commissioning plan for 2013/14. In addition benchmarking with other authorities has been carried out identify current trends and good practice in relation to the commissioning of the VCS against the programme criteria. Both Local Authority and VCS intelligence has been incorporated into the revised version.
14. The full commissioning plan is set out in Appendix 1.

Strategic Review of the Council's Relationship with the Voluntary Sector

15. The Council's commissioning approach is set out in the VCS Framework, which was agreed by the Executive on 24 April 2007. This document sets out the policy and principles governing the council's arrangements for partnership with, support to and resourcing of Southwark's voluntary and community sector (VCS).
16. In relation to commissioning and funding the VCS, the Framework sets out that the council will operate a mixed economy of grant aid and contracts and will where possible operate on a three-year cycle.
17. For 2013/14 within the Community Capacity programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid with CVS functions commissioned via a separate gateway process.
18. In June 2011 the Council's Cabinet also approved the Medium Term Resources

Strategy which incorporates the VCS Strategy and a number of outcomes and principles of partnership working with the VCS.

Community impact statement

19. There is a legal duty on local authorities to promote equal opportunities, eliminate discrimination and to promote positive community relations. The objective of the Community Capacity programme is to empower and enable hard-to-reach communities and those communities which experience discrimination, to achieve a better quality of life.
20. In 2008 the Community Capacity programme underwent an equalities impact assessment. This assessment highlighted the need for on-going support to organisations that capacity-build smaller groups as well as the need to provide resources to a range of smaller front line service deliverers representing specific communities of interest. The Southwark Forum for Equalities and Human Rights (FEHRS) has previously participated in the Community Capacity programme consultation and have been invited to feedback comments.
21. As part of the application process VCS organisations must demonstrate who will benefit from their organisations' activities and how they support cohesion and community bridging initiatives. Within their annual reports organisations must evidence the benefits users gain from their services or activities (Conditions of Grant Aid - Section 8.1 d).

Resource implications

22. For 2013/14 the council's base budget to fund the Community Capacity programme is £1,150,963. The council will need to determine the level of resources for Community Capacity voluntary sector organisations within the context of tight financial constraints of the local government settlement and through the council's annual policy and resources process.
23. The council is also committed to providing 3 months notice of funding decisions where necessary which will need to be factored into the budget.

Consultation

24. CAS, as the umbrella body and the voice of the VCS in Southwark, has been consulted during the development of the 2013/14 Community Capacity voluntary sector commissioning plan. Consultation on the plan has been carried out at a number of representative forums including the Council/VCS Liaison meeting and the CAS led Southwark Voice and Southwark Forum. Copies of the draft commissioning plan have been made available to council departments.

Supplementary Advice from Other Officers

Director of Legal Services

25. The Director of Legal Services notes the content of the report.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services

26. This report sets out the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2013/14 and as such does not yet commit the Council's resources to any organisation. Once submissions

from voluntary organisations have been received and reviewed, a Gateway process will formalise the level of commitment of Council resources to the programme. As stated in paragraph 21, the Council's current budget to fund the Community Capacity programme is £1,150,963, but this does not take into account any efficiency savings to the programme that may emerge during the 2013/14 budget setting process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Community Support Grants Programme 2012/13	Housing & Community Services 160 Tooley St SE1P 5LX	Bonnie Royal Tel: 02075257389
Southwark Compact	As Above	As Above
Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document – April 2007	As Above	As Above
Medium Term Resources Strategy	Finance & Resources	As Above

APPENDICES

No.	Title:
Appendix 1	Commissioning Plan 2013-14
Appendix 2	Community Support programme consultation questionnaire

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Report Author	Bonnie Royal, Commissioning & Voluntary Sector Support Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	23 October 2012	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Team	23 October 2012	