

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

| Meeting of: | Date | Agenda item | Wards |
|--|------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Voluntary and Community Sector Committee | 8 September 2020 | | All |

SUBJECT: Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The Council's current VCS Partnership Grants programme is due to end on 31 December 2020.
- 1.2. This programme provides core grant funding to voluntary and community sector organisations in Islington, with an overall fund of £2,696,000 per annum.
- 1.3. Since the launch of the Council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020, the Council has developed a new Corporate Plan, agreed a series of Corporate Objectives and Corporate Values, and has undertaken significant work to enable us to become the best Council at early intervention and prevention in the country.
- 1.4. The Council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme is a key component of the Council's efforts to support the development of resilient communities and a strong, independent voluntary and community sector.
- 1.5. This report provides an overview of the VCS Grants Programme 2021-2024 outlining the programme structure, the application and assessment processes, and makes recommendations on the allocation of grant funding across the six strands of the VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve the recommendations for funding to 48 organisations for the VCS Partnership Grants Programme across the 6 strands of the programme as detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.2. To agree the proposal to provide funding of £30,000 per annum, totalling £97,500 over the programme period, to support the development of a disability focussed network as detailed in section 4.17 of this report.
- 2.3. To agree the proposal to provide funding of £30,000 per annum, totalling £97,500 over the programme period, in order to support the development of a Black and Minority Ethnic equalities and cohesion network as detailed in section 4.17 of this report.

- 2.4. To agree the proposal to provide funding of £75,000 per annum, totalling £243,750 over the programme period to deliver against the recommendations of a review of capacity-building and volunteering support as detailed in section 4.17 of this report.
- 2.5. To agree to fund the commitment of 2.1 to 2.4 to the required £2.776m per full financial year and over the full 3.25 years of the programme to £9.022m.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council, across all departments currently spends £44 million spend with the borough's VCS partners. £2,696,000 of the Council's £44 million spend is allocated through the Council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020, a programme that provides core funding to strategic VCS partners. This programme was designed around the Council's Corporate Plan 2014-2018 and The Council's Voluntary and Community Sector 2016-2020. The funding provides the foundation for a strong, vibrant, and independent VCS in the borough.
- 3.2. In the current programme (VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020) funded organisations receive grants in the following strands:
 - Advice Strategic Partners Programme
 - Neighbourhoods Strategic Partners Programme
 - Borough-wide Strategic Partners Programme
 - Volunteering Strategic Partners Programme
 - Delivery Partners Programme
- 3.3. On 30 April 2020, in response to the outbreak of Covid 19, Islington's Executive Committee decided to extend the current programme for a further 3 months to 31 December 2020.
- 3.4. Extension of the current programme has enabled funded organisations to continue to deliver vital services in the community and adapt to uncertainty in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.
- 3.5. This means that the new VCS Partnership Grants Programme will begin on the 1 January 2021 and will now run for three years and three months until 31 March 2024.
- 3.6. In November 2019 the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee agreed recommendations to provide funding to organisations across 6 strands, detailed below are the strands and the indicative levels of funding which were made available up to a total fund of £2,696,000:

| 2021-2024 Strand | Indicative Total Funding | Indicative Funding Awards |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Independent Advice and Navigation | Up to £1.45 million | Up to £500K |
| Community Hubs | Up to £600K | Up to £60K |
| VCS Capacity Building | Up to £80K | Up to £60K |
| Volunteering | Up to £35K | Up to £35K |
| Delivery Partners | Up to £400K | Up to £25K |
| Equalities and Cohesion Networks | Up to £150K | Up to £30K |

3.7. Application and Assessment Process

The VCS Partnership Grants Programme was launched for applications on 6 January 2020. Information about the programme was published widely through Council and voluntary sector

communication channels. Six information sessions were held throughout February 2020. The application process was closed on Sunday 15 March 2020.

A total of 91 applications were received with a total funding request of £4,121,931 from organisations working across the borough and these were assessed according to the eligibility criteria outlined below:

Stage 1

Applications were assessed to ensure that organisations met the minimum eligibility criteria outlined in each prospectus:

- Grounds for mandatory exclusion
- Minimum Criteria
- Suitability Criteria in three areas:
 - The organisation's financial viability and their track record of securing income
 - What the organisation will use the core grant for and the difference it will make to the organisation
 - The organisation's objectives / articles of association and how these relate to the Council's Corporate Priorities

Stage 2

Each application for 5 of the strands were then assessed based on the following award criteria with weighting:

- Needs, Issues and Beneficiaries - 20%
- Outcomes, Services, Activities and Risks - 20%
- The Difference We Want You to Make - 30%
- Organisational Development - 20%
- Evaluating and Communicating Impact - 10%

The Advice and Navigation strand was assessed based on the following award criteria with weighting:

- Needs, Issues and Beneficiaries – 10%
- Outcomes, Services, Activities and Risks – 20%
- The Difference We Want You to Make – 30%
- Your Ability to Deliver an Integrated Advice Model for Islington – 20%
- Organisational Development – 10%
- Evaluating and Communicating Impact – 10%

- 3.8. All applications were assessed by a minimum of two individual council officers, in line with the established criteria and all scores were aggregated to identify an overall total score for each application.
- 3.9. Panel meetings were held with assessors to address divergence in scoring, to undertake an additional qualitative assessment of each application, and to agree a final shortlist for each strand.

3.10. At each stage of the process, officers assessed recommendations in line with the aspiration to establish a balanced and diverse portfolio working with different sections of the community with protected characteristics and across the borough. This assessment included consideration of:

- Equalities and protected characteristics
- Geographical spread across the borough
- Thematic spread

3.11. Applications Summary

The applications received break down into the following areas:

| Strand | Total received | Not Recommended for Funding | Recommended for Funding |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Capacity Building | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Community Hubs | 17 | 4 | 13 |
| Delivery | 54 | 31 | 23 |
| Equalities and Cohesion Networks | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Volunteering | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 91 | 43 | 48 |

3.12. Of the 48 applications being recommended for funding, 40 are currently funded organisations and 8 will be newly funded. There are 43 organisations which are not being recommended for funding. This is due to organisations not meeting the requirements for the grants programme or because there was insufficient funding available in the strand being applied to.

3.13. Details of those organisations that are being recommended for grant funding through the VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024 in each of the six strands can be found at appendix 1.

3.14. Once the recommendations have been formally agreed, all organisations will be notified in writing to confirm the decision and the level of funding agreed (where applicable). Organisations will then be required to develop an annual delivery plan before a grant agreement is issued.

3.15. There will be a support package made available to organisations not being recommended for funding which will include:

- Detailed feedback about applications, available upon request
- Access to training opportunities/sessions – Including writing funding applications
- Details of alternative funding available

3.16. Monitoring Arrangements

To ensure that the commitments made within any established grant agreements and applications are developed and actioned, regular monitoring and partnership meetings will be held throughout the duration of the grant programme.

3.17. Funding retained from the VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024

Through the Resident Impact Assessment (see appendix 3), two gaps in provision have been identified. In order to mitigate these and ensure that the VCS Partnership portfolio is fully able to support the Council's equality and community cohesion ambitions, the following measures are being proposed:

- Disability Representation - It is recommended that £30K per annum, totalling £97,500 over the programme period, from the Equalities and Cohesion Networks stand is ring fenced to support the development of a borough-wide pan-disability focussed equalities and cohesion network that can assist the Council in delivering its ambitions for a fairer Islington.
- BAME Representation - It is recommended that £30K per annum, totalling £97,500 over the programme period, from the Equalities and Cohesion Networks stand is ring fenced to support the development of a borough-wide Black and Minority Ethnic equalities and cohesion network that can assist the Council in delivering its ambitions for a fairer Islington.
- In addition, it is also recommended that a strategic review of volunteering and the current and future capacity building support needs of the voluntary sector be undertaken. This recommendation is in light of the Fairer Together programme, and the impacts and changes brought about by Covid-19. It is proposed that £75,000 per annum, totalling £243,750 over the programme period, is ring-fenced, with future allocations being made in line with the recommendations of this review (see appendix 2 for details).

To assist with the mitigation of the above gaps in provision and to support the Council's ambitions for the role of the voluntary and community sector in Islington's Fairer Together programme a one-off fixed amount of £80K per annum, totalling £260,000 over the programme period, has been allocated from the remaining underspend from previous grant rounds.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

The Council seeks to provide funding to VCS organisations to a total of £2,696,000 per year over the financial years: 2020/21, 2021/22, 2020/23, and 2023/24. The reduction in the length of the 2020-2024 VCS grants programme does not have an impact on the amount of money paid out in any one of the financial years as the 2016-2020 programme will extend to cover the shortfall for the same amount. Of the £2,696,000 funding per year available for VCS organisations to bid for as part of the 2021-2024 VCS grants programme, the report recommends £2,641,000 per annum (pro rata FY20/21) be awarded.

Maintaining the Council's existing financial commitment of £2,696,000 per annum to the VCS Partnership Grants Programme requires continued funding of £119,000 from the CCG. An agreement has been reached between the Council and the CCG to commit to this funding arrangement for the duration of the 2021-2024 programme.

£135,000 per FY is proposed for equalities and cohesion, capacity building, and volunteer support activities. The cost of this will partly be met from not committing the full £2,696,000,

with £55,000 per year earmarked for these activities. The remaining £80,000 per year required will be found from retained underspends from the FY2016-20 programme. There is sufficient retained underspend to cover this commitment.

The report's recommendations to fund £2,641,000 per annum for VCS organisations through the 2021-2024 VCS grants programme and an additional £135,000 per annum for equalities, cohesion, capacity, and volunteer activities will result in a total financial commitment of £2,776,000 per annum.

It is intended that grant commitments will be protected for a 3.25 year period although the awards will be issued with a mid-programme review as per the last grants programme. The Council's MTFP currently incorporates a continuation of the scheme as proposed. This is subject to ongoing Council wide savings discussions.

The table below displays the additional money requested in the recommendations, where the funding is coming from, remaining funding, and the number of allocations in the FY21-24 period. Please note that the proposed allocations range in funding size from £10,000 to £450,000.

| | Financial Year | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Programmes: | 20/21 | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 | Total: |
| 2021-24 Grants Programme recommended grant awards | £ 660,250 | £2,641,000 | £2,641,000 | £2,641,000 | £ 8,583,250 |
| Equalities, Cohesion, Capacity, and Volunteer Programme | £ 33,750 | £ 135,000 | £ 135,000 | £ 135,000 | £ 438,750 |
| Total Cost | £ 694,000 | £2,776,000 | £2,776,000 | £2,776,000 | £ 9,022,000 |
| Funding sources: | | | | | |
| Core Funding | -£ 644,250 | -£2,577,000 | -£2,577,000 | -£2,577,000 | -£ 8,375,250 |
| CCG Funding | -£ 29,750 | -£ 119,000 | -£ 119,000 | -£ 119,000 | -£ 386,750 |
| Retained Underspends/ Earmarked Reserves | -£ 20,000 | -£ 80,000 | -£ 80,000 | -£ 80,000 | -£ 260,000 |
| Total Funding: | -£ 694,000 | -£2,776,000 | -£2,776,000 | -£2,776,000 | -£ 9,022,000 |
| Total Difference: | - | - | - | - | - |
| No of Allocations: | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 |

4.2. Legal Implications

The Council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Committee is a sub-committee of the Executive and has delegated authority, in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution to 'oversee the Council's engagement with the Islington community and voluntary sector and to ensure value for money and fairness in the allocation of Council resources to the sector' and to 'be responsible for the allocation of the Islington Community Fund including allocating the VCS Partnership Grants Programme.'

The four elements of state aid are that the assistance must:

- a) be granted by the state or through state resources;
- b) give an advantage to one or more undertakings over others;
- c) distort or have the potential to distort competition;
- d) affect trade between member states.

The provision of these grants may be associated with state aid. Even if there is state aid, there are potential exemptions. The Council can provide state aid in relation to 'services of general economic interest' (SGEI) as detailed in Article 106(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Schedule 3 paragraph 4 of the Competition Act 1998.

Aid of up to €500,000 (approximately £438,000) may be provided to an organisation for SGEI 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 €500,000 (Commission Regulation No 360/2012, the "de minimis Regulation").

In the event that an organization has received other de minimis aid that takes it over the threshold of £438,000, there is an alternative regime for SGEI exemption for high value compensation that may be used. This was established by Commission Decision (2012/12/EU, the "Decision") that came into force on 31 January 2012. Should this be necessary the detailed rules on calculation of cost and record keeping and reporting set out in the Decision will need to be complied with.

4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

The grant programme in itself has minimal environmental impacts, being limited to those associated with the office use of the staff involved. However, the grants will be used to fund activities that are likely to have a range of environmental impacts, most of which will have resulting carbon emissions. These include energy and water use in buildings, the purchase of goods with supply chain impacts and the generation of waste.

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment

A resident impact assessment has been completed (appendix 3) to understand the impact of the grants programme on residents in the borough, particularly those with protected characteristics. The new grants programme aims to support the overarching Council priorities of

addressing inequality, promoting community cohesion and supporting the most vulnerable residents.

Key highlights from the resident impact assessment are detailed below:

- 27 of the 48 organisations recommended for funding are classified as having a 'targetted' approach and 21 with a 'universal' approach. In comparison to core grant-funding awards in 2016-2020, there has been a 13% increase in the level of funding going to organisations with a 'targetted' approach to working with residents with protected characteristics.
- The VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024 recommendations for funding include, 16 organisations which specifically work with BAME communities (including 1 consortium of 6 BAME-led organisations) totalling £609,000 of funding per annum, with a further £30,000 per annum ring-fenced for BAME focussed equalities support through a borough-wide equality and cohesion network. In comparison to 2016-2020, there has therefore been a 19% increase in the amount of funding going to BAME-led/focussed organisations compared to the current Partnership Grants programme 2016-2020.
- The Equality and Cohesion Networks strand is a new strand which will bring together strategic leaders working across a range of protected characteristics, ensuring that the voice and challenge of organisations who represent or work with residents with protected characteristics is elevated. Five organisations, working with a focus on ethnicity, age (older people), faith, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are recommended for funding through this strand, totalling £120,000 with a further £60,000 being ring-fenced pending a review of the offer for residents with disabilities and BAME representation in the borough. These recommendations would see an increase of 20% in the funding provided for borough-wide equalities work in comparison to 2016-2020.
- In addition to the positive impacts associated with providing grant funding to independent advice partners, the Council established a strand of funding for organisations working with residents with protected characteristics that face additional challenges in accessing independent legal advice. Two applications are being recommended in the community advice strand for a funding total of £110,000 per annum, this includes funding for a consortium of 6 organisations working with the BAME community and funding for an organisation working specifically with women in the borough.
- The RIA has resulted in the identification of two gaps in provision which are detailed in the assessment along with proposed mitigation for residents with disabilities and BAME communities, which aims to ensure that residents with protected characteristics are represented throughout the funding programme.
- In considering the Resident Impact Assessment, due regard should be had to the Council's obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:
 - (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - (2) A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

- (3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
 - (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
 - (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- (4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- (5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
 - (a) tackle prejudice, and
 - (b) promote understanding.
- (6) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.
- (7) The relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5. Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

The Council has a strong partnership with the voluntary, community and not-for-profit sector and values highly the role that local independent organisations play in meeting the needs of some of Islington's most disadvantaged communities.

The VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024 builds on the overarching aim of the Council's work with the VCS to support the Council priority of making Islington a fairer place and the ambitions we have for our community through the Fairer Together programme.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisations recommended for funding through the VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024

Appendix 2: Funding retained and ring-fenced – VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024

Appendix 3: Resident Impact Assessment

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Una mattina

Signed by: Executive Member for Community Development

Date:

Report Author: Shabana Aslam
Tel: 0207 527 3848
Email: Shabana.Aslam@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Thomas Cooksey
Tel: 020 7527 1867
Email: Thomas.Cooksey@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Sonal Mistry
Tel: 020 7527 3833
Email: Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk

Environmental Implications Author: James Wilson
Tel: 020 7527 2349
Email: James.Wilson@islington.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Organisations Recommended for Funding through VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024:

| Independent Advice and Navigation Strand | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Strand | Organisation | Funding per annum |
| Strand 1 - Navigation | Help on Your Doorstep | £180,000 |
| Strand 2 – Community Advice | Islington BAMER Advice Alliance | £95,000 |
| Strand 2 – Community Advice Strand 3 – Generalist Advice | Arachne Greek Cypriot Women’s Group | £31,000 |
| Strand 3 – Generalist Advice | RCJ Advice and Citizens Advice Islington | £450,000 |
| Strand 4 – Specialist Advice | Islington Law Centre | £450,000 |
| Strand 5 – Targeted Specialist Advice | Islington People’s Rights | £230,000 |
| | | Total: £1,436,000.00 |

| Community Hubs Strand | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Organisation | Funding per annum |
| Caxton House Community Centre | £45,000 |
| Hanley Crouch Community Association | £60,000 |
| Highbury Roundhouse | £45,000 |
| Highbury Vale Blackstock Trust | £50,000 |
| Hilldrop Area Community Association | £50,000 |
| Holloway Neighbourhood Group | £45,000 |
| Hornsey Lane Community Association | £50,000 |
| Mildmay Community Partnership | £50,000 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Muslim Welfare House | £40,000 |
| St Luke's Parochial Trust | £60,000 |
| The ARC Centre | £30,000 |
| The Peel | £50,000 |
| Whittington Park Community Association | £60,000 |
| Total: £635,000.00 | |

| Capacity Building Strand | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Organisation | Funding per annum |
| Octopus Community Network | £40,000 |
| Funds ring-fenced pending a review of offer for the sector (see appendix 2) | |
| Total: £40,000.00 | |

| Volunteering Strand | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Organisations | Funding per annum |
| No organisations recommended for funding (see appendix 2) | |
| Total: £0 | |

| Delivery Strand | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Organisation | Funding per annum |
| ALAG on behalf of the Autism Hub Islington | £17,500 |
| All Change | £20,000 |
| Community Language Support Services | £24,000 |
| Company Three | £15,000 |
| Culpeper Community Gardens | £9,500 |

| | |
|---|---------|
| Eritrean Community in UK | £22,000 |
| Finsbury Park Mosque | £15,000 |
| Global Generation | £15,000 |
| Healthy Generations | £15,000 |
| Holloway Neighbourhood Group | £20,000 |
| IMECE Women's Centre | £22,000 |
| Islington Bangladesh Association | £22,000 |
| Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants | £20,000 |
| Islington Somali Community | £22,000 |
| Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organisation | £20,000 |
| Light Project Pro International | £24,000 |
| Little Angel Theatre | £15,000 |
| Maa Shanti | £15,000 |
| One True Voice | £10,000 |
| St Mark's Church | £15,000 |
| Stuart Low Trust | £20,000 |
| The Margins Project | £14,500 |
| The Parent House | £17,500 |
| Total: £410,000.00 | |

| Equalities and Cohesion Networks Strand | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Organisation | Funding per annum |
| Forum + | £30,000 |
| Islington Faith Forum | £30,000 |
| Islington Pensioners Forum | £10,000 |
| Islington Refugee and Migrant Forum | £30,000 |

| | |
|---|---------|
| London Irish Centre | £20,000 |
| Funds ring-fenced pending a review of offer for BAME residents. (see appendix 2) | |
| Funds ring-fenced pending a review of offer for residents with disabilities. (see appendix 2) | |
| Total: £120,000.00 | |

Recommended Total Funding Allocations identified by Strand

| Strand | Total Amount Requested | Total Amount Recommended |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Capacity Building | £115,000 | £40,000 |
| Community Hubs | £965,696 | £635,000 |
| Delivery | £1,241,558 | £410,000 |
| Equalities and Cohesion Networks | £210,000 | £120,000 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation - Strand 1 - Navigation | £200,000 | £180,000 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation - Strand 2 - Community Advice | £116,262 | £110,000 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation - Strand 3 – Generalist Advice | £518,415 | £466,000 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation - Strand 4 – Specialist Advice | £460,000 | £450,000 |
| Independent Advice & Navigation Strand 5 - Targeted Specialist Advice | £250,000 | £230,000 |
| Volunteering | £45,000 | £0 |
| Total | £4,121,931 | £2,641,000 |

Appendix 2

Funding Retained and Ring Fenced for VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024

| Strand | Grant Total (per annum) |
|---|--|
| Equalities and Cohesion Networks | £30,000 Disabilities offer £30,000 BAME offer |
| Capacity Building | £40,000 |
| Volunteering | £35,000 |
| Total | £135,000 |