

	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 22 June 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety
<b>Report title:</b>	Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan 2016/17		
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>	All		
<b>From:</b>	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services		

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety approves the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2016/17 for allocation of grants to be awarded under the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes 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. The services to be provided are of Social General Economic Interest, and are to be applied to the care and social inclusion of vulnerable groups. An equalities analysis has been carried out and the Public Sector Equality Duty has been considered.
4. Approval of the commissioning plan for the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes and individual grant approvals over £2,500 to voluntary organisations is given by the individual cabinet member. The organisations to whom grants are to be given are voluntary organisations.
5. Prior to any award made under the Environment & Ecology programme, the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Public Realm will be consulted.
6. Oversight of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector, the council's Conditions of Grant Funding and the overall processes for commissioning services from the VCS also comes within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety.
7. The process for commissioning grant aided voluntary sector service providers for 2016/17 involves 3 key stages:
  - Development and agreement of the commissioning plan
  - Advertising and assessment of applications

- Report & final decisions.

8. A draft indicative timetable for this process is as follows:

Action	Date of completion
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Cabinet Portfolio Member	June 2015
Advertisement of Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes	Beginning Sept 2015
Workshop for applicants delivered by Community Action Southwark	Mid Sept 2015
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	16 Oct 2015
Assessment of applications	Oct-Nov 2015
Write to applicants informing them of recommendations and advising of their right to make representations to the decision maker	Nov 2015
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	Nov-Dec 2015
Formal Notification to groups of IDM decisions	Dec 2015
Start date for grants	1 April 2016

9. For 2016/17 the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes will be openly advertised in September – October 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.
10. The programmes will be advertised on the Community Action Southwark website and e-bulletin; [www.fundingcentral.org.uk](http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk); and the South London Press. Currently funded organisations, and council commissioners, will also be informed via email.
11. Once awards have been made, payments for both programmes will be made quarterly.
12. Organisations in receipt of grant funding from the council are monitored via the council's performance monitoring framework for grants. This includes an annual monitoring visit; completion of a self-assessment checklist; and submission of financial information including annual accounts and a half-yearly income / expenditure statement.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

### Community Capacity Programme

13. 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.
14. The objectives of the Community Capacity programme are to fund organisations that:
  - **Engage with diverse local communities** in order to redress imbalances in quality of life outcomes

- **Develop and sustain multi-purpose community bases** aimed at tackling social exclusion in deprived areas and neighbourhoods
  - **Promote a greener borough** via the environment and ecology objectives.
15. These objectives fall within the Council Plan and the ten Fairer Future promises (updated July 2014) to create a fairer future for all in Southwark.
  16. The council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2014/15 to 2016/17 Revenue Budget was agreed in February 2014, in the context of unprecedented cuts in its budget settlement from government.
  17. In 2015/16, the third Community Capacity priority of 'Specialist Infrastructure and Capacity Building Support' was removed from the Community Capacity grants programme and commissioned via a separate contract to the value of £130,000 known at the Integrated Technical and Volunteering Support Services contract. The contract was awarded to Community Action Southwark.
  18. The following elements of the infrastructure service were previously provided by four separate organisations and are now provided via the single contract:
    - Supporting volunteering
    - Financial and other technical services
    - Support for engagement networks.
  19. These four organisations were not precluded from applying to the grants programme but were required to demonstrate that they are able to meet the revised priorities set out in paragraph 13 in order to be eligible for funding. One of these organisations did apply to the Community Capacity programme but it was deemed that the application did not meet the priorities.
  20. An additional three organisations are not being funded as either they closed down in 2014-15 or chose not to apply to the programme.

This table summarises changes to the Community Capacity programme since 2011-12:

Year	Savings	Groups funding stopped	- Groups newly funded	Total funding
2015/16	£161,937	7	2	£851,451 (+ £130k for ITVSS contract)
2014/15	0	0	1	£1,142,404*
2013/14	£60,000	6	4	£1,117,907
2012/13	£77,000	5	7	£1,110,544
2011/12	0	0	0	£1,198,196

\* This increase arose because £27,000 was made available following a one-off reduction in the council's levy to the London Councils grants scheme

21. For 2016/17, it is anticipated that there will be a reduction to the Community Capacity / Environment & Ecology programme budgets, but until the council agrees its overall budget the extent of any reduction to be applied is not known.

22. The consultation exercise carried out in 2011 also found that there was strong support for an approach that targeted funding to priority organisations, rather than blanket budget reductions across all funded groups.
23. The last strategic review, carried out 2011-12, found that funding recommendations should be guided by the need to ensure stability for the sector, and create sufficient flexibility within the criteria, balancing interests of continuity of funding with the need to ensure that groups not previously funded have the opportunity to apply for and potentially get funding. Duplication should be avoided, and as clear a picture as possible should be obtained of the financial health of organisations applying.
24. For the 2014/15 programme, the council's Environment & Ecology programme was brought into the Community Capacity programme. The objectives of the Environment & Ecology programme have been reviewed for 2016/17 in consultation with the council's Ecology Officer.
25. The full commissioning plan for both the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes is set out in Appendix 1.

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

26. The council's commissioning approach is set out in the VCS Framework, which was agreed by the Executive in 2007. This document sets out the policy and principles governing the council's arrangements for working with, support to and resourcing of Southwark's voluntary and community sector (VCS).
27. 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.
28. For 2016/17 within the Community Capacity programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid with CVS functions commissioned via contract as described in paragraph 8.
29. The council's Medium Term Resources Strategy 2014-15 to 2016-2017 incorporates the VCS Strategy and a number of outcomes and principles of working with the VCS.

### **Community Impact Statement**

30. 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.
31. As part of the application process the council asks organisations to estimate the percentage of their service users that fall into the protected characteristics of the 2010 Equality Act. This information is used to assess the equalities impact of the Community Capacity programme and the impact of any funding reductions. The form used to collect this information has been developed in line with feedback from the Forum for Equalities and Human Rights in Southwark (FEHRS).
32. 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 Funding - Section 4. paragraph 1.1).

### **Resource implications**

33. The total budget available in 2016/17 to fund the Community Capacity programme and the Environment and Ecology programme has not yet been determined as it will be subject to the council's budget review process.
34. In 2015/16 the total budget for the Community Capacity programme is £850,467 whilst the Environment & Ecology budget is £99,451. This includes rent grants.
35. 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**

36. As described in paragraph 18, in September 2012 a consultation exercise was carried out on revised funding priorities for the commissioning plan. For 2016/17, the changes that are happening follow on from that consultation. As a result further consultation was not deemed necessary. CAS, as the umbrella body and the voice of the VCS in Southwark, and the Forum for Equalities in Human Rights in Southwark, have been given the opportunity to comment on the 2016/17 commissioning plan.

### **Supplementary Advice from Other Officers**

#### **From the Director of Legal Services**

37. The Director of Legal Services notes the contents of this report and confirms that under Part 3D of the council's Constitution the agreement of significant programmes relating to revenue and capital budget allocations and the approval of grants of over £2,500 to voluntary sector organisations is a matter that is reserved to IDM for decision.
38. It is noted that the purpose of the grants is for the care and social inclusion of vulnerable groups and on this basis the Social General Economic Interest exception to the State Aid rules applies.

Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 the council has a duty to have due regard in its decision making processes to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
  - (c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
39. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The PSED also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to (a) above.
  40. Paragraphs 13-15 of the report shows that this duty has been complied with.

## Strategic Director of Finance & Corporate Services

41. This report sets out the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2016/17 and as such does not yet commit the council's resources to any organisation. Once submissions from voluntary organisations have been received and reviewed, an assessment process will formalise the level of commitment of council resources to the programme and approval sought once more by way of an IDM .
42. As stated in paragraph 34, the council's current budget to fund the Community Capacity programme is £850,467 whilst £99,451 is available to fund the Environment & Ecology programme, but this does not take into account any efficiency savings to the programme that may emerge during the 2016/17 budget setting process.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Community Support Grants Programme 2015/16	Housing & Community Services 160 Tooley St SE1P 5LX	Andy Matheson 020 7525 7648
Southwark Compact	Housing & Community Services	“ “
Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document - April 2007	Housing & Community Services	“ “
Medium Term Resources Strategy 2014-15 – 2016-2017	Finance & Resources	“ “

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	The Community Capacity Commissioning Programme: Commissioning Plan 2016/17

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephen Douglass. Head of Community Engagement	
<b>Report Author</b>	Katherine Pitt, Commissioning Officer, Housing & Community Services	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	19 June 2015	
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		22 June 2015