

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: February 2015	Decision Taker: Cabinet member for Communities, Employment & Business
Report title:		Community Capacity & Environment & Ecology commissioning programme 2015/16	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Employment & Business approves the funding recommendations for voluntary sector organisations delivering services under the Community Capacity and the Environment & Ecology programme 2015/16 subject to Council Assembly approval of the Council's budget. The recommendations for Community Capacity are set out in Appendix 1 and the recommendations for Environment Ecology are set out in Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Cabinet Member for Communities, Employment & Business approved the Community Capacity / Environment & Ecology commissioning plan for 2015/16 in August 2014. The commissioning plan is attached as Appendix 3. The plan sets out the purpose of the programme, how it fits with the council's corporate plan, objectives and priorities, and the outcomes that are to be delivered by the voluntary organisations that receive grant funding. The plan also sets out the funding mechanism for commissioning services (via contract or grant aid).
3. Oversight of the council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), the council's conditions of grant funding and the overall processes for commissioning services from the voluntary sector comes within the portfolio of the Communities, Employment & Business. Approval of the commissioning plan and approval of grants over £2,500 under the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes is a matter for the Cabinet Member through individual member decision-making (Constitution: Clauses 2 and 5 Part 3D).
4. The council's commissioning approach is set out in the VCS Framework which was agreed by the former Executive in 2007. This document sets out the policy and principles governing the council's arrangements for working with and resourcing of the sector. In October 2013 the council's Cabinet approved the Medium Term Resources Strategy 2014-15 to 2016-17 which incorporates further principles which underpin the council's approach to the VCS to strengthen the resilience of the sector in the context of budget reductions.
5. The main objective of the Community Capacity/Environment & Ecology programme is to improve community relations and to empower and enable

diverse communities and those who experience discrimination to achieve a better quality of life. The programme is divided into 2 categories:

- a. **Category One: Community Engagement. This category relates to support for organisations that promote specific cultural, social, and faith activities in ways that contribute to the development of confident communities able to play a full role in public and civic life; and that encourage people to take more responsibility for their lives.**
6. The purpose of this category of the Community Capacity programme is to ensure that communities that may face exclusion and disadvantage have access to support and services that enable them to fully participate as active citizens. Funded organisations should contribute to building mutual understanding and shared ways of working across different faiths, cultures and ethnic identities. They should also seek to promote community cohesion, participation, volunteering, advocacy, mediation, and consultation between communities and public services.
 7. In addition organisations are asked to provide evidence of their capacity to provide basic advice at a general help level and to make links with the providers of community legal advice services. This approach aims to build the capacity of organisations to provide basic support to residents affected by welfare reform and to signpost them to the appropriate organisations.
 - b. **Category Two: Area based resources for tackling social exclusion. This category relates to support for organisations that provide a core resource base for work that tackles social exclusion in the deprived areas and neighbourhoods of the borough.**
 8. The purpose of this category of the Community Capacity programme is to support a range of community based resources within localities in the areas of greatest deprivation which act as a focus for community engagement, engage with marginalised communities and provide a physical base and support to voluntary sector organisations and communities. This includes settlements, community centres and faith based organisations. In addition organisations are asked to provide evidence of: understanding of levels of need in the area covered, and the ability to bring together of a wide range of services to meet that need; development of accessible premises that bring different groups together; and evidence of business planning and income generation.
 9. Council officers have taken part in a workshop organised by Community Action Southwark (CAS) for the broader voluntary and community sector which covered these commissioning priorities described above and the requirements for making applications.
 10. Funding will be targeted at those organisations that can show evidence of strengthening local area and neighbourhood partnerships between local agencies and people. It will contribute to core costs that enable organisations to act as a local focus for the community and enable funds from other sources to be levered in.
 11. For the 2015/16 programme, the advertising and assessment of the council's Environment & Ecology programme has been carried out as part of the same

process as the Community Capacity programme. The objectives of the Environment & 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.
12. Monitoring of the Environment & Ecology funded organisations is the responsibility of the Housing & Community Services department, with input from the Environment & Leisure Department.
 13. The objectives of both the Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes fall within the Council's Plan and the ten Fairer Future promises (updated July 2014) to create a fairer future for all in Southwark.
 14. It is particularly important in the current financial climate that organisations demonstrate: evidence of fundraising efforts; that they are not solely reliant on the council for funding; how they add value including partnership activity; value for money; innovation/transformation; reduced back office costs, fitness for purpose, building social capital and potential to meet new and emerging needs.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

15. The council's Policy and Resources Strategy 2014/15 to 2016/17 Revenue Budget was agreed in February 2014, in the context of unprecedented cuts in its budget settlement from government. For 2014-15 the council's settlement was reduced by £26.9m (10.6%) from 2013-14.
16. In the context of ongoing reductions to the council's budget, a consultation exercise with the VCS carried out in 2011 found that there was strong support for an approach that targeted funding to priority organisations, rather than blanket budget reductions across all funded groups. Almost half of the groups were also in favour of having one borough wide infrastructure organisation only.
17. Two consultation workshops were carried out in 2012 with representatives of groups both funded and not funded through the programme, including CAS. It was agreed that funding recommendations should be guided by the need to ensure stability for the sector, and create sufficient flexibility within the criteria, balancing interests of continuity of funding with the need to ensure that groups not previously funded have greater opportunity to apply. It was also emphasised that duplication should be avoided, and as clear a picture as possible should be obtained of the financial health of organisations applying for funding.

18. A further outcome of the consultation exercises described above is a move to a single infrastructure service for the borough. This service is being procured via one single contract to be known as the Integrated Technical and Volunteering Support Service. This service will deliver the following:
- **Volunteering services** – including information and support for individuals who wish to volunteer as well as to organisations wishing to host volunteers
 - **Technical support services for the VCS** - including advice and support on financial management and governance
 - **Services that empower local communities and areas** – including development of engagement networks and support for communities of interest.
19. At a meeting with organisations currently delivering similar infrastructure services the council advised that it was seeking one unified service under contract, outlining the process and providing timelines. These providers have not been precluded from applying to the grants programme but are required to demonstrate that they meet either one of the two priorities set out in paragraphs 5-8. They have also been invited to tender for the delivery of this service.

Assessment and funding recommendations

20. The Community Capacity and Environment & Ecology programmes were openly advertised in September-October 2014. The applications received are summarised in the table below:

	Community Capacity programme	Environment & Ecology programme
Currently funded organisations	28	3
New organisations		
That meet the priorities	2	3
That do not meet the priorities	6	
TOTAL	36	6
TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED	£1,233,905	£225,661

21. The 6 applications which do not meet the Community Capacity priorities are focussed on a specific departmental service area such as adult social care. Details of these groups have been forwarded to the relevant departmental commissioners where appropriate and fundraising advice will be available from both Community Action Southwark and the Commissioning & Voluntary Sector Support Unit.
22. Applications were assessed using a scoring system, consisting of 3 stages, designed to inform the final recommendations. The scoring criteria are set out in Appendix 4 to this report.
23. Factors taken into account include: meeting the programme priorities, the financial health of the organisation, the level of dependency on council funding, the impact of withdrawal of services on particular groups and the scope to refer beneficiaries to alternative service providers.

24. For the Community Capacity programme, funding recommended totals **£850,451** for 28 organisations, 2 of which, Bermondsey Community Kitchen and Mental Fight Club, are completely new applicants to the programme.
25. Two currently funded organisations that submitted an application for funding for 2015/16 but are not recommended for an award are Southwark Refugee Project (SRP) and Peckham Voluntary Sector Forum (PVSF). There are a number of concerns with SRP, including that it has no funding from alternative sources. Officers have worked with the organisation over recent years and emphasised the importance of widening their funding efforts and not being solely reliant on Council funding. Support has also been made available through other organisations including CAS and Advice UK. PVSF is currently funded through the Specialist Capacity Building and Infrastructure Support priority. As described in paragraph 16, in 2015/16 this service will be provided through the ITVSS contract. PVSF and all other organisations currently funded under the Specialist Capacity Building and Infrastructure Support priority were formally informed of this at a meeting on 1 September 2014. PVSF has applied to the 2015-16 programme under the Area Based Resources priority but the application does not meet the criteria.
26. In line with the principles of the Compact the Council has undertaken to give 3 months notice to existing funded groups where funding is not recommended for 2015/16. This notice will run from the date the decision is made which is anticipated to be mid-February. The funding required to meet this notice period totals £25,890.30 for the Community Capacity programme and £1,075.38 for the Environment & Ecology programme. This will be met within existing departmental budget resources. Organisations will be given the opportunity to request to make either a written or verbal representation to the Individual Decision Maker before the decision is taken.
27. In addition, officers have visited these organisations in order to discuss the recommendations in person and set out the reasons. Groups will also be offered support with fundraising from other sources from both Community Engagement and Community Action Southwark and explore options for continued service delivery or exit strategies. Organisations will be invited to apply to future rounds of the Transition Fund but will be required to demonstrate evidence of how a funding award will improve sustainability through transition and transformation.
28. For the Environment & Ecology programme, funding recommended totals **£99,451** for 2 organisations, both of whom are funded in 2014-15. These are listed in Appendix 2 of this report.

Conditions of Grant Funding

29. Organisations awarded grant funding are subject to monitoring through the council's Conditions of Grant Funding (COGF). Schedules to these cover the key areas of: governance and employment; finance; employment practices and monitoring and information. The COGF was updated and strengthened in a report agreed by Cabinet in January 2013. In addition to a requirement to comply with these conditions, organisations are subject to an annual monitoring visit and the monitoring framework includes assessment through a monitoring checklist which assesses each of the areas covered within the COGF as well as service delivery.

Community Impact Statement

30. The organisations funded under the Community Capacity programme play a vital role in supporting the delivery of the Council's equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 and ensuring that communities that may face exclusion because of discrimination have access to support and services that enable them to fully participate as citizens. As with any grants process there is the potential for there to be winners and losers, some organisations awarded funding and some not.
31. The council recognises the importance of having specific organisations that support and enable 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
 - Support for particularly marginalized communities e.g. migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
 - Reducing duplication of organisations offering support to specific communities
 - The impact of regeneration and redevelopment on communities and the need to support the infrastructure of such communities
 - The impact of welfare reform by improving the capacity of organisations to provide initial support, information and signposting to accredited community legal advice providers
 - Community engagement and the promotion of community cohesion.
32. Equalities analysis has been carried out with currently funded organisations and with new applicants to ascertain where their target groups fall within the protected characteristics of the Equality Act i.e. age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. A copy of the analysis has been provided to the Forum for Equalities and Human Rights in Southwark (FEHRS). The recommendations contained in this report have taken into account the results of this analysis.
33. CAS and FEHRS have provided input on the guidance to be provided to organisations on providing equalities information about their services. The information requested does not form part of the assessment criteria and contributes to raising awareness of broader equality objectives.
34. The equalities scheme: "Southwark Council's approach to equality: delivering a fairer future for all" is available on the council's website at:
[http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2921/southwark councils approach to equality delivering a fairer future for all](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2921/southwark_councils_approach_to_equality_delivering_a_fairer_future_for_all)

An important consideration in relation to future service delivery under this programme will be how changing needs will be addressed in the context of the economic climate and budgetary constraints.

Resource implications

35. For 2015/16, the indicative budget for the Community Capacity programme is £980,467 with £130,000 set aside specifically for funding for the ITVSS contract described in paragraph 18. This leaves a budget of £850,467 for the grants programme with an additional amount of £99,451 available for the Environment and Ecology grants. This is subject to agreement of the budget at Council Assembly on 25 February 2015. The council has determined these levels of resources within the context of tight financial constraints and through the council's annual policy and resources process. As described in paragraph 26, a further £26,966 has to be paid in the form of 3 months notice period payments to current (2014/15) receivers of the grant that have not been successful in bidding for a 2015/16 grant. The division has sufficient resources to absorb this cost.

Consultation

36. For the Community Capacity programme, consultation exercises have been carried out as described in paragraphs 16-17.
37. For 2015/16, in line with the recommendations from the 2012 consultation workshops, a commissioning process is now under way for the procurement of the single infrastructure service. Therefore specialist infrastructure and capacity building support is no longer a priority of the programme. The other 2 priorities for the programme, set out in paragraphs 5-8, have not changed; therefore it was deemed that a further consultation exercise was not necessary. However, CAS has been kept informed of the development of the 2015-16 commissioning plan, which contained updated needs analysis and policy context.
38. Currently funded groups, and groups recommended for funding, have been sent a copy of a written summary of their application and asked to sign their acceptance of this as a written representation of their application. Copies of this IDM report have been sent to CAS, FEHRS and the individual groups. Those organisations not recommended for funding have been contacted and offered feedback on their application, reasons for the recommendation, other sources of funding and referral as appropriate to other departments or to CAS for support. They will also be given the opportunity to request a representation before the decision is made.
39. In addition, where applications were unsuccessful or where funding is proposed to be reduced, organisations will be invited to apply to any future round of the Transition Fund but will be required to provide evidence of transformation and modernisation in their proposals.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services

40. The council has sufficient resources to fund the recommendations set out in this report. These recommendations take into account savings proposals put forward during the 2015/16 budget setting process. As the budget setting process is not yet concluded, the final budget amount available is not yet known for certain, and is thus only indicative.

Director of Legal Services

41. The director of legal services notes the contents of this report and confirms that under Part 3D of the council's Constitution the agreement of significant programmes relating to revenue and capital budget allocations and the approval of grants of over £2,500 to voluntary sector organisations is a matter that is reserved to IDM for decision.
42. Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 the council has a duty to have due regard in its decision making processes to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
43. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The PSED also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to (a) above.
44. Paragraphs 29 to 32 of this report shows that this duty has been complied with.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Equality Analysis	Community Engagement	Katherine Pitt 020 7525 1579

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Community Capacity recommendations 2015/16
Appendix 2	Environment & Ecology recommendations 2015/16
Appendix 3	Community Capacity / Environment & Ecology commissioning plan 2015/16
Appendix 4	Scoring Criteria for Community Capacity Programme 2015/16

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Report Author	Katherine Pitt, Commissioning Officer	
Version	Final	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	No	No
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