Infrastructure support

Context

In addition to these priorities, the council wishes to provide funding to support all voluntary sector organisations to be sustainable in order to make the best use of the VCS’ strengths outlined in Section 2.1 and meet the challenges and opportunities it faces in Section 2.2. We will do this through providing funding to support the infrastructure of the VCS in Ealing.

Budget

The proposed budget for the provision of infrastructure support to the VCS is £0.146m per year for 4 years (2019/20 to 2022/23) subject to annual approval.

Proposed funding priorities

We propose that from the next funding round April 2019 onwards, VCS infrastructure support funding will focus on the following two key priority areas:

- Supporting organisations & communities to better enable social action and volunteering

One of the main reasons for a more distinct focus on social action is its value not only for the voluntary and community sector but also for the individual.

Supporting social action and volunteering enables organisations to be more efficient and also supports residents to develop their resourcefulness and wellbeing as a result. This will

- make a significant contribution to the local economy
- enhance connections between residents, communities, the voluntary sector and other local organisations & employers
- help build a more cohesive, safer, stronger community and increase the social network between communities and neighbourhoods
- promote people to be more active in civic engagement
- have positive effects on people as individuals, increasing self-esteem, enhancing skills and capacities, expanding career paths and improving physical and mental health

We want to enable organisations to support different forms of social action amongst their local residents, service users, staff and neighbourhoods. We also want to support residents and communities to self-organise to take action to improve their local area or tackle an issue. As there are different forms of social action and that people have different motivations & capabilities to participate, we want to ensure that any support is co-designed with communities and residents.

- Improve the capabilities of VCS organisations through capacity building, training, funding advice and having a voice for the sector

We know that having a strong, sustainable voluntary and community sector will play a key contribution in achieving the Future Ealing outcomes and improving the wellbeing of our communities so this funding stream will include

- Providing funding advice, with associated capacity building and development support to local VCS groups
- Supporting communities and VCS organisations to take advantage of digital opportunities to help residents take action and meet their own needs
- Developing the capabilities of the VCS to become more financially sustainable and work with other local organisations to attract investment into our local communities
- Providing safeguarding information, advice and training to the voluntary sector
- Enabling the VCS to have a common voice to democratically represent the sector

The priorities have been identified based on a London Council survey of Third Sector Infrastructure, a review of the funding of Volunteer Centres in London, the results of the Ealing VCS survey and the performance of the organisations currently being grant funded.

The proposal is to deliver these priorities through a number of separate grants with the focus being on organisations which are able to provide specialist expertise in specific areas.

**Main changes from 2015/19 funding arrangements**

Because of its value both for the VCS as a whole and for the individual, support for volunteering and social action is proposed to be a separate grant. In 2015/19 this was combined with the grant for training, funding advice and capacity building.

Children’s safeguarding support service was funded as a separate project in 2015-19 but it is proposed to link this with funding for wider voluntary sector capacity building and training.

Support for activities which will increase community participation will be available through a small grants fund (detailed below). These types of activities are currently provided as part of the area-based grant.

The proposal would see the deletion of the area based grant as there is duplication with the general infrastructure grant. Currently both the area-based grant and VCS capacity building and development grant include the requirement to provide funding advice. Also there will be an overlap going forwards in terms of the focus on volunteering and social action which will be catered for as part of the volunteer support funding stream. The small grants fund will provide funding for neighbourhood based activities, some of which were formally supported through the area based grant.

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1 Such as crowdfunding, asset transfer and other forms of social investment