

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 July 2010	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Equalities & Community Engagement
Report title:		Community Support Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan 2011/12	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Deborah Collins Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Equalities & Community Engagement approves the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2011/12 for allocation of grants awarded under the Community Support 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 Southwark Alliance Sustainable Community Strategy 2016, 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 Support 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 2011/12 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
Departments confirm to Community Support Unit adherence to timetable, or reasons for variation from timetable as appropriate	June 2010
Community Support and departmental voluntary sector commissioning officers finalise arrangements for reviewing commissioning plans & timetable for processing	July 2010
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Cabinet Portfolio Member	July 2010
Advertisement of community support programme and any other available departmental funding	First week September 2010
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	Mid October 2010
Assessment of applications	November 2010
Draft report to corporate management team	December 2010
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	January 2011
Notification to groups of IDM decisions	Jan/Feb 2011

7. For 2011/12 the community support programme programme would be openly advertised in September with the exception of the element which supports the CVS functions for the borough. These services are currently delivered by Community Action Southwark (CAS) the borough Council for the Voluntary Sector (CVS). CAS is currently contracted as a preferred supplier via contract standing orders for 2008 – 2011 in order to ensure effective services are available locally. This service will be re-appointed for one year from 2011 onwards by way of separate gateway reports and with a variation in the form of a revised service specification. This is in order to allow sufficient time for consultation with neighbouring boroughs and relevant stakeholders. In 2010/11 there was a proposal to extend the number of groups in contract under this programme however this has now been deferred pending the outcome of the comprehensive spending review and further anticipated budget reductions.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Community Support Programme

8. The purpose of the corporate Community Support 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 Support programme are to fund organisations that:
- Provide support to disadvantaged **communities of interest** including to 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 Sustainable Community Strategy – *Southwark 2016*.
 - **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 overall priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy - Southwark 2016 - and support the council's Equality, Diversity and Cohesion Policy.
11. In addition the Cabinet has committed to creating a fairer borough where no-one is left behind and residents achieve their potential. For Equalities and Community Engagement this involves opening up the budget making process for public scrutiny, promotion of volunteer champions and working with the VCS to establish a new charter of rights for Health & Social Care services.
12. The full commissioning plan is set out in Appendix 1.

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

13. From April 2006 to April 2007 the council undertook a strategic review of its relationship with the voluntary and community sector. The findings and recommendations of the review were set out in the Council/Voluntary Sector 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).
14. 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. For 2011/12 within the Community Support programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid with CVS functions commissioned via a separate gateway process.

Community Impact Statement

15. 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 Support programme is to empower and enable hard-to-reach communities and those communities which experience discrimination, to achieve a better quality of life.

16. In 2008 the Community Support 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.
17. 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

18. For 2011/12 the council's base budget to fund the Community Support programme, and a local CVS via contract, is £1,316,654. The council will determine the level of resources for Community Support voluntary sector organisations within the context of tight financial constraints of the 2011-14 local government settlement and through the council's annual policy and resources process.
19. In 2010/11 the council committed to providing 3 months notice of funding decisions from April to June. This will be considered through the council's annual policy and resources process for 2011/12.

Consultation

20. CAS, as the umbrella body and the voice of the VCS in Southwark, has been consulted during the development of the 2011/12 Community Support voluntary sector commissioning plan. Copies of the draft commissioning plan have been made available to council departments.

Supplementary Advice from Other Officers

From the Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

21. The Director of Legal & Democratic Services notes the content of the report.
22. Positive equalities obligations are placed on local authorities sometimes described as equalities duties with regard to race, disability and gender.

Gender equalities duties were introduced by the Equality Act 2006, which amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The general duties in summary require local authorities to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) "eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and
 - b) Promote the equality of opportunity between men and women."
23. Race equality duties were introduced by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 which amended the Race Relations Act 1976. The general duties in summary require local authorities are required to give due regard to the need to:
 - a) "eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
 - b) promote the equality of opportunity and

- c) promote good race relations between people of different racial groups”
24. Disability equality duties were introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which amended the Disability Act 1995. The general duties in summary require local authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to:
- (a) “promote equal opportunities between disabled persons and other persons
 - (b) eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
 - (c) eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability and
 - (d) promote a positive attitude towards disabled persons
 - (e) encourage participation by disabled persons in public life and
 - (f) Take steps to take account of disabled person’s disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.”
25. Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976, 49A(i) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 76A of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, require local authorities to act in accordance with the equalities duties and have due regard to these duties when we are carrying out our functions, which includes making decisions in the current context.
26. The community support voluntary sector funding programme as set out at paragraphs 9 to 11 by the report author assists the council to meet its equalities duties and accords with the councils Equalities and Human Rights Scheme 2008-2011.
27. The report author refers to an equalities impact assessment of the Community support programme which took place in 2008. This report responds to a continuing need identified during the assessment. Equality impact assessments are an essential tool to assist councils to comply with our equalities duties and to make decisions fairly. The council’s equalities impact assessment process goes beyond our current equalities duties to incorporate religion/belief, sexual orientation and age.
- The Equalities Act 2010 which introduces additional protected characteristics does not come into effect until October 2010.
28. The Cabinet Member for Equalities & Communities Engagement is advised that for those parts of the programme where the council is intending to procure services, there will need to obtain separate approval by way of Gateway reports, in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

From the Chief Finance Officer

29. Programme managers should ensure that the total grant allocated to the voluntary sector remains within the, as yet undecided, budget allocation for 2011/12. This applies to both the grant and the rental elements of the approved budget. The budget setting process aligns closely with the allocation timetable set out at paragraphs 6 and 11. This should ensure the grant funding programme

for 2011/12 will be considered in the context of the medium term financial strategy's aim of delivering efficiencies of up to 5%.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
<i>Community Support Grants Programme 2010/11</i>	<i>Communities, Law & Governance West House, Peckham Road SE5 8UB</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal 020.7525.7389</i>
<i>Southwark Compact</i>	<i>Communities, Law & Governance</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>
<i>Local Infrastructure Plan</i>	<i>Communities, Law & Governance</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>
<i>Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document - April 2007</i>	<i>Communities, Law & Governance</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	The Community Support Commissioning Programme: Commissioning Plan 2011/12

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins. Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Bonnie Royal. Commissioning & Voluntary Sector Support Manager. Communities, Law & Governance	
Version	Final	
Dated	26 July 2010	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director. Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	Yes	Yes
Head of Procurement	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	26 July 2010	