

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Grants Determination Sub-Committee</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">26 June 2024</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Robin Beattie, Acting Director of Strategy, Improvement &amp; Transformation</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Local Community Fund (LCF) Programme Performance Report July 2023 – October 2023</b></p>	

## Executive Summary

The performance report for the Local Community Fund programme covers the period July 2023 to October 2023 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 July 2023 – October 2023
2. Note the performance of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project as set out in 3.9.

## 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee's (GDSC) 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 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**

- (a)** 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 was 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.
- (b)** At GDSC meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> 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 (subsequently re-scheduled to commence in November 2023). The cost of this extension amounted to £1,325,823.
- (c)** The delivery of the LCF Programme was supported by the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme. At GDSC meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.
- (d)** Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to authorise the Chief Executive to agree to an extension of four weeks for current core Council grant funded VCS services – the Local Community Fund (LCF) and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building programmes - beyond their scheduled end date of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This was agreed to enable these services to remain in operation until the new Mayor's Community Grant Programme started in November 2023. This extension was subsequently confirmed by the

Chief Executive for the whole month of October 2023 at a total cost of £241,304.

### **3.2 Overview of July 2023-October 2023**

- (a) LCF providers made good progress towards delivering their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and project outcomes in their final four months, enabling local residents to fulfil their potential and access required support. These projects delivered successfully against their KPIs and project outcomes across the lifetime of their projects.
- (b) All remaining 49 LCF projects were classed as Green for the July-October 2023 period, as was Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service's (THCVS) Infrastructure & Capacity Building Project, enabling payments to be made for these projects for the above monitoring period.

### **3.3 Theme 1 Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing**

- (a) This theme involved five schemes focusing on promoting wider health and well-being for local residents, including a range of services targeted at specific protected characteristic groups:

- Scheme 1A - Children, Young People and Families (Eight projects)
- Scheme 1B – Older People (Seven projects)
- Scheme 1C – Access, Information and Self-Management (Two projects)
- Scheme 1D – Healthy Living and Healthy Choices (Six projects)
- Scheme 1E – Improved Inclusion, Health and Well-being Outcomes for Disabled People and People Experiencing Mental Health Issues (Four projects)

- (b) Notable project achievements in July-October 2023 period included:

- Newark Youth London's Girls in Action project delivering a social action project in July 2023, providing sports activities for young people.
- 33 older people feeling more included and integrated as a result of participating in a community cohesion project through Age UK East London's project at Caxton Hall, which is led by older people for the whole community.
- Community of Refugees from Vietnam - East London's Vietnamese and Chinese Lunch and Social Club holding 68 social and wellbeing activities at the organisation's centre and online. Activities included healthy eating sessions, Tai Chi exercise, indoor games, plus meditation and yoga classes.
- 15 older adults with dementia visited on a regular basis by a Befriender Advocate who was a Dementia Champion through Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours' Older People's Befriending Project.

- London Tigers' Exercise for health: BAME women, children and young people project organised a local community Sports Day where families, mothers and children participated in sports activities and relay races.

### **3.4 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness**

(a) This theme involved two schemes whose focus included promoting access to IT training and support for older people, digital skills development for children and young people and promoting on-line safety for children and young people.

- Scheme 2A - ICT Skills and Digital Careers (Three projects)
- Scheme 2B - Online Safety (Two projects)

(b) Areas of project progress in July-October 2023 period included:

- Limehouse Project's DigiTIES project, which addresses digital exclusion among older adults, established a partnership with the Royal Foundation, providing a welcoming space for social interaction and befriending, with Thursday morning Tea & Coffee sessions.
- Wapping Bangladesh Association's Digital First project taught 13 older adults computer skills and how to navigate around internet, including how to use smartphones efficiently.
- SocietyLinks Tower Hamlet's E-Safety Champions project trained 15 women to become e-safety champions.

### **3.5 Theme 3 Advice and Information (Two projects)**

(a) This theme had two projects, one providing direct social welfare advice to residents and the other providing capacity building and training for VCS providers and volunteers in this sector.

(b) East End Citizens Advice Bureaux-led Advice Tower Hamlets Consortium's achievements included:

- 6,706 clients assisted with social welfare advice
- 1,604 clients supported to increase/maximise their incomes
- £6,956,115 of clients' income increased/or backdated
- £867,486 debt reduction/write offs, resulting in reduction in amounts of personal debt.

(c) Island Advice Centre's Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project delivered five Advice Workshops on benefits issues to 92 people working in the borough's advice sector on a range of issues.

### **3.6 Theme 4 Employment and Skills**

- (a) This theme involved three schemes focusing on supporting people from socially excluded communities to access skills and employment opportunities:
- 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)
  - 4B - Reducing barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups (Four projects)
  - 4C - Support focused on increasing access to art and cultural industries (Four projects)
- (b) Project achievements in July-October 2023 period included:
- Real DPO's THEN & NOW inclusive employment project provided 95 hours of one-to-one support to eight employers, to support them to be excellent employers of disabled people and achieved 100% satisfaction rate from them.
  - 15 women who attended an accredited course through Limehouse Project's Developing Potential project will complete and gain certifications.
  - 6 young people participating in St Giles Trust's Choices Tower Hamlets project - which supports young people not in education, employment or training - progressed into and completed training and education courses.
  - Auto Italia South East's Learning Live! project delivered Creative Futures session at Tower Hamlets Careers Live at University of East London and the Employability Skills Fair at Idea Store Whitechapel to 204 and 120 school pupils respectively.

### **3.7 Theme 5 Community Safety**

- (a) This theme involved three schemes whose work included promoting community safety for children and young people, bringing young and old people together and supporting victims of domestic violence:
- 5A - Reduction in the exploitation of children, young people and other vulnerable groups (Three projects)
  - 5B - Improving the perception of young people in the community (Two projects)
  - 5C - Services for people affected by domestic violence or other unsafe circumstances (One project).

(b) Significant areas of project progress in July-October 2023 period included:

- Kazzum Arts' Build project, which supported young people excluded from mainstream education, involved artist facilitators working with beneficiary groups to put together an activity book that encompassed the creative activities and approach that was successful with them during the project's in-person workshops.
- Over 280 visitors attended the reception for Four Corners' Into Focus Photography project exhibition on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to celebrate all 103 of the project's participants' achievements.

### 3.8 Premises update

Several organisations that were funded by LCF were based in Council-owned buildings. It was a condition of funding that LCF organisations occupying Council owned premises needed to have an appropriate property agreement in place. There was no agreement between Real DPO, the provider of two LCF projects, and the Council for this provider's premises at Jack Dash House during the July-October 2023 period. However, the Council approved LCF payment to Real DPO for July-October 2023 period as above organisation had been engaging with the Council to secure a satisfactory premises agreement.

### 3.9 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS), in partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH), delivered an Infrastructure and Capacity Building project, focusing on increasing the range and number of VCS organisations in the borough that were well-run, resilient and sustainable and strengthening the VCS as a key public sector strategic delivery partner. Its main achievements in July-October 2023 period included:

- supporting 34 VCS organisations, with a focus on supporting organisations who had been unsuccessful in their applications for Mayor's Community Grant Programme funding
- delivering training to 9 volunteer managers
- advertising volunteering roles on behalf of 44 VCS organisations
- advertising 86 unique volunteering roles on behalf of VCS organisations
- 309 new registrations on the Volunteering Hub by volunteers.

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 July 2023 - October 2023**.

3.11 There are currently 9 projects which we have not received quarterly monitoring returns from due to staffing issues. We will provide this

information in time for the Grants Determination Sub Committee Meeting on the 24th of April 2024.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The programme continued 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.
- 5.2 Best Value Implications: To ensure best value for the Council we require organisations to complete quarterly and annual monitoring returns which report on the progress organisations have made against their Key Performance Indicators as set out in their funding agreements. Officers also conduct annual monitoring visits. This helps to ensure the Council is getting best value on the grants provided. If the Council has concerns about performance, then this is made a priority on the risk register and the group will be provided with additional support to achieve their Key performance Indicators.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 The Council's MTFS includes £4m annual funding for Community grants, including £982k funding from the Public Health grant for services that are eligible for the use of the Public Health grant.
- 6.2 The new Mayor's Community Grant Programme (MCGP) approved by cabinet in March 23 replaces the current Local Community Fund which ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023. The new programme will be funded through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL).
- 6.3 In the financial year 23/24 from April to October a total of £1.6m LCF grant was paid out. Underspends against the grant will be put into a reserve to fund future payments.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

**7.1** The terms of reference for the GDSC require a performance report and updates to be brought back to the GDSC where the grants were made under a delegated authority. This report conforms to this requirement.

**7.2** The report determines that all the projects have a Green status. This means that the following apply to those schemes:

- on track to achieve project objectives
- delivery taken place
- any performance issues were resolved
- satisfactory project management.

This provides good evidence that the projects are delivering in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness and therefore that the schemes are achieving Best Value

**7.3** The Council needs proceed at pace to secure an appropriate property use agreement with Real DPO to ensure that proper recognition is given to the value of the use of a Council owned property to Real DPO as an organisation.

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- NONE

#### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - Local Community Fund Programme Management Arrangements
- Appendix 2 – LCF Project Summary July 2023 – October 2023

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

- NONE

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A