

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: March 23 2009	Meeting Name: Executive Member for Citizenship, Equalities and Communities.
Report title:		Request for continuation of Grant Aid Funding to Bankside Residents Forum	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Cathedrals	
From:		Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the funding of £26,768 for the Bankside Residents Forum (BRF), in 2009/10 be approved. This represents a stand still budget for 2009/10.
2. That the executive member notes that BRF has made excellent progress in the community engagement process and is actively seeking to involve all sections of the community in the Bankside area. It plays a vital role in helping residents to understand what each development means to their area. The recent door to door survey to attain views on affordable housing is one example which demonstrates BRF's commitment to empowering local people, lobbying for appropriate local provisions and ultimately allowing people to make real difference to the planning process and the local environment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Bankside Resident's Forum was set up initially in 1995 to involve and empower local residents in the regeneration process in and around the Bankside area. It is run by residents for local residents. The advice and support it provides covers not only the course of planning applications, but also regeneration, land development and urban design issues. The forum's key principles are:
 - Consultation prior to planning applications being submitted and throughout the development process.
 - Close liaison with developers, architects, planners, Southwark Council, businesses, residents and other community groups.
 - Sustaining the heritage and character of the area in various ways such as restricting the height of buildings, having more green open spaces and studying the environment impact of developments on listed building conservation areas.
 - Providing for a sustainable and diverse community in terms of training and employment for local people and mixture of places to live.
 - Supporting local amenities for local people with various needs, such as good quality and reasonable priced transport, shops and recreation facilities for all sections of community.
4. BRF plays a crucial role in community engagement in issues of change which is brought about by the re-development pressures in the Bankside area. To this end BRF will continue to work closely with officers in the Community Involvement and Development Unit (CIDU) and the Legal and Democratic Services department in order to ensure that the service is more pro-active in its approach to community involvement, and that local people are fully informed and engaged.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. BRF is making good progress in community engagement and in particular it is continuing to actively involve local BME communities.
 - Has developed stronger partnerships with local forums and networks.
 - Increased membership through the door-knocking project.
 - The additional work delivered through BRF complements and adds value to the existing work of CIDU.
 - BRF has met its targets for 2008/09
6. Below are some key achievements for the past year:
 - BRF has surveyed 2000 Bankside homes for their views on affordable shopping opportunities in the area. The survey was conducted door to door and the collated information will be used to lobby for more appropriate future retail provision for the area.
 - BRF has provided formal responses to a variety of Southwark initiatives including key Planning Policy documents: Affordable Housing SPD / Elephant Enterprise Zone SPD / Southwark's (UDP) Core Strategy Document.
 - BRF has publicised and been involved with developing the Bankside Urban Forest Strategy.
 - BRF has hosted 3 well attended Open Forum meetings where developers as Tate, Native Land, and Southwark Cathedral have discussed plans with local residents.
 - BRF has launched a quarterly "e-News" letter that goes out to 350 member & stakeholder subscribers.
 - BRF membership remains free of charge and has been increasing progressively.

Policy implications

7. It is considered that the Bankside Residents Forum meets the Southwark Corporate Plan's key strategic objective. The Corporate Plan states that Southwark Council aims to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, works in or visits Southwark through transforming places for people. The BRF seeks to work with local communities in bringing about changes that will benefit the area. The BRF are local experts in thinking about how a place like Bankside can be a model of urban sustainability.
8. The BRF supports the aims of the council in relation to community cohesion and civic responsiveness among residents. The idea is that supporting residents to create their own ideas of how Bankside should be developed and regenerated will in turn create more confident and sustainable communities.

Borough wide policy considerations

9. There is currently a mapping in progress to explore the opportunities available to Southwark residents to get involved in local civic life. This is being carried out by the Active Citizens Hub, part of Volunteer Centre Southwark, and the mapping project is expected to be completed by June/July 2009. It is anticipated that this will inform future assessments by the council, and in particular area management teams, of the best way to support resident forum

type work throughout the borough. However, regardless of how the mapping project comments on the support needs of resident groups across Southwark, the conclusion of this report is that the Bankside area continues to face unique pressures due to the scale of developments happening there and that BRF will need to continue to play its role to represent the views of local people and stakeholders. The economic slowdown has affected but not halted the process of re-development in the Bankside, if only because commitments to re-development were already in place.

Community Impact Statement

10. Bankside Residents Forum operates an equal opportunities policy. Membership is free and all residents interested, affected and involved in the regeneration process are welcome to participate in the forum. Anyone based in the area, for example businesses, organisations and residents can take part in the meetings.

Resource implications

11. BRF have requested that the current funding level is continued in 2009/10.
12. The contract will require the continued support of the Community Council Co-ordinator, who will act as a link officer to BRF. The specific monitoring and administration role will ensure BRF fulfil their obligations under the contract.

Consultation

13. Extensive consultation was undertaken at the initial award of funding. As this is a renewal of an existing agreement, no further external consultation was undertaken, however key internal departments have been consulted.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services

14. The director of legal & democratic services notes the content of this report, which confirms that the proposed funding of the BRF is consistent with the council's corporate policy and objectives.
15. The Council has power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 ("the Act") 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.
16. Section 2(3) of the Act requires the Council to have regard to its Community Strategy when determining whether or not to exercise this power. Section 2(4) of the Act specifies that this includes a power to give financial assistance to any person.
17. The Council has power under the Act to provide funding to voluntary organisations but in exercising this power regard must be had to the Council's sustainable community strategy.
18. The report confirms that the proposed funding is contained within an existing

budget, and the approval of the grant payment is a matter which is reserved to an individual executive member (in this case, the executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities) under Part 3D of the council constitution.

Departmental Finance Manager

19. There are no resource implications arising from this report as the recommended funding of £26,768 can be contained with the budgets for Social Inclusion.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
BRF Contract of Agreement	East House, Town Hall, 35 Peckham Road, SE5 8UB	Forid Ahmed 0207 525 5540

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Director of Legal and Democratic Services	
Report Author	Forid Ahmed, Community Council Coordinator	
Version	Final	
Dated	March 23 2009	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services		March 23 2009