

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 2021 – September 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

This performance report provides the Committee with an update on the council-funded Local Community Fund (LCF) programme for the voluntary and community sector for the period October 2021 to September 2022, including an overview of activities and performance for the five themes of the programme, and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project. The Project Summary (Appendix 3) gives an update by each project. The Annual Report (Appendix 4) gives a programme overview with highlights of its impact.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund (LCF) programme for October 2021 – September 2022, as set out in 3.3 to 3.8 and Appendices 3 and 4.
2. Note the performance of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project as set out in 3.10.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Grants Determination Sub Committee (GDSC) Terms of Reference sets out the need to provide performance reporting 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.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Background

In July 2019 the Council agreed 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 Appendix 4 Annual Report presents a programme report, highlighting the work done by programme Theme, including case studies. The Report also includes equalities and geographical breakdowns of programme beneficiaries, using the aggregated information from the individual project reports.

3.3 Overview of October 2021 – September 2022

- (a)** In the October 2021-September 2022 funding year LCF providers had to respond to the cost of living crisis, which led to increased demands on their services, particularly for those focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion. VCS organisations found it more difficult to retain staff due to challenges or inability to offer wage increases in line with inflation. There was also the challenge of responding to increased demand for physically-based services.
- (b)** LCF providers demonstrated significant resilience in responding to the above demands. Projects continued to be successfully delivered although one project had to suspend its services permanently following an organisation's review of its services: please see 3.3 (d).
- (c)** 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 in relation to the October 2021-September 2022 funding year, as was Infrastructure & Capacity Building Project, enabling all project payments to be made for that year. Two LCF projects are currently classified as Red, from the January-March 2023 quarter, due to premises issues – please see report of LCF programme in the October-December 2022 quarter.
- (d)** As previously reported to GDSC, one project's services were permanently suspended during the October 2021-September 2022 funding year - St Hilda's East Community Centre's Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project in January 2022, following a review of the organisation's services. St Hilda's ensured that project beneficiaries, with their co-operation and that of their parents, were satisfactorily transitioned to other appropriate services to receive required support. The Council has not made any LCF project payments to St Hilda's for the above project for any activity post-December 2021.

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

(a) Scheme A Children, Young People and Families (Eight projects)

Projects in this scheme are focused on developing the confidence and life opportunities of young people. Significant areas of progress in past year included:

- Canaan Project's Isle of Dogs project, which offers a range of activities to young girls aged 11-19 in the Isle of Dogs, set up a new after school club at Canary Wharf youth hub.
- 86% of the 192 beneficiaries of Half Moon Young People's Theatre's Professional Theatre and Inclusive Participatory Drama for Young People project reported at the end of year that they were feeling definitely confident about being in youth theatre.
- Newark Youth London's Girls in Action project supported 25 girls and young women to deliver social action projects for others, enabling them to increase their leadership skills and establish their own initiatives.

(b) Scheme B – Older People (Seven projects)

Projects are concerned with improving the health and wellbeing of older residents. Notable areas of success have included:

- 94% of the isolated, housebound older people supported by Age UK East London's Friend at Home project reported an increase or stabilisation of their well-being via the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.
- the Lunch and Social Club provided by Community of Refugees from Vietnam – East London supported 60 people aged 50+ from the Vietnamese and Chinese community in Tower Hamlets through lunches, delivery service, and a range of social activities.
- 105 beneficiaries of St Hilda's East Community Centre's Older People's 'Feeling Good!' Wellbeing Project reported to be feeling less socially isolated and lonely.

(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. Progress has included:

- Globe Community Project's Take Back Your Life project provided a mindfulness-based pain management programme to 69 people that addressed chronic pain/illness and related social isolation and inactivity.
- Real DPO's Taking Control of Your Life project supported 47% of its 69 disabled beneficiaries to maximise their income through accessing benefits, grants and support to access services, for which there would usually be a charge.

(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. Successes have included:

- London Tigers' Exercise for Health (BAME Women, Children and Young People) engaged 193 children and 182 women in a series of sports, physical activities and health-related workshops.

- Stifford Centre-led consortium's Healthy Lifestyle Partnership Programme delivered a free health club to 444 people, with 92% of members reporting that participation in club activities had led to improvements in their health.
- The Bangladesh Youth Movement's Live Healthy Enjoy Life project increased awareness of health issues for 130 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)

Projects are focused on improving health outcomes for disabled people and ensuring that people experiencing mental health issues are better supported. Areas of success have included:

- deafPlus' Improving Health and Wellbeing for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Tower Hamlets project supported improvements in health and well-being of 40 deaf and hard of hearing adults through a range of events and well-being sessions.
- Woman's Trust's Therapeutic Support Groups for Women Affected by Domestic Abuse project's support for its beneficiaries resulted in 86% of them reporting that their stress and anxiety levels had either improved or not worsened, whilst 72% reported improved self-esteem.
- Working Well Trust's Upskill project supported 125 beneficiaries with lived experience of mental health to access well-being and training opportunities.

3.5 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness

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

Theme's projects provide digital ICT skills and knowledge to residents:

- Limehouse Project's DigITIES project enabled 192 older people to learn to use three ICT platforms.
- Newham New Deal Partnership's @online club Network Tower Hamlets project supported 17 older residents to do more activities on-line.
- Wapping Bangladesh Association's Digital First project enabled eight 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)

Projects focus on children and young people's online safety. Progress has included:

- SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets E-Safety Champions project trained local women to be champions for e-safety in the community to enable 45 local residents to be more knowledgeable about the potential dangers of on-line activities, including abuse of social media and on-line fraud.

- Sporting Foundation's Building Digital Resilience project enabled 215 parents and young people to be more aware of the relationship between social media and on-line grooming and other risks.

3.6 Theme 3 Advice and Information (Two projects)

- (a) There has been an increased demand on the services of East End Citizens Advice Bureaux-led Advice Tower Hamlets Consortium with the cost of living crisis, including demands for fuel and food vouchers. It assisted 21,402 clients with social welfare advice and supported 4,543 beneficiaries to increase or maximise their income. Project secured £22,062,653 for clients through either increase in income or backdated payment and £4,081,597 in reduction or write off of personal debt for beneficiaries.
- (b) Island Advice Centre's Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project delivered 39 Advice Workshops on benefits issues to 508 people working in the borough's advice sector.

3.7 Theme 4 Employment and Skills

- (a) Areas of this theme's projects' success in delivering employment and training support in last year are outlined 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 engaged 50 organisations on a range of activities, including one-to-one advice service and 2-hour shared learning and development workshops.

- (c) **Scheme 4B: Reducing barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups (Four projects)**
- Limehouse Project's Developing Potential project supported 16 women from Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic communities to complete and gain accredited qualifications.
 - SocietyLinks' Tower Hamlet's Job Club enabled 15 beneficiaries to access employment and provided employment support to 127 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 accredited training, including in child care and digital learning to 16 women to enable them to progress towards employment.
- (d) **Scheme 4C: Support focused on increasing access to art and cultural industries (Four projects)**
- Auto Italia South East's Learning Live! project supported 233 young people from socially excluded groups through portfolio review and mentoring workshops to explore creative careers and university courses.

- 13 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.
- The Bromley by Bow Centre's Creative Communities project supported 12 beneficiaries to obtain sustainable paid employment of over 26 weeks in the arts sector and 58 beneficiaries to progress onto art-related training.

3.8 Theme 5 Community Safety

- (a) Project achievements for this theme in promoting community safety in the funding year are outlined below.
- (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 secured improvements in attitude and outlook on life with 93 pupils, with 36 pupils benefitting from mentoring support.
 - 28 young people fully completed Streets of Growth's Resilient Young Leaders Programme, which now has a Young People's leadership network of 79 young people.
- (c) **Scheme B - Improving the perception of young people in the community (Two projects)**
- Four Corners Ltd's Into Focus Photography project supported 43 children, aged between 14-25, and 11 people over 50, to take part in 55 experimental photography workshops.
 - Leaders in Community's Mind the Gap project hosted a quiz event at the Teviot Centre involving young people, who ran the event, and elders, with the young people using their digital skills to support the older people.
- (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 amongst children and families of domestic violence and sexual assault, supporting 31 families within a Tower Hamlets domestic abuse refuge - 31 mothers and 47 children.

3.9 Premises update

- (a) 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 2021-September 2022 are currently outstanding due to premises issues.

3.10 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

- (a) Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS) is the lead organisation in a partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) to

deliver the 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. Achievements in the funding year included:

- supported 119 VCS organisations on 307 interactions, with positive feedback received from 99 organisations (83%)
- secured £1.1 million in external funding to support partnership work between local VCS organisations
- delivered training to 53 volunteer managers (target of 36), with 96% of trainees completing feedback survey reporting positive outcomes
- 82 VCS organisations advertised their volunteering roles through the project's Volunteering Hub (target of 75) with 175 roles advertised
- 664 new volunteer registrations with the Hub (annual target of 500 registrations)
- training and matching borough residents from Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic communities to serve as trustees, matching 17 of them to serve on the boards of 10 local VCS organisations in this role.

3.11 A summary of the progress of individual LCF programme projects and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project is outlined in **Appendix 3 LCF Project Summary October 2021 – September 2022**.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The programme has made good progress in October 2021-September 2022 in supporting protected characteristic groups and residents from different areas of the borough. This progress is outlined in **Appendix 2 LCF Programme Annual Report October 2021-September 2022 - Profile Of Beneficiaries**

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 3 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.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Local Community Fund Programme Management Arrangements
- Appendix 2 LCF Programme Annual Report October 2021-September 2022 - Profile Of Beneficiaries
- Appendix 3 – LCF Project Summary October 2021 – September 2022
- Appendix 4 Annual Report

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A