

	Classification: Open	Date: July 22 2009	MEETING NAME: Executive Member for Citizenship, Equalities & Communities
Report title:	Community Support Voluntary Sector Commissioning Programme 2010/11		
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All		
From:	Deborah Collins Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance		

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Executive Member for Citizenship, Equalities & Communities approves the Community Support Voluntary Sector Commissioning Plan for 2010/11 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 and 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 voluntary grants approvals over £2,500 has transferred to IDM and is now a matter for the Executive Member for Citizenship, Equalities and Communities (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 Executive members for Citizenship, Equalities and Communities.
5. The proposed process for commissioning grant aided voluntary sector service providers for 2010/11 involves 3 key stages:
 - Development and agreement of commissioning plans
 - Advertising and assessment of applications
 - Report & final decisions.

6. The draft indicative timetable for the 2010/11 allocation is as follows:

Action	Date for completion
Departments confirm to Community Support Unit adherence to timetable, or reasons for variation from timetable as appropriate	July 2009
Community Support and departmental voluntary sector commissioning officers finalise arrangements for reviewing commissioning plans & timetable for processing	July 2009
Commissioning plan drafted and signed off by the Executive Portfolio Member	July 2009
Advertisement of community support programme and any other available departmental funding	First week September 2009
Closing date for receipt of completed applications	October 2009
Assessment of applications	November 2009
Draft report to corporate management team	December 2009
Report to Individual Member Decision maker	January 2010
Notification to groups of IDM decisions	Jan/Feb 2010

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Community Support Programme

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.

10. For 2010/11 the Community Support programme is being re-commissioned with the exception of Community Action Southwark (CAS) the newly formed Council for the Voluntary Sector (CVS). which is contracted as a preferred supplier via contract standing orders for 2008 – 2011 in order to ensure effective services are available locally for the voluntary sector.
11. To inform the Community Support programme the views of all community councils were sought in 2007/8. The feedback from this consultation is listed in Appendix B of the commissioning plan. For the 2010/11 Community Support programme the funding priorities remain unchanged, therefore this feedback is still relevant.
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 2010/11, within the Community Support programme VCS organisations will be commissioned through grant aid, with the exception of CAS which is in a 3-year contract.

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 2010/11 the council's base budget to fund the Community Support programme, and a local CVS via contract, is £1,313,066. The council will determine the level of resources for Community Support voluntary sector organisations within the context of tight financial constraints of the 2008/11 local government settlement and through the council's annual policy and resources process.

Consultation

19. CAS has been consulted during the development of the 2010/11 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

20. Under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 ("the Act") the Council has the power to do anything it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area (known as the 'well-being' power). Such power includes the ability to incur expenditure and give financial assistance to any person. 'Person' includes a body of persons corporate or incorporate. 'Person' therefore includes voluntary organisations.
21. Statutory Guidance on the provisions of the 'well-being' power states that "such financial assistance may be given by any means authorities consider appropriate, including by way of grants or loans, or by the provision of guarantees". The well-being power must be exercised within the limitations set out in the Act – broadly, that the action proposed is not prohibited. The authority must also have regard to their community strategy in determining whether or how to exercise the power.
22. The Executive Member for Citizenship, Communities and Equalities, whose portfolio responsibilities include relationships with the voluntary sector, is advised that Clause 2 of Part 3D of the council's constitution reserves agreement of programmes such as the one referred to in this report to the member with portfolio responsibility and Clause 5 of Part 3D confirms that approval of grants over £2,500 is similarly reserved for individual member decision-making. However Clause 8 of Part 3C reserves the approval of policy and procedure governing the council's relationship with the voluntary sector to the full executive.
23. Where funding is to be provided pursuant to a contractual relationship, rather than by means of a grant, this will be subject to the requirements of the appropriate legal requirements and Contract Standing Orders.
24. The Council has other duties it needs to consider including the duty to involve local representatives when carrying out 'any of its functions' by providing information, consulting or 'involving in another way'. In addition the Council has duty to eliminate discrimination and in making any decision must fully consider the effect on various groups. For example where race equality is relevant to a decision, because there are concerns that a particular racial group may be adversely effected by the decision, then the decision will be unlawful if a full race equality impact assessment was not undertaken before the decision was taken.

From the Chief Finance Officer

25. Programme managers should ensure that the total grant allocated to the voluntary sector remains within the, as yet undecided, budget allocation for 2010/11. 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 paragraph 6. This should ensure the grant funding programme for 2010/11 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 2009/10</i>	<i>Social Inclusion West House, Peckham Road SE5 8UB</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal 020.7525.7389</i>
<i>Southwark Compact</i>	<i>Social Inclusion</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>
<i>Local Infrastructure Plan</i>	<i>Social Inclusion</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>
<i>Council-Voluntary and Community Sector Framework Document - April 2007</i>	<i>Social Inclusion</i>	<i>Bonnie Royal</i>

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	The Community Support Commissioning Programme: Commissioning Plan 2010/11

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins. Strategic Director, Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Bonnie Royal, Principal Commissioning Officer, Social Inclusion Division.	
Version	Final	
Dated	July 2009	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director. Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	Yes	Yes
Head of Procurement	No	No
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	July 22 2009	