

	Classification: Open	Date: November 2011	Meeting Name: Cabinet Member for Equalities & Community Engagement
Report title:	Community Support Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan 2012/13		
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All		
From:	Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance		

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Equalities & Community Engagement approves the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2012/13 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 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 2012/13 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
Community Support consultation process with the voluntary sector	22 July – 15 August 2011
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Executive Portfolio Member	Early November 2011
Advertisement of community support programme and any other available departmental funding	Second week November 2011
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	16 December 2011
Assessment of applications	Last week Dec & January 2012
Write to applicants informing them of recommendations and advising of their right to make representations to the decision maker	January 2012
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	January 2012
Formal Notification to groups of IDM decisions	February 2012

7. For 2012/13 the community support programme will be openly advertised in November 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 2011 - 2014 in order to ensure effective services are available locally. This service was re-commissioned in 2011 by way of separate gateway reports.

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 diverse communities** 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 Council's Plan.
 - **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 Plan and the ten fairer promises to create a fairer future for all in Southwark.
11. Facing an unprecedented cut in its budget settlement from Government of £34m on 22 February 2011 the Council Assembly agreed the revenue strategy for the period 2011/12 – 2013/14. Despite this unprecedented reduction the budget for the Community Support programme for 2011/12 stayed at the same level as the previous year. The strategy also set out a reduction of £200,000 to the Community Support programme for 2012/13 that equates to a reduction of just under 17%. In order to achieve these savings on 23 July 2011 the council launched a consultation process with the voluntary sector in Southwark to elicit their views and explore ways in which the Community Support programme could be re-configured. The closing date was 15 August 2011 and a total of 28 responses were received 5 of which were from organisations not currently funded by the council. The summary of findings arising from this consultation is attached as Appendix 2.
12. The voluntary sector was also invited to input to the revised commissioning plan for the programme with representatives from Southwark Voice from each of the funding priority areas i.e. Communities of Interest; Area based resources and Capacity Building. These representatives were invited to attend a workshop to discuss and feed into a revised commissioning plan for 2012/13. Both VCS intelligence and contributions have been incorporated into the revised version.
13. The full commissioning plan is set out in Appendix 1.

Policy implications

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

14. The Council's commissioning approach is set out in the VCS 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).
15. 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 2012/13 within the Community Support programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid with CVS functions commissioned via a separate gateway process.
16. In June 2011 the Council's Cabinet also approved the Medium Term Resources Strategy which incorporates the VCS Strategy and a number of outcomes and principles of partnership working with the VCS.

Community impact statement

17. A public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act) came into force in April 2011. The public sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. Under the PSED, a public authority must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to;

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
18. The objective of the Community Support programme is to improve community relations and empower and enable diverse communities and those which experience discrimination, to achieve a better quality of life.
19. 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.
20. 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

21. For 2011/12 the council's base budget to fund the Community Support programme is £1,198,196. The council has determined 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.
22. The council is also committed to providing 3 months notice of funding decisions and all departments will be providing customised written letters to the sector in November outlining timelines and proposals for commissioning of VCS providers in 2012/13.

Consultation

23. CAS, as the umbrella body and the voice of the VCS in Southwark, has been consulted during the development of the 2012/13 Community Support voluntary sector commissioning plan. Consultation on the plan has been carried out at a number of representative forums including the Council/VCS Liaison Meeting and the CAS led Southwark Voice and Southwark Forum. Copies of the draft commissioning plan have been made available to council departments.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

24. The Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance notes the content of the report.

Finance Director

25. The Finance Director notes the current budget allocation for the Community Support programme and the provisional budget allocation agreement for the

programme in 2012-13. Final departmental allocations will be determined through the normal revenue budget setting process timetabled for Council Assembly in February 2012.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Community Support Grants Programme 2011/12	Communities, Law & Governance, 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Bonnie Royal 020 7525 7389
Southwark Compact	Communities, Law & Governance	Bonnie Royal
Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document - April 2007	Communities, Law & Governance	Bonnie Royal
Medium Term Resources Strategy	Finance & Resources	Bonnie Royal

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	The Community Support Commissioning Programme: Commissioning Plan 2012/13
Appendix 2	Community Support consultation – Summary of Findings

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Bonnie Royal, Commissioning & Voluntary Sector Support Manager, Communities, Law & Governance	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 October 2011	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		21 October 2011