

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 November 2022	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Finance
Report title:		Common Purpose grants programme 2019-23: 1 year extension 2023-4	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Communities	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Finance approves the extension of the Common Purpose grants programme 2019-23 at the current grant amounts for an additional year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The total annual budget for the programme is £801,451. The funded organisations are listed in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The overall aims of the Common Purpose programme are to bring Southwark's diverse communities together, tackle social exclusion and promote a greener borough.
3. The Common Purpose grants programme was developed to support the ambitions of the Southwark Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2017-2022 '[Common Purpose Common Cause](#)'. One of the commitments in the strategy was to provide longer funding cycles. The programme is made of:
 - Four year 'strategic partner' grants: currently 15 organisations are funded in 2019-23. Specific criteria for the 4 year grants are as follows:
 - Borough-wide service or community anchor in neighbourhoods: works in partnership with other VCS groups; supports grassroots groups and / or emerging communities; contributes to local strategy development
 - Has substantial non-council funding for services
 - Makes premises available for grassroots groups to hire at low or no cost.
 - Two year 'community engagement' grants: currently 15 organisations are funded in 2021-23. Specific criteria for the 2 year grants are as follows:

- Meets needs of one or more community of interest and brings communities together
 - Works with other VCS organisations serving different client groups
 - Enables clients to move on and brings new clients in
 - Has **some** non-council funding and is not wholly reliant on council funding
 - Provides advice, information and signposting to the correct services.
4. A further commitment in the strategy was an increased focus on outcomes for residents and to that end the [Common Outcomes Framework](#) was developed with the VCS. When the Common Purpose programme was launched in 2019, commissioners specified the outcomes they wished funded organisations to achieve. These are as follows:
- Residents have improved access to community services
 - Residents feel that they have access to services to improve their wellbeing
 - Residents feel more confident to maintain their independence without the need for higher levels of support
 - Residents have increased opportunities and support to volunteer
 - Residents have the skills and confidence to increase their use of online services and there is less digital exclusion
 - Residents and organisations have greater access to community spaces and premises
 - Residents increase their use of public transport, cycling or walking around the borough
 - Residents and organisations feel more able to use green spaces to support social action and health & wellbeing activities
 - Increasing numbers of residents and organisations support initiatives to make Southwark greener.

Organisations are not required to meet all the criteria but can specify which ones they will use the funding to achieve and the indicators they will use to measure progress.

5. Funded organisations are required to submit data annually on the indicators they are using to measure achievement of these outcomes. This data is collated and reviewed by the commissioning team.
6. In 2022 the Common Outcomes Framework is being reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is in line with the new Council Delivery Plan. This review is being led by the Commissioning team in Communities.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. In March 2023 both the 4 and 2 year grants are due to expire. The timetable for the new grants process for 2023 onwards would normally start in

summer 2022 with the programme advertised from early September, and recommendations being approved via an IDM report in December. This timetable:

- Allows time for review and evaluation of the existing programme to inform any changes going forward.
 - Allows sufficient time for 3 months' notice to be given to any currently funded organisation that is unsuccessful in their application.
 - Ensures that the first grant payments are made at the start of the next financial year.
8. This report seeks approval to extend the current grants for a further year. This allows sufficient time for [the recommendations the two independent reviews](#) of council grant making carried out in 2021 to be implemented. The following recommended actions are currently in development:
- Review of the Common Outcomes Framework as described in paragraph 6.
 - Allocation of an additional £400k in grant funding, with £200k of this to be available specifically for groups that self-identify as Black Asian and minority ethnic led.
 - Creation of a council-wide funding prospectus.
 - Set up systems for collecting data on the composition of the board or management of an organisation, so we are able to identify who is leading the groups we fund as well as those who are not successful in their applications or tenders.
 - Build a database of Black, Asian and minority ethnic led organisations in the borough, so we are better able to include and act positively to encourage and support Black Asian and minority ethnic led groups to access funding opportunities.
9. Wider developments are taking place that also support these recommendations. The council's Positive Futures grants programme has piloted new ways of allocating funding that involve a brief expression of interest, 'Dragon's Den' style interview and support for those who pass the first two stages to work up a more detailed proposal. This supports the request from Black Asian & minority ethnic led organisations who took part in the independent reviews for simpler application processes.
10. A number of smaller, Black Asian and minority led organisations who are regularly successful in applying to the council's Neighbourhoods Fund but who have had less success in obtaining larger amounts of core funding, have recently been successful in obtaining funding from other local funders including Impact on Urban Health, United St Saviour's Charity and Peter Minet Trust. In some cases, grant amounts range from £20,000 to £140,000 and will therefore have a significant impact on organisational

capacity and sustainability.

11. This is part of a commitment by independent funders in the borough, to remove barriers and improve access to funding for Black Asian and minority ethnic led organisations. The council's engagement and leadership on taking forward the Southwark Stands Together actions have played a part in influencing the funding environment.

Process for extending the grants

12. We will write to currently funded organisations asking them to register their interest in the additional year's funding, at the current level. Commissioners will also take into account any issues arising from the annual monitoring process carried out in autumn 2022. Monitoring includes: review of annual accounts for 2021-22, governance documentation, and submission of the outcomes data referred to in paragraph 5 above. Organisations will be asked to complete a brief application form to indicate which outcomes they will deliver and which priorities within the new Council Delivery Plan they will contribute to including:

- Tackling inequality
- Cost of living crisis
- Anti-racism

13. There is not a right to receive this grant. Grants will be awarded provided that organisations fulfil the following conditions:

- Have met monitoring requirements
- Continue to deliver the services for which grant was first awarded
- Have complete the form on the following pages of this letter and indicated where you will contribute to the new Council Delivery Plan objectives.

Recent developments

14. A number of changes and developments among some of the Common Purpose funded groups are noted as follows:

- Crystal Palace Community Trust handed back their grant in spring 2022.
- Cambridge House sold their building in summer 2022 and are moving to new premises. The Cambridge House Law Centre, Youth and Disability Empowerment services remain in the borough but Cambridge House are no longer a voluntary sector hub offering premises to other voluntary sector organisations. They therefore may no longer meet the criteria for a 4 year strategic partner grant.
- The Bike Project, who give refurbished bikes to refugees, have grown significantly in a relatively short timescale and now have a second base in Birmingham as well as outreach in 7 other English cities, while retaining a base in Camberwell.

- Bede House, with significant support from the Council, is building the new Bede Centre as part of the redevelopment of the Abbeyfield Estate. The Centre offers greater efficiency, suitability and sustainability for Bede's future on a long term lease from the Council.
- The Forum for Equalities and Human Rights In Southwark (FEHRS) hosted by Citizens Advice Southwark, has played an important role as a critical friend to the council in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty via its Panel. This has included the Southwark Stands Together strategy, the Housing Allocation Equality Impact Assessment and the Technology and Digital Strategy.
- Spring Community Hub has vastly expanded its services in response to the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis. Previous to the pandemic, it saw 30-50 weekly clients across all 4 of its food banks. This increased 6-fold since lockdown to a weekly average of over 200 clients. It has also expanded its non-food services by working alongside people to help them escape food poverty, build confidence and find community. For example, by running Holiday Clubs and Black History Month grant funded events.

Policy framework implications

15. The Common Purpose grants programme was developed to support the ambitions of the 2016 'Common Purpose Common Cause' [Voluntary and Community Sector \(VCS\) strategy](#), with a focus on supporting resilient and connected communities, improving outcomes for residents and supporting a resilient VCS via core funding and longer funding cycles.
16. The Common Outcomes Framework is being reviewed as described in paragraph 6 above to ensure it is in line with the Council Delivery Plan.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

17. There is a legal duty on local authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equal opportunities, eliminate discrimination and to promote positive community relations. This grants programme aims to empower and enable diverse communities and those communities which experience discrimination to achieve a better quality of life. This includes those communities who have been, and may continue to be disproportionately impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

18. In 2020 the council-wide [Southwark Stands Together programme](#) was launched in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, to tackle ingrained racism in the borough and make the council an effective anti-racist organisation. As part of this programme of work, two independent reviews of council grant giving were carried out in 2021.
 - The first looking at how to dismantle barriers to funding for Black Asian

- & minority ethnic led organisations
 - The second looking at the impact the council's investment in the VCS is having in tackling inequalities across the borough more broadly. The council's Communities Team is working with other council teams to implement the recommendations from these reviews which are set out in paragraph 8.
19. 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 Equality Act 2010. This information is used to assess the equalities impact of the 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) and with the council's Equalities and Inclusion officer.
 20. The short application form for the one year extension will ask organisations to provide data on the composition of the board or management of organisations, so we are able to identify who is leading the groups we fund. Future application rounds will ask for this information from all applicants so that we can use that information to address any gaps in who is being funded.
 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 Funding - Section 4. paragraph 1.1).
 22. Grant funded VCS organisations are required as part of the Conditions of Grant Funding to sign up to the Southwark Diversity Standard. Contained within this is a requirement that all subcontractors and service providers pay workers the London Living Wage as a minimum. The council has achieved Friendly Funder Accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation. Living Wage Friendly Funders support charities to pay the real Living Wage that meets the cost of living through their grant-making.

Health impact statement

23. The Common Purpose grants programme aims to improve the wellbeing and resilience of local communities. Several of the outcomes that funded organisations are required to achieve are taken from the 'Healthier Communities' list of outcomes in the Common Outcomes Framework. These relate in particular to enabling access to health services; and ensuring clients maintain and improve their independence.
24. Some of the funded organisations provide specific services to support mental health: these include Mental Fight Club, Blackfriars Settlement and AAINA. Some also provide specific supporting to clients in accessing health services, for example the Somali Integration and Development Association

Some organisations enable access to physical activity, including the Bike Project and organisations who offer gardening activities, including Bankside Open Spaces Trust, Global Generation, London Wildlife Trust, Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers, Surrey Docks Farm and Time and Talents.

Climate change implications

25. 4 organisations are specifically funded under the 'greener communities' theme of the Common Purpose programme: Bankside Open Spaces Trust, Global Generation, London Wildlife Trust and Surrey Docks Farm. All provide environmental education opportunities, for example formal horticultural training, activities and clubs for families, children and young people. This includes training and educating service users in climate change and biodiversity, and broadening engagement in environmental issues to reach all communities. Global Generation supports young people in environmental and social activism. Two funded organisations, Surrey Docks Farm and Time and Talents, have solar panels.
26. The 30 funded organisations provide services to Southwark residents; largely people who live within walking distance. Public transport connections are generally good. Paxton Green Time Bank provides services to residents in the far south of the borough who are somewhat geographically isolated. It is assumed that the programme does not generate high levels of carbon emissions from people travelling to the services.
27. The boroughs' VCS premises stock is largely dated and not energy-efficient. The majority of Common Purpose groups do not own their own premises hence this is largely outside of their control.
28. For the additional year's funding for 2023-24, currently funded organisations will be invited to complete a simple application form. They will be asked to indicate which outcomes in the Council Delivery Plan they will seek to achieve. The third theme of the delivery plan is 'A healthy environment' and this sets out a number of outcomes the VCS are in a position to contribute to, in particular engaging Southwark's communities in tackling the climate emergency.

Resource implications

29. The council is committed to providing 3 months' notice of funding decisions.

Legal implications

30. Please see the concurrent report of the Director of Law and Governance below.

Financial implications

31. The total budget for the Common Purpose programme in 2022-23 is £801,451 and this will remain unchanged in 2023-24. The amount that was previously allocated to Crystal Palace Development Trust for the current year will be made available to support funds for Connected at Xmas and the cost of providing the Warm Hubs. This is subject to a separate approval process.

Consultation

32. The two independent reviews of council grant making and commissioning involved wide ranging consultation with the local VCS. The stage 1 Southwark Stands Together review included a survey which 53 Black Asian & minority ethnic led organisations responded to; conversations with 6 community leaders, interviews with 8 council commissioners, and a focus group with Black Asian & minority ethnic led organisations. For the second stage VCS investment review, a survey was carried out which 49 organisations responded to. Interviews were carried out with 14 council officers and 3 external organisations, including an independent funder. 4 focus groups were held with representatives of funded organisations and independent funders.
33. On 29 June an online event was held with approximately 40 representatives from Black Asian and minority ethnic organisations to feed back the findings of the two reviews and the recommendations for action that were approved by the council's Cabinet in February 2022.
34. The findings and key messages from these consultations will inform the development of the new Common Purpose programme to be launched in autumn 2023.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Governance

35. This report seeks approval of the extension of the Common Purpose grants programme 2019-23, for the purpose of supporting those funded organisations listed in Appendix 1.
36. As all of the proposed grants exceed £2,500 and are to be made to voluntary sector organisations the decision to approve the report recommendation is one which is reserved to the Cabinet Member under Part 3D of the Council Constitution. The proposed grant awards are consistent with statutory duties and with corporate policy in this area, in particular the Common Outcomes Framework.
37. Paragraph 18 advises that funded organisations are requested to provide certain information about service users who have a protected characteristic as defined in the Equality Act 2010. This information is

used to assess the equalities impact of the programme and the impact of any funding reductions and assists the council to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by section 149 of the Act.

38. Paragraph 12 explains the process by which funded organisations will be required to express interest in the additional grant funding and it also notes that the council will review annual accounts and the outcomes data and future proposals contained in each organisation’s submission.
39. The award of additional funding will continue to be regulated by appropriate contract conditions.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FIN1324 – JB)

40. The report requests approval to extend the Common Purpose grants programme 2019-2023 for an additional year at the current grant values. Following approval the current Common Purpose grants programme would end in March 2024.
41. Paragraph 32 notes the current budget level for the programme and that this will be unchanged for 2023-24. Paragraph 12 notes the process for extending the grant period will include the annual review, submission of outcomes data and completion of a brief application form.

Other officers

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet Report on Grants and Commissioning Reviews, February 2022	Environment and Leisure / Communities	Katherine Pitt Katherine.pitt@southwark.gov.uk
<u>Decision - Grants and Commissioning Review - Southwark Council</u>		
Southwark Common Outcomes Framework	Environment and Leisure / Communities	Katherine Pitt Katherine.pitt@southwark.gov.uk
<u>Common Purpose grants - Southwark Council</u>		
Common Purpose Common Cause Voluntary Sector Strategy	Environment and Leisure / Communities	Katherine Pitt Katherine.pitt@southwark.gov.uk
<u>Common Purpose grants - Southwark Council</u>		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	List of Common Purpose funded groups 2021-23

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities	
Report Author	Katherine Pitt, Commissioning Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 November 2022	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here: Research and policy officer, Climate Change Team	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	7 November 2022	