

**Homes and Communities**  
222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

**Report of: Executive Member for Homes and Communities**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	11 July 2023		All

**SUBJECT: Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 2024-2028**

## 1. SYNOPSIS

The council's four-year VCS Partnership Grants programme is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The current grant budget totals £2,696,000 per annum.

Since the launch of the council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021 - 24, the council has developed a new Corporate Plan - Islington Together 2030, which sets out the vision for a more equal Islington, agreed a series of Missions to help achieve this vision and has undertaken significant work to enable us to tackle inequality and lead the way in early intervention and prevention.

The council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme is a key component of the council's efforts to support the development of resilient communities. The Voluntary Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) play a key role in supporting our communities through these difficult times and are themselves facing significant challenges. The Council has committed to maintaining the VCS grants programme. This paper sets out details of the current programme and recommends that authorisation is given to initiate the programme within a framework set out below. It also recommends the overall budget for the programme to be included in the Council's budget setting.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve the development of the Council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme, enabling consultation and co-production of the programme with key stakeholders, including elected members, council departments, CCG (Islington Integrated Care Group) and VCS partners

To recommend to the Executive the maintenance of the existing council budget of £2,696,000 from General and Housing Revenue Account funding streams for 2024/25.

To agree the outline timetable for the development and delivery of the 2024 – 28 grants programme as outlined in appendix 1.

To approve negotiations with Islington CCG to seek commitment to continue joint funding for Advice provision in the borough at existing levels (£119K per annum) throughout the duration of the 2024-2028 programme.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Our recently published Islington Together 2030 plan sets out a bold vision for working together with our communities to create a more equal future for our borough by 2030 and the [five key missions we have set ourselves](#) to achieve this.

In summary, we want Islington to be a place where people know their children will get the very best start in life, where people can access help and support when they need it and where wealth is created and enjoyed locally. A place where people can live sustainable, happy and healthy lives.

The council's corporate plan provides the over-arching framework for our work and the partnerships that the council forms with the voluntary and community sector, through our Fairer Together objectives.

The council has set out ambitions to adopt an early intervention and prevention approach to improve community resilience. Through this work a 'prevention' pyramid was established, segmenting services into four levels; 'specialist', 'targeted', 'universal' and 'place-shaping'. Achieving our aspiration of being the best council in the country at delivering preventative work will require a reorientation towards community resilience and a rebalance of our current spend towards early intervention and prevention work at 'universal' and 'place shaping levels'.

Islington's VCS are key partners in delivering an interconnected system of preventative services in community settings across the borough. The VCS play a key role in supporting our communities and have provided invaluable support through the pandemic and now with the cost of living crisis. Like the council, the sector itself is facing significant challenges. The council recognises the value of the sector and the challenges faced by the sector and has committed to maintaining the grants programme over the next four years. Unlike other boroughs, we believe cutting VCS grants isn't the answer. Instead we need to think about how else we can work together to harness the power of the whole system.

The council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2016-2020 ended in 2020 and work is underway to develop a new Communities Strategy that will seek to establish a co-produced strategic framework for the council and VCS – framing the whole council's work with the VCS. This strategy will seek to empower communities to enable resilience through our partnership with the borough's VCS.

The Compact which is currently being redeveloped and will come into effect in Autumn 2023 is the framework in which the Council and the VCS sector form alliances to enhance the relationship and equity in which we work. This provides a tool where the VCS are seen as partners in delivering our ambitions of a 'more equal Islington'.

#### 4. VCS PARTNERSHIPS GRANT FUNDING 2021 – 24

£2.7 million of the council’s current annual £44 million spend with the borough’s VCS is allocated through the council’s VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024, a programme that provides core funding to our strategic VCS partners.

Islington’s VCS Partnership Grants Programme serves as an enabler, ensuring that the borough has a strong, independent VCS that is able to respond to the needs of our local communities and to attract resource into the borough. The current grants programme will end on 31st March 2024 and work was carried out in the last programme to reframe the programme in relation to the Corporate Plan 2018-2022 and the council’s ambitions for early intervention and prevention, and our focus on a fairer Islington.

The exact structure of the council’s VCS Grants Programme 2021-24 was co-designed and co-delivered, with involvement of a range of Executive Members, directorates and external partners, including the CCG (Integrated Care Boards). Based on current arrangements and the opportunities identified through a mapping of grants and contracts that Islington CCG (Integrated Care Boards) and the council held with the borough’s VCS, the current programme is structured around the following strands:

- Community Hubs
- Delivery Partners
- VCS Capacity Building
- Equalities and Cohesion Networks
- Volunteering
- Independent Advice

Funding to organisations across the 6 strands are detailed below, details of the various strands and the indicative levels of funding which were made available up to a total fund of £2,696,000:

<b>2021-2024 Strand</b>	<b>Indicative Total Funding</b>	<b>Indicative Funding Awards</b>
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

The 2021-24 VCS Partnership Grants Programme provides funding to 50 VCS organisations, designed to meet our early intervention and prevention ambitions. (Details of awards in appendix 2).

All partners are subject to a rigorous assessment process and ongoing monitoring as 'strategic partners'. Organisations are continuously assessed, monitored and supported through a Funder+ model in terms of; service delivery and outcomes for residents, governance, organisational management, financial management, fundraising capacity, communications, safeguarding, and data protection.

## **5. VCS PARTNERSHIPS GRANTS FUNDING 2024 -28**

The Council's VCS Partnership Grants Programme is a corporate undertaking, requiring collaboration across the organisation to ensure that that the programme responds to corporate priorities and the aims and objectives of different departments.

The VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2024, therefore requires a 'whole-council' approach in terms of development, design, administration and monitoring.

The Council is committed to providing funding support to VCS organisations to a total of £2,696,000 per year over the period Financial Year 2024-2028.

The current programme has been successful in moving towards a vision of a 'more equal Islington' and therefore, it is recommended that the programme for the coming period 2024–28, mirrors the current programme in place.

The recommendations are that the six strands and the indicative budgets remain the same, as they are detailed above, with a little more emphasis on collaborative working to ensure smaller grass root organisations are enabled and empowered to be part of the process, and we are able to use their expertise to support our harder to engage/reach communities.

The recommendation is that the application process which was previously just at one stage, be moved to a two stage process, for this to be in the form of a pre-qualifying questionnaire, to ensure the eligibility of applicants and make the process more streamlined and efficient.

The recommendation is for the Grants Programme to be launched in the summer of 2024, with a view for all new contracts to be aligned by 1 April 2024. (Timeline in Appendix 1).

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council is committed to providing funding support to VCS organisations to a total of £2,696,000 per year over the period Financial Year 2024 - 28. This will be reflected in the Budget Setting report to full Council in February 2024.

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. The Council are currently drafting a formal agreement to guarantee the funding of £119,000 from the CCG for the next four years. The CCG have indicated support for this, but if the funding from the CCG is not available, the Council will require additional resources to support the programme. **(Appendix 2)**

It is intended that grant commitments will be protected for a four-year period although the award will be issued on a two-by-two-year basis as per the last grants programme.

The Council has been given an indication that its financial settlement for 2024/25 will be in line with the current settlement and the MTFS refresh incorporates a continuation of the scheme as proposed.

## **7. 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 off the Islington Community Fund including allocating the VCS Partnership Grants Programme.'

The provision of these grants is likely to be associated with state aid. 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 £435,000) 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 £435,000, 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.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

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. These impacts will be considered during the award process and detailed in the VCS Committee report.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1: Timeline fo the VCS Partnerships Grants Programme
- Appendix 2: Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 2020–2024

## Appendix 1

### Timeline for VCS Partnership Grants Programme:

Milestone	Key Dates
Codesign draft principles and framework for 2024-2028 grant prospectus in partnership with internal stakeholders	February – May 2023
Develop draft prospectus for 2024 -2028 programme with Executive Member	May – June 2023
Consult with wider stakeholders on draft programme including Cllrs, Senior leadership, VCS Sector	June 2023
Complete final prospectus	June 2023
Take prospectus through decision making process	June – July 2023
Launch grant programme	24 July 2023
Grant programme closing date	1 October 2023
Visits to new organisations	October 2023
Shortlisting	November 2023
Recommendations to VCS committee	November 2023
Final awards agreed	December 2023
Contracts in place	February – March 2024
Programme starts	1 April 2024

## Appendix 2:

### List of organisations funded through the VCS Partnerships Grant 2021 -24

<b>Independent Advice and Navigation Strand</b>		
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
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
<b>Total: £1,436,000.00</b>		

<b>Community Hubs Strand</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
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
<b>Total: £635,000.00</b>	



<b>Capacity Building Strand</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
Octopus Community Network	£40,000
Voluntary Action Islington	£40,000
<b>Total: £80,000.00</b>	

<b>Volunteering Strand</b>	
<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
Voluntary Action Islington	£35,000
<b>Total: £35,000.00</b>	

<b>Delivery Strand</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
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
<b>Total: £410,000.00</b>	

<b>Equalities and Cohesion Networks Strand</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Funding per annum</b>
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 for a Black Leaders Alliance	£30,000
Disability Action Islington	£30,000
<b>Total: £180,000.00</b>	

### **Total Funding Allocations identified by Strand**

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Total Amount Requested</b>	<b>Total Amount Recommended</b>
<b>Capacity Building</b>	£115,000	£40,000
<b>Community Hubs</b>	£965,696	£635,000
<b>Delivery</b>	£1,241,558	£410,000
<b>Equalities and Cohesion Networks</b>	£210,000	£120,000
<b>Independent Advice &amp; Navigation - Strand 1 - Navigation</b>	£200,000	£180,000
<b>Independent Advice &amp; Navigation - Strand 2 - Community Advice</b>	£116,262	£110,000
<b>Independent Advice &amp; Navigation - Strand 3 - Generalist Advice</b>	£518,415	£466,000

<b>Independent Advice &amp; Navigation - Strand 4 - Specialist Advice</b>	£460,000	£450,000
<b>Independent Advice &amp; Navigation Strand 5 - Targeted Specialist Advice</b>	£250,000	£230,000
<b>Volunteering</b>	£45,000	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,121,931</b>	<b>£2,641,000</b>