

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Wards
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	06 July 2021		All

SUBJECT: Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. This paper sets out the background and recommendations for new Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks in Islington.
- 1.2. Three wellbeing networks will be launched and developed in each locality; North, South and Central. Networks will comprise of voluntary and community groups, including grassroots groups, and people with lived experience.
- 1.3. A funding programme was launched in April 2021 welcoming voluntary and community sector organisations to apply to lead either one or all of the local wellbeing networks.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. To agree the awarding of funding, commencing in the summer of 2021 for 1 year, to Voluntary Action Islington and Octopus Community Network's consortium bid to lead all three Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks in the borough (please see appendix 1).

3. Background

- 3.1. The key purpose of Fairer Together is to build and strengthen the partnership of services working together to tackle inequality and create a fairer Islington. The philosophy is that the council will do this by building skills, strengthening relationships and connecting with the community.
- 3.2. Bringing services together in support of the above is best done at locality level, where relationships can be developed, and the council can build knowledge of the geography and local assets. Through Fairer Together, the council are developing an all age early intervention and prevention offer - with three clear elements that will ensure the council works together as part of a coherent, integrated approach to building strengths, building relationships and building communities, together with health services, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the community.

3.3. These elements are:

- Bright Start – ages 0-5
- Bright Futures – ages 5-19
- Bright Lives - adults early help offer

3.4. It is critical that as part of this agenda the Council is able to draw in the VCS and residents for:

- Connecting – providing a mechanism for local VCS organisations and residents/lived experience groups to share feedback, ideas, resources and activities to further strengthen Islington's projects that support residents, and to connect in grassroots VCS to the Fairer Together Programme.
- Co-delivery – recognising that most people who are in need of support look to their community first rather than public services, whether that is friends or family or community groups such as faith groups or more formal VCS organisations. In order to improve wellbeing, the council therefore needs to build strong relationships with the community as co-deliverers, e.g. as Peer Champions or Coaches, Good Neighbours Schemes, and link this with more enhanced offers for community wellbeing such as Social Prescribing Link Workers or Early Intervention and Prevention services.
- Community voice – as part of our Duty to Involve making sure delivery of Fairer Together is informed by lived experience, in particular those whose voices have been previously marginalised, so that the council better understands what's important to the community, where people are accessing support and what are their needs, wants and aspirations.

3.5. The delivery of the Local Wellbeing Networks will be supported by the Fairer Together and VCS Development Teams. Monitoring will be co-developed with the lead organisations.

3.6. Establishing the networks will require a dedicated programme of engagement and capacity building. Together with the Community Partnerships Working Group, the Council will understand what support is needed to kick-start Local Wellbeing Networks in Islington.

3.7. Organisations will set out how they see the networks developing. They have however been asked to consider framing these around the following suggested key deliverables:

- Initial engagement with Hyper-local VCS and Lived Experience Groups, and managing the membership.
- Initial high-level plans for year 1 and year 2 to be developed over time, including for example building connections to networks and services and Asset Based Community Development.
- Monthly 'Doing' Social Events to build relationships, share feedback, ideas, opportunities and actions.
- Quarterly engagement with network members/residents on Impact against agreed outcomes.
- Quarterly 'Planning and Reviewing' meetings to review progress and agree upcoming activities.
- Regular borough wide workshops for networks to come together and share learning and ideas.
- Active participation in the Community Partnerships Group
- Ongoing capacity building and support to hyper-local and Lived Experience groups.
- Identifying opportunities to utilise the Time Credits pilot to grow active community participation and peer/resident-led opportunities in line with Islington's Reward and Recognition Policy for service user/carer involvement.
- Identify opportunities for ongoing funding to develop and sustain grassroots activity.

4. Application and Assessment Process

- 4.1. A fund of £10,000, per annum, per Local Wellbeing Network has been allocated for a lead VCS organisation or consortium to apply to support their formation and development.
- 4.2. A prospectus for the Local Wellbeing Networks was developed, detailing a summary of Fairer Together, the local wellbeing networks and what the Council is looking for. This included; experience and positioning within the locality, experience of developing and running networks, the difference we want the lead organisation to make, organisational development and evaluating and communicating impact.
- 4.3. The prospectus and application form was widely publicised to the sector, via the voluntary Action Islington mailing, list and the Community Partnership Board. The opportunity to apply was open for 3 weeks.
- 4.4. By running an open application process that will be publicly scrutinised this ensures transparency and clarity about the nature of the networks and the allocation of funding to the sector.
- 4.5. Three applications were submitted for consideration, please see details below:
 - A consortium application by VAI & Octopus community network to lead all three local wellbeing networks.
 - An application by Help on Your Doorstep (HOYD) to lead all three local wellbeing networks.
 - An application by Manor Gardens Welfare Trust to lead the North local wellbeing network.
- 4.6. Three officers within the Fairer Together directorate individually assessed applications. The officers then came together with the VCS Development Team leads, jointly scored, considered and evaluated the three applications.
- 4.7. All the organisations met the minimum requirements and criteria. At stage two of the assessment, which involved an evaluation of the 'award criteria' (see 4.2) a clear recommendation was reached.
- 4.8. The consortium application by VAI & Octopus is being recommended to be the lead organisation for all three Local Wellbeing Networks. This was the highest scoring application. The application and assessment emphasised that this is a strong partnership, which has the infrastructure and experience of networks in place, and will offer a consistent approach to all three localities. The recommended application for funding clearly met the criteria and had the strongest answers on the 'difference we want you to make'.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

The total cost of the Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks grant is £30,000 per annum or £90,000 over the lifetime of the three year project. The proposals are for £30,000 to be awarded in financial year 2021/22 and then renewed for another 2 years depending on partner organisations meeting set criteria. The funding year will begin in August 2021 and continue to

September in 2022. The total cost of the project will be paid from the Council's Fairer Together core funding, with the resources originating from corporate sources.

Sufficient notice will be given to prevent any outstanding liabilities from the Council to the partner organisations. Any overspends incurred by the Local Wellbeing Network will be the responsibility of partner organisation and not Islington Borough Council.

5.2. 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.'

Public funding/ support given in Great Britain since 1 January 2021 is no longer subject to state aid law. New rules on subsidy control now apply, which are in many ways closely analogous to EU state aid law. Public authorities are to make a case by case consideration of their proposed subsidy in compliance with the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) reached between the UK and the EU. The TCA is incorporated into domestic law by virtue of Section 29 of the EU (Future Relationships) Act 2020.

The concept of subsidy subject to the TCA requirements is defined in very broad terms. A subsidy is a measure which:

- a) is given by a public authority (including a local authority)
- b) makes a contribution to an enterprise conferring an economic advantage that is not available on market terms (for example, grants, loans at below market rate, or allowing a company to use publicly owned offices rent free). An enterprise could be a government department or charity if it acts commercially; and
- c) affects international trade

The UK-EU TCA obligations must be met if they apply, and the subsidy must meet the terms of its principles. The TCA sets out principles which all subsidies of more than 325,000 Special Drawing Rights (approximately £350,000) given to a single beneficiary over 3 years must meet.

The only exceptions are subsidies to compensate for natural disasters, subsidies for agriculture and subsidies for audio visual. If in scope, the council must consider these principles in the design and granting of subsidies on a case-by-case basis. Failure to do so could leave the council open to judicial review.

The principles are that the subsidies should:

- i. Pursue a specific public policy objective to remedy an identified market failure or to address an equity rationale such as social difficulties or distributional concerns ("the objective")
- ii. Be proportionate and limited to what is necessary to achieve the objective
- iii. Be designed to bring about a change of economic behaviour of the beneficiary that is conducive to achieving the objective and that would not be achieved in the absence of subsidies being provided
- iv. Not normally compensate for the costs the beneficiary would have funded in the absence of any subsidy

- v. Should be an appropriate policy instrument to achieve a public policy objective and that objective cannot be achieved through other less distortive means
- vi. Subsidies' positive contributions to achieving the objective should outweigh any negative effects, in particular the negative effects on trade or investment between the UK and EU.

The government is seeking views on the best way to design a bespoke approach to UK-wide subsidy control, including any additions to the principles underpinning the regime and any subsidies which should be excluded from the commitments to these principles. It is also seeking thoughts on how best to manage the most distortive kinds of subsidies, in addition to opinions on the role and powers of the independent body that will oversee the regime. The government aims to deliver a subsidy control regime that:

- Facilitates strategic interventions to support government priorities, including supporting the economy's recovery from COVID-19
- Takes account of the economic needs of the UK's individual nations and strengthens the economic bonds of our Union
- Protects the UK's competitive and dynamic market economy and
- Ensures that subsidies in the UK are given in line with our international commitments including those in the UK-EU TCA. The consultation ended on 31 March 2021 and the Government response is awaited.

For the avoidance of doubt, the council can still pay out subsidies over previously approved schemes as these will be in line with the principles. This includes subsidies related to COVID-19 that have previously been given under the State Aid Temporary Framework. The council must keep these schemes under review and apply the principles to any changes made to these schemes.

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

There are not expected to be any major environmental implications from the creation of the Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks. The organisation and hosting of the networks will involve some office/building use (and therefore energy and water use, plus printing and waste generation), while attendees will need to travel to meetings, which may involve use of vehicles.

5.4 Resident 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, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

This initiative will assist in building and strengthening the partnership of services working together to tackle inequality and create a fairer Islington. The philosophy is that the council will do this by building skills, strengthening relationships and connecting with the community. This fund will support local community engagement and will enable some of Islington's poorest communities to access community-based services and activities and allows provision to be developed locally which can reach groups of residents that may not otherwise be supported.

6. 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.

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:



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Appendix 1

Organisation recommended	Amount recommended	Contract Length	Localities
Voluntary Action Islington and Octopus Community Network's	£30,000 per annum	Summer 2021-2022 Intention to renew for a further two years, subject to progress.	North Central South