

## Community Support programme consultation questionnaire

### Summary of findings

#### August 2011

- 1) The approach we are proposing taking is to review the Community Support Programme so that we can allocate funding according to how priorities have changed rather than reducing funding equally to all organisations across the board. Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree	22%
Agree	67%
Neither agree nor disagree	5.5%
Disagree	5.5%
Strongly disagree	

- Difficulty of securing core funding from alternative sources.
- Much of this funding is 'historical' and needs / demographics have changed over the years.
- Cutting some organisations entirely probably better than top-slicing. Keep funding those orgs providing a service to most vulnerable communities.

**83.5% net agreement.**

- 2) a) Are the 3 priorities for the Community Support programme the right priorities to deliver the objectives?

Strongly agree	29%
Agree	63%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	

- General sense that area based ie local resources of more value in supporting most vulnerable than capacity building and infrastructure.

**88% net agreement.**

- b) If we had to rank these priorities, how would you rank them and why?

Priority	1	2	3
Communities of Interest – service deliverers	<b>56%</b>	26%	18%
Capacity building and infrastructure support	22%	22%	<b>46%</b>
Area-based resources	22%	<b>41%</b>	32%

- Difficult / impossible to rank these meaningfully.
- Area based resources vital to people who cannot travel far and they can support communities of interest.
- Centralised infrastructure support / capacity building not needed.
- More work on integration and cohesion needed and avoidance of dependency culture.

#### Preferred ranking:

Communities of Interest / Service Deliverers	1
Area Based Resources	2
Capacity Building and Infrastructure Support	3

2) a) Under the Communities of Interest – Service Deliverers priority, we fund a range of organisations that provide services to specific communities.... support and represent those communities. ...Do you agree that the council should continue to support organisations that provide services to specific communities?

Strongly agree	44%
Agree	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	8%
Disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	

- Need to be flexible to respond to emerging needs.

**68% net agreement.**

b) Should the council change its funding model so that it aims to fund these types of organisation only for a limited period until the organisation can become independent?

Strongly agree	14%
Agree	9%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%
Disagree	18%
Strongly disagree	41%

- In an ideal world organisations would become 100% independent of the council but this is not realistic in practice.
- Losing council funding could mean loss of local focus of org.
- Adapt to changing needs ('dynamic evaluation'). Eg refugee communities change and move on over time. Need to use data on changing needs.
- Reconcile consistency with avoiding dependency.
- Difficult to raise funds from other sources without core funding from council.

- Orgs should charge affordable fees for services.
- Some orgs, because of the nature of the service they provide, find it easier than others to attract other sources of funding (eg its easier to get funding for health and animal charities than those working on race).

**36% net disagreement.**

3) Currently there are 5 capacity building and infrastructure organisations for the borough. Do you think we should through our funding criteria encourage those to work together towards developing one universal capacity building and infrastructure organisation for the borough?

Strongly agree	28%
Agree	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%
Disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	12%

- Collaboration, partnership working and merger is good but only where it adds value and the council should not force it.
- Mergers may reduce orgs ability to lever in external funds, and may result in loss of front-line provision.
- Some capacity building and infrastructure support organisations provide much needed local services, eg providing voice, recruiting volunteers.
- Currently no criteria, other than a financial saving in the long term, on which we can assess whether one organisation could provide effective and appropriate support to the whole sector.

**44% net agreement**

a) Do you agree that the Community Support programme should continue to support settlements?

Strongly agree	22%
Agree	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree	13%
Strongly disagree	9%

- Settlements bring funding and expertise into an area.
- Just because individual settlements have existed historically in an area does not mean their objectives and effectiveness should not be reviewed.
- Vulnerable people need to be able to access services close to where they live.
- Settlements are already looking at how they can compliment each other's work and collaborate and share resources more closely.

**34 % net agreement.**

b) Do you agree that the Community Support programme should continue to support community centres?

Strongly agree	26%
Agree	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	11%

- Community centres bring different groups of people together and support community cohesion.
- Needs to be rationalisation of community centres – buildings, services, staff etc – as there is currently some wastage of space.
- Community centres help the council to deliver services to the most vulnerable people.

**40% net agreement.**

c) Do you think there is duplication of services / activities within the programme?

Strongly agree	12%
Agree	40%
Neither agree nor disagree	36%
Disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	6%

- There is no duplication – organisations compliment each others work.
- Some duplication between organisations working with specific communities and others working with a wider spread of communities.
- VCS orgs may offer a specific cultural and linguistic approach which statutory organisations are unable to offer, therefore there is no duplication of services in this sense.
- It is difficult to judge: needs across the borough are high organisations are located in different areas around the borough so although there appears to be duplication this may not in fact be the case.

**38% net agreement.**

Suggestions for avoiding duplication:

- Council facilitate partnership working
- Council encourage mergers
- Look more widely at where infrastructure support is offered and many of the general advice/training/info is now offered on a London wide level or by regional organisations e.g. NCVO or LVSC
- Council work very closely with VCS to map the duplication, and work with the VCS to develop a model for service delivery (with caveat that specific bespoke services to one section of the community and are specialists. A universal one model approach will not be appropriate in such a diverse borough).

4) In principle, would you be in favour of tapered funding?

Strongly agree	8%
Agree	42%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	11%

- For project costs or development but not for core costs
- Better than abrupt termination.
- Some areas of work would not be funded by external funders if the council withdrew its support.
- Reductions in funding should be based on effectiveness.
- New communities should be encouraged to set up support groups.

**20% net agreement.**

### Alternative suggestions to tapered funding

- Tapered funding followed by a fallow period, then allowed to re-apply for more tapered funding
- Staggered process across year rather than 31<sup>st</sup> March cliff face.
- Continue to provide running costs at same level.
- Rigorous performance monitoring and evaluation.
- Savings from infrastructure orgs put into small pot for innovative work.
- Capacity building support should be provided with much more closer working relationships encouraged between those funded community groups and local enterprise support agencies who can help them to develop social enterprise principles as part of their long term sustainability strategy
- Ask organisations to provide match funding with any proposals they submit
- Only fund organisations where their application to the Council is for less than, e.g. 50%, of their total turnover
- Ring fence a pot of funding specifically for organisations supporting new communities More organisations working under the umbrella of a larger organisation will reduce costs
- Taper some areas of core costs eg premises utilities, marketing. while leaving other areas untouched eg staffing.

5) As set out above, the CS programme targets communities of interest groups, capacity building and infrastructure organisations and area based resources as listed in Appendix one. Do you agree that these are all appropriate areas of need?

Strongly agree	27%
Agree	50%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Disagree	4.5%
Strongly disagree	4.5%

**68% net agreement.**

If we had to reduce the areas of need which are targeted, which are those which should be protected, and are there any which are less significant?

- All meeting a need; just consider who is having greatest impact with available resources.
- How long should refugee groups be supported after arrival?
- Vulnerable groups (elderly, disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers) should be protected.
- Make savings from infrastructure organisations.
- Test which groups are making an impact through rigorous objective setting and monitoring.

**Most significant needs not currently being met:**

- Research into local needs, to provide evidence for funding bids
- Early intervention and prevention
- New groups and emerging needs
- Support for Gypsy Roma Traveller community.
- Economic self-help
- Publicity and printing
- Affordable premises
- Active citizenship – interface between local people and council
- Longer term funding rather than annual cycle
- Support for organisations facing cuts from London Councils
- Bringing different communities together
- Borough wide approach to pensioners services: benefits and advice, health, befriending, use of IT

6) Does the council make effective use of its community buildings?

Strongly agree	4%
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	35%
Disagree	35%
Strongly disagree	26%

- Buildings need entrepreneurial approach but VCS orgs can rarely match market rate.
- Some tenants halls under-used.
- More equitable access.
- Majority of groups in council owned buildings are struggling to cover rent costs.
- Make more use of schools, libraries, council offices, and other, particularly out of normal office/school hours.

**57% net disagreement.**

7) Does the voluntary and community sector make effective use of its community buildings?

Strongly agree	12%
Agree	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	42%
Disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	8%

- Very variable.
- A lot of sharing of space.
- There could be a lot more hotdesking and sharing of back office space.

**12% net agreement.**

8) Would you be in favour of our changing our funding criteria to encourage the organisations that we fund to share premises and back-office costs?

Strongly agree	8%
Agree	40%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%
Disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	16%

- Would take away the independence of the voluntary sector
- A good idea but not always feasible.
- Groups should not be forced into this.
- Have to be careful about safety and cultural issues.
- In the short term, costs of moving, ending contracts and liabilities may exceed savings made.

**20% net agreement.**

### Other ways the council could support organisations

- More research / data on local needs and demographics to support funding bids
- Provide expert advice on fundraising
- 'Hot tips' – sift information on funding opportunities and pass to appropriate groups rather than blanket emails
- Simplify monitoring processes / make monitoring more supportive
- Introduce 3 year service agreements
- Involve VCS in strategic planning – not just consulting, but actually helping draft objectives.
- Second council staff in the VCS and vice versa.
- Free use of meeting / training rooms to deliver services to young people
- Better understanding of and access to Section 106 funding
- Council apprenticeships for young people
- Encouraging give as you earn amongst staff
- Encourage staff to take part in some of our initiatives
- Brokering relationships
- Set up resource centres for volunteer led agencies, unfunded or with very small amounts of funding, who can't afford to rent office space. These would provide free access to the internet, and photocopying and printing.
- Reduced rent.

### Other comments

- Any reduction on rates and rents for community organisations using these community buildings would be helpful. So would transport for disabled or vulnerable service users.
- Comments that the questionnaire has been difficult to respond to.
- Resources for most vulnerable members of community must be assured. New organisations should also be supported.
- 'Just to say that the Community Support fund is a vital part of Southwark Council's support for the voluntary sector in Surrey and without it organisations such as my own would be unable to lever the external funds required to make our organisations sustainable. A huge amount of excellent work is funded through this grant pot, and we need to see it continue.'
- Thank you to the Community Support Programme for the contribution and support for the last year to our project. Individuals of Spanish and Portuguese background, in the borough of Southwark and neighbour boroughs, that are the most vulnerable in the community have benefitted greatly from our services.'