

<b>Item No.</b> 7	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2007	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Executive
<b>Report title:</b>		Community Support Voluntary Sector Commissioning Programme 2007/8	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Executive agrees the funding recommendations for voluntary sector organisations delivering services under the Community Support Programme for 2007/8. The recommendations are detailed at Appendix 1.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. At its meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2006 the Executive approved the Community Support Commissioning Plan for 2007/8 subject to the inclusion of more explicit links to the 2016 Community Strategy. This has been actioned. The Commissioning Plan is attached as Appendix 2. This Plan sets out the business case for funding voluntary sector providers, the expected links between Council policy and priorities and the outcomes that are to be delivered by the voluntary organisations that receive grant aid. The Plan also sets out the funding mechanism for commissioning services (via Contract Standing Orders or grant aid).
3. Unlike departmental commissioning plans, which are subject to Individual Decision Making, approval for the Community Support Programme remains with the full Executive. This reflects the crosscutting nature of the Community Support programme.
4. Members are aware of the Voluntary Sector Review which will result in changes to the funding strategy for 2008/9 onwards. The Community Support programme this year aims for a balance between continuity and support for new groups.
5. The Community Support programme is divided into three categories:  
  
***Category One: Communities of interest. This category relates to the Southwark 2016 priority of: Citizens value diversity and are active; encourage support for self help and community led activities.***
6. The purpose of this element of the Community Support programme is to ensure that communities that may face exclusion and discrimination because of race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability or faith, have access to support and services that enable them to fully participate as citizens.
7. The Council recognises the importance of having specific organisations that support and enable specific communities to access mainstream services and to integrate into the life of the borough. Activities include support for pensioners, women, faith and BME groups to engage as active citizens.

8. This element promotes community cohesion, cultural interchange, and mutual understanding between people of different ages, cultures, ethnic groups and faith.

***Category Two: Infrastructure and capacity building. This category relates to the Southwark 2016 priority of: Citizens value diversity and are active; strengthen capacity of voluntary sector organisations to deliver.***

9. Infrastructure and capacity building organisations provide services to other voluntary sector organisations. These can include the following:
- Strategic co-ordination and leadership of the voluntary sector across the borough, or within a part of the borough or with a particular sector/community of interest, providing a conduit for influencing public sector policy at local, regional and national level, and keeping the sector informed of policy and funding developments.
  - Provision of capacity building services to help voluntary sector organisations strengthen their own effectiveness. This can be in the form of generic training, one-to-one mentoring, or business development.
  - Provision of a specialist service that assists voluntary sector organisations to deliver, e.g. identifying and training volunteers; payroll, finance and personnel services; IT services, etc.
10. There is a diverse range of infrastructure and capacity building organisations in the borough, which have grown up historically. Some receive funding from the Community Support programme. Others are funded through service specific programmes. Most of the organisations lever in funds from elsewhere.

***Category Three: Area resource/community centres. This category relates to the Southwark 2016 priority of: Citizens value diversity and are active; encourage and support self-help and community led activities.***

11. Southwark has a rich mix of area based resource centres that act as multi-functional resources for community delivered activity. They fall into three groups:
- Settlements with a track record of leveraging in external resources and experience of running a range of services for or as a complement to statutory provision across health, education, youth and the elderly. They provide meeting space for smaller groups, act as a host body for a range of groups, offer capacity building to voluntary sector organisations in their 'patch', and provide a base for residents' engagement. Two of the settlements operate from council owned premises whilst the remainder are owned by the organisations themselves. The council's Community Support funding represents a small flat rate contribution to core costs.
  - Faith-based community centres offering a range of social activities to their local community and providing space for small groups. They have less experience of delivering services on behalf of the statutory sector, and variable success in leveraging in funds from elsewhere. These groups own their own premises. For historical reasons they have received different levels of funding.

- Other community centres where the buildings are mainly owned by Southwark Council, and the organisations are run by local management committees. These act as a base for other local separately funded organisations to meet and to varying degree run their own activities. They have varying levels of success in leveraging in external funding.
12. Of the 14 currently funded area resource centres, 8 are located north of the Old Kent Road. Four are located in central Southwark, and 1 towards the south of the borough. All are based in neighbourhoods that score highly on the Index of Deprivation. Most have worked hard to engage with Southwark's BME communities. However, ensuring that the Management Committees are fully representative of their local community remains a challenge.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

13. As a result of openly advertising the Community Support programme in October 2006 applications were received totalling approximately £2 million. These applications fall into the following groups;

- Applications from 39 existing funded organisations.

A range of new applications from the following;

- Organisations that act as a voice for particular communities of interest i.e. established forums for Refugee Communities, the Somali Advisory Forum, the SE5 Forum for Camberwell and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Network;
  - Organisations that wish to expand into new activity related to capacity-building support to other voluntary sector organisations. Most of these are targeted at capacity-building small BME organisations;
  - A small number of new applications from new or relaunched area based resource centres seeking a contribution to core funding e.g. East Dulwich Community Centre, Albrighton Community Centre and the Synergy Centre;
  - Applications that do not meet the Community Support priorities, mainly because they have a focus on a specific service area such as health and social care, education, employment and training.
14. A total of 11 new applications, which meet the Community Support priorities, have been assessed alongside the 39 applications from existing funded organisations. A number of these new bids have been designated as high priority and are being recommended for funding as detailed in Appendix 1. Project summaries for the individual groups are available as hard copy from the Community Support Unit.
15. A further 8 new applications fall outside the existing priorities for the Community Support programme. These relate to health, education, employment and training. Contact details of these groups have been forwarded to relevant departments where appropriate.

16. Of the existing 39 groups funded through the Community support programme 27 groups have requested amounts over and above the level of inflation and in some cases have requested substantial additional increases. The additional resources requested exceed the amount available within the existing Community Support budget.
17. Applications have been received from four community forums. These forums are structures and services that are about engaging residents to develop self-help, advocacy and influence the delivery of public sector services and are important in supporting the council's community engagement ambitions. Three of these applications are not being recommended for funding in the next financial year. A number of these forums currently use the council as a host for their workers who are located in the Community Involvement & Development Unit (CIDU). Others are funded via the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Historically the Community Support programme has not had sufficient resources to cover both its original core priorities for funding self-help and service delivery, and to pick up the expanding network of resident led advocacy groups that have a campaigning role, acting as a voice for residents rather than delivering services.
18. Southwark Refugee Communities Forum is, as one exception, being recommended for funding on the basis that it is a borough wide infrastructure body supporting refugee organisations in Southwark. In addition changes in Home Office funding for refugees and asylum seekers have resulted in less funding generally being available. The issue of the mainstreaming of the forums needs to be addressed when NRF funding ceases in 2008.
19. The SE5 Forum is another exception to the above. Whilst there are insufficient resources in the Community Support budget to fund this organisation, officers are exploring further possible funding options through Southwark Alliance and other regeneration funds. However, as a newly formed organisation there is no track record of performance and demonstrable evidence of effective governance systems in place. At this stage no accounts or annual report is available. If funding is secured from another source the forum will be required to demonstrate its ability to deliver against the work plan and business plan for the organisation, when produced.
20. Applications that fall within the remit of other Departments or commissioning plans have been forwarded for consideration as appropriate and any decisions made will be taken under Individual Member Decision Making.

#### **Assessment and proposals for funding.**

21. Across the applications that fall within the Community Support programme priorities, in assessing the applications, a combination of factors have been used to allocate a priority rating. The rating applied is as follows:
  - Is the service a policy imperative for the council? Does it meet some critical immediate needs such as integration of our diverse communities in the context of Southwark 2016?
  - Is the organisation fit for purpose with appropriate governance & systems in place?
  - Are there alternative providers; is there duplication of services or are there gaps in services?

22. All applications were assessed against the above and given a rating of 1,2 or 3.
- **A rating of one 1** demonstrates that the organisation fully exceeds the requirements of that criteria;
  - **A rating of 2** demonstrates that the criteria is substantially met
  - **A rating of 3** indicates that the criteria are not met. This rating indicates that an organisation may not meet our priorities in that criteria e.g. the services provided are a duplication or the service is not an immediate policy imperative. It is not necessarily a reflection on the value or performance of the organisation. However where an organisation is rated 3 on 'fit-for-purpose' this indicates that it is not delivering effectively or there are concerns about governance or finance.
23. Overall, in terms of recommendations officers propose funding groups that score in combination the following:
- A policy imperative rating of 1
  - A fitness for purpose rating of 1 or 2
  - A non-duplication of services rating of 1 or 2

This would result in 42 projects being funded to a total budget of £1,364,197.

24. It is proposed that for 2007/8 the majority of groups be awarded this year's level of funding plus inflation.
25. In terms of new applications it is proposed that 2 new projects be awarded funding. These are **East Dulwich Community Centre** (£14,900) and **Southwark Refugee Communities Forum** (£25,000). East Dulwich Community Centre has been in operation for 26 years and currently receives no council funding. There are limited community facilities within the East Dulwich area and the centre has a proven track record of delivering to a range of communities of interest and to people of all ages.
26. Funding is recommended to **Bermondsey Village Hall** conditional on certain requirements being met. These include production of outstanding accounts for the periods ending 31st March 2006, a workplan for 2007/8 and full compliance with the conditions of grant aid. Any release of funding will be subject to set conditions being met.
27. It is recommended that funding for a borough Council for Voluntary Sector organisations should be earmarked but not awarded to SAVO. Further detail on SAVO is dealt with as a closed item to be considered by the Executive which will be submitted as a late and urgent item pending receipt of further information from the organisation. Discussions are underway between the Community Support Unit and Health & Social Care regarding the future commissioning under contract of Council for Voluntary Sector organisations (CVS).

28. Two reductions in funding levels are proposed. It is recommended that funding to the **Beormund Community Centre** be reduced by £20,000. Currently the level of funding awarded to this community centre is disproportionate to levels of funding awarded to other community centres across the borough. In addition in light of the new needs coming forward from the south of the borough this recommendation achieves a measure of redistribution of funding across the borough to meet the needs of Southwark's diverse communities.
29. It is recommended that funding for the management of **Rockingham Community Centre** be reduced by £10,000. Currently the organisation is being managed through Elephant Links as part of the resources available to the area management programme in the north west of the borough. Under this arrangement there was agreement that grant would be tapered annually counterbalanced by generated income increasing. Ongoing discussions are taking place with regard to how the Rockingham Community Centre can be incorporated into the wider regeneration programme for the area.

### **Premises**

30. Under the Community Support programme, a number of organisations receive grants that incorporate a rent element. These are withheld at source and paid to Property services on behalf of the organisations. The longer-term approach to rents and lettings is being addressed in the Voluntary Sector Review.

### **Community Impact Statement**

31. One purpose of the Community Support programme is to ensure that communities that may face exclusion because of discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability or faith, have access to support and services that enable them to fully participate as citizens. As with any grants process there are going to be perceived winners and losers, some organisations awarded funding and some not.
32. The Council recognizes the importance of having specific organisations that support and enable specific communities to access mainstream services that enable them to fully participate as citizens. In arriving at recommendations account has been taken of both established need as well as responding to changing needs and critical immediate needs i.e.
  - Integration of specific communities of interest such as Muslim and Somali communities;
  - Support for particularly marginalized communities e.g. refugees and asylum seekers;
  - The impact of regeneration and redevelopment on communities and the need to support the infrastructure of such communities;
  - Community engagement and the promotion of community cohesion.
33. The Community Support programme has undergone an Equalities Impact Assessment which highlighted the need for on-going support to organisations that capacity build smaller groups as well as providing resources to a range of smaller front line service deliverers representing specific communities of interest.

## **Resource implications**

34. The overall recommendations for the programme can be met within the cash allocation for 2007/8 allowed for within the Strategic Services Departmental budget. The proposed allocation of £1,364,197 for 2007/8 is set out in Appendix 1 and is subject to approval of the Council's overall budget by the Executive.

## **Consultation**

35. Copies of this report have been sent to Southwark Action for Voluntary Organisations (SAVO). Each of the groups recommended for funding has been sent a copy of their Project Summary and asked to sign their acceptance of the written representation of their organisation. Those organisations not recommended for funding have been contacted and offered the opportunity to get feedback on their application, reasons for the recommendation, other sources of funding and referral as appropriate to other departments or to SAVO for support.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Borough Solicitor**

36. The Council has power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it calculates is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well being of the area. This power can be exercised for benefit of the whole or any part of the council's area or for the benefits of any person resident or present in the area. Section 2(4) specifies that this includes a power to give financial assistance to any person.
37. Section 2(3) of the above Act requires the Council to have regard to its Community Strategy when determining whether or not to exercise this power.
38. The Acting Borough Solicitor confirms that the Council has power under the above Act to provide funding to voluntary organisations but in exercising this power regard must be had to the Council's Community Strategy. The Acting Borough Solicitor also confirms that the Executive is the appropriate decision making body.

### **Chief Finance Officer**

36. As the cost of the proposals can be contained within 2007/8 budgets, and there are no corporate implications, a separate Director of Finance concurrent report is not required. This is covered by Paragraph 34.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Community Support Grants Programme 2005/6	Social Inclusion Unit Town Hall, Peckham Road SE5 8UB	Bonnie Royal 020.7525.7389
Community Support Commissioning Plan 2006/7	Social Inclusion Unit	Bonnie Royal
Southwark Compact	Social Inclusion Unit	Bonnie Royal
Community Support Equalities Impact Assessment	Social Inclusion Unit	Bonnie Royal
Community Support Programme Project Summaries	Social Inclusion Unit	Bonnie Royal

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Community Support Programme. Recommendations for 2007/8
Appendix 2	Community Support Commissioning Plan

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Paul Evans Strategic Director Regeneration & Neighbourhood	
<b>Report Author</b>	Bonnie Royal Principal Community Support Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Draft Version (3)	
<b>Dated</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2007	
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Borough Solicitor	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	Yes	Yes
Property Portfolio	No	No
<b>Executive Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2007	