

	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 10 September 2013	<b>Decision Taker:</b> Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Wellbeing
<b>Report title:</b>	Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan 2014/15		
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>	All		
<b>From:</b>	Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services		

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Wellbeing approves the voluntary sector commissioning plan for 2014/15 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. Approval of the commissioning plan for the community capacity and environment & ecology programmes 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 Communities & Economic Wellbeing (Constitution: Clauses 2 and 5 Part 3D).
4. Prior to any award made under the Environment & Ecology programme, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Recycling will be consulted.
5. 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 & Economic Wellbeing.
6. The process for commissioning grant aided voluntary sector service providers for 2014/15 involves 3 key stages:
  - Development and agreement of the commissioning plan

- Advertising and assessment of applications
- Report & final decisions.

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	11-30 September 2013
Advertisement of Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes	Wednesday 2nd October 2013
Workshop for applicants delivered by Community Action Southwark	Wednesday 9 October 2013
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	Friday 15 November 2013
Assessment of applications	Monday 18 November - Friday 13 December 2013
Write to applicants informing them of recommendations and advising of their right to make representations to the decision maker	January 2014
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	January 2014
Formal Notification to groups of IDM decisions	February 2014

7. For 2014/15 the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes will be openly advertised in October 2013 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. 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 and contained provision for a 2 year contract extension to 2016. A gateway report is currently in process to seek approval of the extension.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

### Community Capacity Programme

8. 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.
9. The objectives of the community capacity programme are to fund organisations that:
- **Engage with diverse local communities** including 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 Future promises to create a fairer future for all in Southwark.
  11. Facing an unprecedented cut in its budget settlement from Government of £34m, council assembly agreed the revenue strategy for the period 2011/12 – 2013/14 in February 2011. Despite this unprecedented reduction the budget for the community capacity (formerly Community Support) programme for 2011/12 stayed at the same level as the previous year. The strategy also set out a reduction of £204,000 to the programme for 2012/13. This reduction was to be met through £45,000 reduction in administrative costs and the balance to be met from the programme. However, after careful consideration a decision was taken to offset part of the reduction by taking £123,000 of the savings from 2011/12 from the London Council's levy agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 January 2012.
  12. In July / August 2011 the council carried out a consultation process with the voluntary sector in Southwark to elicit their views and explore ways in which the programme could be re-configured in order to achieve the original proposed savings. The findings of this consultation were fed back to the sector. For the 2013/14 programme, representatives from Southwark Voice were involved in 2 half day workshops in September 2012 with the objective of revising the commissioning plan and funding priorities. In addition benchmarking with other authorities has been carried out identify current trends and good practice in relation to the commissioning of the VCS against the programme criteria. A key outcome of this consultation and benchmarking was the inclusion of a requirement that capacity building / infrastructure organisations applying to the programme provide evidence that they are working towards a unified infrastructure organisation by 2015/16.
  13. For 2014/15, until the settlement from Government is announced and the council agrees its budget the extent of any reduction to be applied for 2014/15 is not known.
  14. For the 2014/15 programme, the council's environment and ecology programme has been brought into the community capacity programme. The objectives of the environment and ecology programme are to:
    - Improve the lives of people in Southwark through opportunities to experience parks, open spaces and the natural environment whether for leisure or for learning.
    - Provide services that deliver environmental education and life-long learning, social inclusion and community cohesion outcomes.
    - Develop the environment sector for the benefit of the people of Southwark, recognising the importance of the natural environment in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and improving the life chances of young people in

the borough.

15. The full commissioning plan is set out in Appendix 1.

### **Strategic review of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector**

16. 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).
17. 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.
18. For 2014/15 within the Community Capacity programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid with CVS functions commissioned via a separate gateway process.
19. 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**

20. 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.
21. 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. Following feedback from the Southwark Forum for Equalities and Human Rights (FEHRS) the form used to collect this information has been amended in order to clarify the purpose of collecting the information.
22. 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**

23. For 2014/15 the council's budgets for funding the Community Capacity Grant Aid programme and the Environment and Ecology programme has not yet been determined and will be subject to the council's budget review process. For 2013/14 the budget for the Community Capacity programme was £1,117,511 and for the Environment & Ecology programme it was £99,451.
24. 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**

25. As described in paragraph 12, in September 2012 a consultation exercise was carried out with representatives of Southwark Voice on revised funding priorities for the commissioning plan. In addition Council officers took part in a workshop organised by Community Action Southwark for the broader voluntary and community sector which covered the commissioning priorities and the requirements for making applications. The Forum for Equalities & Human Rights (FEHRS) also commented on the commissioning plan.
26. For 2014/15, the priorities for the programme have not changed. The consultation exercise carried out in September 2012, as described in paragraph 12, determined that a two year approach would be taken. In addition, there has been no significant change to the circumstances or context of the programme. Therefore, it was deemed that a further consultation exercise was not necessary. However, CAS, as the umbrella body and the voice of the VCS in Southwark, has been kept informed of the development of the commissioning plan.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

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

27. Officers from the Corporate Services Team of Legal Services have reviewed this report and confirm that under the provisions of Part 3D of the council's Constitution the Cabinet Member for Communities & Economic Wellbeing may approve the recommendations that are set out in this Report.
28. This report sets out the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2014/15 which, as the report sets out in paragraph 9, assists the council in meeting its statutory public sector equality duty (PSED) under 149 of the Equality Act 2010, its policy objectives under the council plan and also supports the council's published approach to equalities. It is important that equalities have been considered in formalising the Plan and it is noted that the priorities for the 2014-15 programme have been retained from 2013/14. PSED requires public bodies to have an adequate evidence base for decision making; consultation/engagement is a useful tool to provide an adequate evidence base. Case law has shown how important it is for public bodies to consult/engage to ensure that the council understand the impact our decisions have on our community. In paragraphs 25 to 26 above, the report author confirms that consultation has been undertaken with all relevant organisations in relation to the council's funding priorities which it has retained for 2014-15.
29. As noted in the report, the amount of funding and any budget savings for 2014/15 have not yet been determined. When a decision is made regarding the allocation of grants for 2014/15 (which decision is understood to be subject to a further report), the council will need to take into account the PSED and ensure that any adverse impact to an particular group sharing a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 is identified as well as ways in which any such adverse impact can be mitigated.

## Strategic Director of Finance & Corporate Services

30. This report sets out the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2014/15 and as such does not yet commit the Council's resources to any organisation. Once submissions from voluntary organisations have been received and reviewed, a Gateway process will formalise the level of commitment of council resources to the programme. As stated in paragraph 22, the council's current budget to fund the Community Capacity programme is £1,118,467, 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 2014/15 budget setting process.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Community Support Grants Programme 2013/14	Housing & Community Services 160 Tooley Street SE1P 5LX	Andy Matheson 020 7525 7648
Southwark Compact	Housing & Community Services	Andy Matheson 020 7525 7648
Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document - April 2007	Housing & Community Services	Andy Matheson 020 7525 7648
Medium Term Resources Strategy	Finance & Resources	Andy Matheson 020 7525 7648

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	The Community Capacity Commissioning Programme: Commissioning Plan 2014/15

## 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>	6 September 2013	
<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>
Chief Finance Officer	Yes	Yes
Head of Procurement	No	No
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	16 September 2013	