

Grants Determination Sub-Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
26 April 2023	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
Local Community Fund (LCF) Performance Report - October 2022 – December 2022	

Lead Member	Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities Mark Waterman, Senior VCS Development Officer
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	N/A
Reason for Key Decision	N/A
Community Plan Theme	All

Executive Summary

The performance report for the Local Community Fund programme for the voluntary and community sector covers the period October 2022 to December 2022 and reports on the five themes of the LCF and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding. The Project Summary (Appendix 2) gives an update by each project.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund (LCF) programme as set out in 3.2 to 3.7 and Appendix 2 for October 2022 – December 2022
2. Note the performance of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project as set out in 3.9.
3. Note the current Red RAG rating for Real DPO's two LCF projects due to premises issues, as outlined in paragraph 3.2 (b).

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Grants Determination Sub Committee Terms of Reference sets out the need to provide performance report to the Committee.
- 1.2 Regular performance updates ensure that the LCF themes and individual projects are on track to achieve the targeted outcomes. Any issues that arise can be addressed and appropriate remedial actions agreed. Where necessary, this could include the reduction, withdrawal or reallocation of funds to ensure that the overall Programme is making the most effective use of resources and maximising the potential achievement of agreed aims and objectives.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Information relating to various aspects of project and monitoring activity is contained within the report to provide Grants Determination Sub-Committee (GDSC) with an overall understanding of how projects and organisations have performed against the key elements of their Funding Agreements.
- 2.2 GDSC could request further information or alter the recommendations.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Background

The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. This programme is called the Local Community Fund (LCF) with 50 projects awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes:

- Inclusion Health and Wellbeing
- Digital Inclusion and Awareness
- Information Advice and Guidance
- Employment and Skills
- Community Safety.

At GDSC meeting on 9th March 2022 it was agreed that the above LCF projects would be extended until September 2023 to ensure that council-funded VCS services are in operation whilst the council develops new funding options for the VCS to commence in October 2023. The cost of this extension amounts to £1,329,616. The delivery of the LCF Programme has been supported by the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme. At GDSC meeting on 3rd July 2019 it was agreed that funding of £780,000 from this programme would be allocated between October 2019 to September 2022 to Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) to deliver infrastructure support for local VCS organisations and support the VCS in strategic partnership working. It was agreed at GDSC meeting on 25th January 2023 that funding for THCVS to deliver this programme would be extended from October 2022 to September 2023, on the basis of a £260,000 grant.

3.2 Overview of October-December 2022

- (a) LCF providers are responding to the cost of living crisis' impact on its beneficiaries. Funded organisations provided a range of responses:
- provision of advice on welfare benefits, money and fuel
 - donations of food, clothes, toys and essentials to families
 - liaison with food banks and other food providers to support food donations to older beneficiaries
 - establishing links between projects and warm spaces initiatives
 - presentations on the cost of living crisis
 - linking residents to web links offering advice in the crisis.
- (b) LCF projects are assigned a Red, Amber or Green rating (RAG rating) when reporting to the GDSC on project performance - please see Appendix 1 for more details. Of the 49 remaining LCF projects all were classed as Green for the October 2022-December 2022 quarter, as was Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service's (THCVS) Infrastructure & Capacity Building Project, enabling all project payments to be made for that quarter. Two LCF projects, managed by Real DPO, are now classified as Red, post-October to December 2022 quarter, due to premises issues – the NOW and THEN project and Taking Control of Your Life project. A satisfactory agreement is not yet in place between the council and Real DPO for its premises at Jack Dash House on the Isle of Dogs. The council is liaising with Real DPO to reach a satisfactory agreement.

3.3 Theme 1 Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing (27 projects)

- (a) **Scheme A Children, Young People and Families (Eight projects)**
This theme is focused on developing the confidence and life opportunities of young people. Significant areas of progress included:
- Canaan Project's Isle of Dogs project provided a range of activities to 125 young girls aged 11-19, across 70 sessions, in the Isle of Dogs, to develop their confidence.
 - 172 of the 192 beneficiaries (including 58 disabled young people) of Half Moon Young People's Theatre's Professional Theatre and Inclusive Participatory Drama for Young People project were involved in drama performances at the end of term.
 - The Yard Theatre's Black Excellence at Night-time initiative worked with the Theatre's Tower Hamlets Teens LCF project to design a new drama-based creative project for young people to develop a drama company. The aim is to launch this company in 2023.
- (b) **Scheme B – Older People (Seven projects)**
Theme focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of older residents and the quality of the care services they receive. Achievements included:
- 145 volunteers in Age UK East London's Friend at Home project continued to provide companionship and support to individual isolated, housebound older people in the borough.

- 20 people from the borough's LGBT community, who are disabled and/or have mental health support needs, reported better life satisfaction and better quality of life three months after starting the project.
- 40 beneficiaries of St Hilda's East Community Centre's Older People's 'Feeling Good!' Wellbeing Project attended Black History month events in October 2022.

(c) Scheme C – Access, Information and Self-Management (Two projects)

Projects enable older and physically disabled residents to be better informed and equipped to manage health and social care conditions. Examples of successful project activity included:

- 17 beneficiaries of Globe Community Project's Take Back Your Life project reported a decrease in levels of pain catastrophising after participation in five week mindfulness-based pain management course.
- 90% of the beneficiaries of Real DPO's Taking Control of Your Life project, who are disabled people, reported that they felt more independent, with a better quality of life.

(d) Scheme D – Healthy Living and Healthy Choices (Six projects)

Projects are concerned with making residents better informed, to enable them to make healthier choices, and increasing engagement in physical activity. Success has included:

- London Tigers' Exercise for Health (BAME Women, Children and Young People) organised multi-sport and physical activities during the October 2022 half-term holiday.
- Newark Youth London's Healthy-Active-Together project supported 226 children, young people and adults with a range of sports and physical activities.
- The Bangladesh Youth Movement's Live Healthy Enjoy Life project increased awareness of health issues for 42 women from Bangladeshi and other Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic communities.

(e) Scheme E – Improved Inclusion, Health and Well-being Outcomes for Disabled People and People Experiencing Mental Health Issues (Four projects)

Theme is focused on improving health and care outcomes for disabled people and people experiencing mental health issues. Achievements included:

- DeafPlus' Improving Health and Wellbeing for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Tower Hamlets project delivered 11 activities to address health inequalities and social isolation for its beneficiaries.
- Working Well Trust's Upskill project delivered one-to-one support to 92 borough residents with mental health support needs.

3.4 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness

(a) Scheme A: ICT Skills and Digital Careers (Three projects)

- Limehouse Project's DigITIES project's co production partnership with Royal Foundation of St Katharines facilitated a new Thursday morning

Tea and Coffee sessions, to provide a warm space bank, befriending and social activities to support project beneficiaries.

- Wapping Bangladesh Association's Digital First project enabled 11 older adults to develop a better understanding and appreciation of learning how to use computers and the internet.

(b) Scheme B: Online Safety (Two projects)

- SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets E-Safety Champions project linked digitally excluded residents to IT resources to address the cost of living crisis.
- Sporting Foundation's Building Digital Resilience project enabled 18 parents and young people to be more confident in understanding the relationship between social media and on-line grooming.

3.5 Theme 3 Advice and Information (Two projects)

(a) End Citizens Advice Bureaux-led Advice Tower Hamlets Consortium:

- assisted 5,086 clients with social welfare advice
- supported 1,283 beneficiaries to increase or maximise their income.
- enabled £4,747,723 of beneficiaries' income to be increased or backdated
- secured £1,087,987 in reduction or write off of personal debt for beneficiaries.

(b) Island Advice Centre's Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project delivered 12 Advice Workshops on benefits issues to 187 people working in the borough's advice sector on a range of issues.

3.6 Theme 4 Employment and Skills

(a) Areas of significant project achievement in delivering training and employment support listed against each scheme below:

(b) Scheme 4A: Developing and embedding good practice in the workplace for people with disabilities, learning difficulties and physical and mental health barriers to work (One project)

Real DPO's Then and Now project delivered its highest quarterly level of 73 hours of advice work to seven employers in Tower Hamlets on how to be better employers of disabled people.

(c) Scheme 4B: Reducing barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups (Four projects)

- SocietyLinks' Tower Hamlet's Job Club enabled 15 beneficiaries to access employment and provided employment support to 29 people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) and from workless households.
- Stifford Centre Limited's BAME Women's Employment Support Programme delivered to its beneficiaries ESOL classes, Health & Social Care and Teaching Assistant training, digital upskilling sessions and business start-up training.

(d) Scheme 4C: Support focused on increasing access to art and cultural industries (Four projects)

- Auto Italia South East's Learning Live! project delivered creative technology workshops to 36 young people from working class backgrounds from Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic communities.
- Six trainees on Four Corners Ltd's ZOOM Film School successfully completed their training in a camera, production and editing programme accredited by the Open College Network and one secured paid employment.

3.7 Theme 5 Community Safety

(a) Areas of significant project progress in delivering community safety outlined below against each scheme.

(b) Scheme A- Reduction in the exploitation of children, young people and other vulnerable groups (Three projects)

- Osmani Trust's Schools and Community Resilience Programme continued to work with 29 young people identified as at risk of exclusion and violence through school sessions, youthwork, plus mentoring support for 32 young people.
- Two of the Young Influencers on Streets of Growth's Resilient Young Leaders Programme won the category for the council's Youth Awards.

(c) Scheme B - Improving the perception of young people in the community (Two projects)

- Eight beneficiaries on Four Corners Ltd's Into Focus Photography project worked together and co-designed a range of photographic activities.
- Leaders in Community's Mind the Gap project hosted a Christmas event, which was planned by its young leaders and elderly community members, with over 100 attendees.

(d) Scheme C - Services for people affected by domestic violence or other unsafe circumstances (One project)

Hestia Housing and Support's Families Safe and Secure in Tower Hamlets project promoted awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault amongst children and families and also delivered four community sessions.

3.8 Premises update

There are several LCF funded organisations that are based in Council-owned buildings. It is a condition of funding that LCF organisations occupying Council owned premises have an appropriate property agreement in place. No payments to LCF projects for October 2022-December 2022 are currently outstanding due to premises issues. As outlined in paragraph 3.2 (b) above, payments are currently suspended for Real DPO's two LCF projects, post-October to December 2022 quarter, due to the absence of an agreement between this organisation and the council for its premises at Jack Dash House.

3.9 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS) is the lead organisation in a partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) to deliver an Infrastructure and Capacity Building project, focusing on increasing the range and number of VCS organisations in the borough that are well-run, resilient and sustainable and strengthening the VCS as a key public sector strategic delivery partner in Tower Hamlets. Its main achievements in October-December 2022 included:

- supporting 59 VCS organisations, with 72% positive of these organisations providing positive feedback on this support.
- assisting the council to hold two engagement events in December 2022 with the VCS on the Mayor's Community Grants Programme that is scheduled to commence in October 2023.
- delivering training to 12 volunteer managers on a *Volunteers and the Law* course and a peer learning session, *Volunteers with Mental Health Issues*.
- advertising 33 volunteering roles for 21 VCS organisations on the Volunteer Hub and registering 173 volunteers on the Hub.

3.10 A summary of the progress of individual LCF programme projects and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project is outlined in **Appendix 2 LCF Project Summary October 2022 – December 2022**.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The programme continues to deliver against the themes developed to address identified equalities needs, successfully supporting people from a range of protected characteristic groups, both through projects specifically addressing the needs of these groups and projects with a generic beneficiary focus.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.

5.2 There are no other specific statutory implications relevant to consideration of this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report. Appendix 2 details the projects and programmes allocated within the overall grant budget of £11.67M.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The terms of reference of the Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee require regular reporting where grants have been given based upon a general delegation. This report complies with that requirement.
- 7.2 The Council is required to ensure it achieves statutory Best Value in the delivery of its functions. Grants form part of that statutory framework and the monitoring of the use of the grant and achieved outcomes assists in compliance with the Best Value duty.
- 7.3 The Council was obliged by a previous Best Value review to ensure that use of Council buildings was subject to an appropriate property use agreement. Therefore, entering into such an agreement was made a mandatory part of the relevant grant agreements. It is therefore lawful for the Council to withhold payment until such time as the lease is concluded in accordance with the grant terms.
-

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Local Community Fund Programme Management Arrangements
- Appendix 2 – LCF Project Summary October 2022 – December 2022

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A