

**Report of: Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	5 March 2013		Caledonian

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## **SUBJECT: Developing a Community Hub in Caledonian Ward**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 As part of a package of support to voluntary and community organisations providing services for Islington's disadvantaged communities, the Council awards grant funding to a number of community hubs across the borough. There are currently 11 of these large community centres offering a variety of activities to meet the needs of residents in the wards where they're situated. Community hubs also assist smaller community groups in their area and support the development of ward partnerships.
- 1.2 This report asks VCS Committee to award a grant to develop a community hub in Caledonian Ward, one of the wards without any existing hub provision. If approved, the grant would enable Bemerton Villages Management Organisation/Team Cally to develop a network of community spaces across the ward which, working together, will form an integrated Caledonian Community Hub. Local stakeholders support the recommendation and it has been endorsed by Caledonian Ward Partnership.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To award grant funding of £30,000 to Bemerton Villages Management Organisation/Team Cally to develop a community hub in Caledonian Ward.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 In 2011 the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee awarded funding totalling £500,000 per year to 11 community hubs in Islington. Individual awards ranged from a maximum of £60,000 per year for larger hubs to a minimum of £25,000 per year for smaller hubs. Funding was awarded for three and a half years from 1 October 2011 to 31 March 2015. Ten wards now have a council funded community hub; there are two in Hillrise ward. To enable new hubs to be developed in parts of the borough where

there are gaps in hub provision the Committee agreed to establish a Community Hubs Development Fund. Proposals from organisations seeking investment from the Fund have to be endorsed by their local ward partnership before being brought to the VCS Committee for consideration.

- 3.2 A proposal has been submitted by Bemerton Villages Management Organisation (BVMO)/Team Cally to develop a community hub in Caledonian Ward. BVMO was set up as a tenant management organisation in 1998 by residents of the Bemerton Estate with the support of central government and Islington Council. It is governed by elected residents and manages housing services such as repairs, cleaning, grounds maintenance and general upkeep of the estate. Team Cally is hosted by BVMO and is a network of local organisations and residents who have a stake in Caledonian Ward. It plays a key role in coordinating local community based service providers and delivers capacity and innovation, for example through the development of activities such as the Cally Festival and the Cally Market.
- 3.3 Unlike other part of the borough, Caledonian ward does not have a large community centre able to perform all the functions of a community hub. The ward consists of a range of small to medium sized community buildings and assets with varying levels of community use. Service provision has developed organically and there is limited communication and coordination between the different facilities. The aim of the proposal submitted by BVMO/Team Cally is to develop a network of community spaces across the ward which, working together, will form an integrated Caledonian Community Hub.
- 3.4 The proposed investment will build the capacity of a number of community facilities including: Cally Resource Centre, Jean Stokes Community Hall, Orkney House (vacant and underused spaces), Naish Court Youth and Community Centre, BVMO (training and meeting rooms), and the Cally Pitch. The intention over the next two years is to expand the local service offer and to create opportunities for a wider range of residents, especially those who are vulnerable or from disadvantaged communities, to access and benefit from hub resources. This will be achieved by improving communication between the various facilities, initiating joint marketing activities to encourage more use of community spaces, and introducing a coordinated approach to service development and delivery.
- 3.5 The proposal is supported by stakeholders and residents on the Team Cally Steering Group and residents on the BVMO Board, and has been formally endorsed by the Caledonian Ward Partnership. £30,000 is requested for hub development, to be spent over a period of two years from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2015. Partners have committed an additional £24,500 as match funding: £20,000 capital from BVMO for entrance improvements to the Jean Stokes Community Hall; and £4,500 revenue for marketing/communications from resources already allocated to the Caledonian Ward Improvement Plan.
- 3.6 A multi-site approach to hub development is being considered in one or two other wards and results from Caledonian Ward would help the Council to assess whether networks of smaller community spaces might work elsewhere in Islington. The Team Cally Neighbourhood Coordinator who will lead on the implementation of the proposed arrangements for Caledonian Ward has been attending meetings of the Octopus network of community hubs and will work closely with Octopus members and with Octopus support staff to share learning and expertise around hub development.
- 3.7 The recommendation to VCS Committee is to award a grant of £30,000 to BVMO /Team Cally to develop a community hub in Caledonian Ward, with expenditure profiled over a two year period beginning 1 April 2013. The proposal submitted by BVMO/Team Cally will form the basis of a negotiation with council officers which will establish outcomes to be included in a formal funding agreement. BVMO will be the accountable body for grant monies released and for ensuring compliance with the council's reporting requirements and standards of probity.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

A Community Hubs Development Fund was established by the VCS Committee on 13 June 2011 with £150,000 of underspends from Islington Strategic Partnership. The purpose of the Fund is to enable

new hubs to be developed in parts of the borough where there are gaps in hub provision.

#### 4.2 **Legal Implications:**

The general power of competence pursuant to section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which came into force on 6 April 2012 provides the Council with very broad powers 'to do anything that individuals generally may do' which covers the proposal to award a grant for the hub development arrangements set out in this report.

Grants, unlike contracts, are not subject to contract law. This means that if an organisation ceases to provide the service for which it has been given a grant or fails to provide the required monitoring information, the Council cannot ask the court to force that organisation to comply or seek damages. The only recourse for the Council is to cease to pay the grant.

When providing grants it is necessary to consider state aid issues. Aid of up to €200,000 (approximately £165,000) may be provided to any organisation so long as that organisation has not received de minimis aid from any other source in the last three fiscal years which would result in the total de minimis aid to that organisation exceeding the €200,000. It is likely that the grant proposed for BVMO/Team Cally in this report will fall within the de minimis level and therefore be exempted from state aid rules.

In deciding to provide a grant to BVMO/Team Cally the VCS Committee should be satisfied that the Council is complying with its general Duty of Best Value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." (Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999).

#### 4.3 **Environmental Implications:**

None

#### 4.4 **Equality Impact Assessment:**

The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The recommendations in this report directly respond to concerns highlighted in the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) already undertaken of (a) the loss of Islington Strategic Partnership funding; and (b) the proposals for achieving savings across the Council. A further EIA was completed to assess the impact of the new Islington Community Fund on different groups of residents. The impact was found to be mainly positive. Where actual or potential impacts were identified, further actions were proposed to mitigate these. A copy of the EIA was published as an appendix to the Islington Community Fund report to Executive Committee on 17 March 2011. The proposed grant award to BVMO/Team Cally will not make any material difference to the findings of these earlier impact assessments.

## 5. **Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

- 5.1 An award of £30,000 will enable a community hub to be developed in Caledonian Ward which takes account of the available community assets and the needs of the local area. The investment will lead to a more joined up approach to frontline service provision across the ward and will create opportunities for a greater number of residents to access and benefit from activities in local community facilities.

**Appendices:** None

**Background papers:** None

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities 21 February 2013

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