

## **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.

In order to best meet the needs of the borough, we would like to hear ideas on how to focus on supporting voluntary and community groups in developing stronger organisational infrastructure, better coordination with their partners and in effective fundraising, rather than trying to directly fund everything that is needed in the borough.

### **Budget**

The proposed budget for the provision of infrastructure support to the VCS is £0.146m per year for 4 years (2023/24 to 2026/27) subject to annual approval.

### **Proposed funding priorities**

The proposal is for VCS infrastructure support funding to focus on the following priority areas:

- a) Improving the capabilities of VCS organisations through capacity building, training, funding advice and having a voice for the sector.
- b) Supporting organisations & communities to better enable social action and volunteering
- c) Enabling the VCS to have a common voice to democratically represent the sector.

We know that having a strong, sustainable voluntary and community sector will play a key contribution in achieving the council's priorities 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
- Working to increase the number, diversity and impact of volunteering & social impact across the borough
- Helping to improve the ability of local organisations to access and make the best use of volunteering to improve their impact
- Improving collaboration between organisations to develop a culture of giving across the borough

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

In addition to these priority areas, it is proposed that the council retain a small budget in order that it has the necessary funding to commission specific consultation and research projects with the sector as new priorities and issues emerge throughout the funding period.

## **Main changes from 2019/23 funding arrangements**

The core activities remain the same as in 2019-23 programme with a similar budget allocation. It is however proposed to review the delivery of infrastructure support as part of the consultation to determine the most efficient and effective way of funding this area. Research indicates that having a grant for the voice of the sector separate to the capacity building grant is not the model that other local authorities have adopted as it can lead to confusion in the sector and a degree of duplication. We will therefore be inviting feedback from the sector on its needs and whether there is value in retaining our current arrangements or whether alternative arrangements could better meet the needs of the sector. The 2019-23 capacity building grant included a detailed requirement for safeguarding support to voluntary, community and independent groups who work with and support children and their families aged 0 to 18, supporting the provision of safe services and safe employment practices, by providing advice, information and guidance. Although safeguarding support will be included in the criteria for the capacity building and group development grant for the 2023-27 programme, it is proposed to review this requirement as some of the activities are already provided as part of the council's statutory function.

The inclusion of a budget to allow the council to commission research and consultation from the sector is seen as an important addition as currently there is no available budget to respond to any new and emerging issues that may arise during the 4-year funding programme.