


Non-Executive Report of the: Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee 11 th January 2017	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Graham White	Classification: Unrestricted
Update on Co-Production Pilot Project	

Originating Officer(s)	Emily Fieran-Reed
Wards affected	All wards

Summary

The current Mainstream Grants (MSG) programme for Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience ends at the end of March 2017. Beyond that date, the Council will co-produce and co-commission activity for this theme – this is known as the Co-Production Pilot. This report has three elements:

1. A change to the original timetable of this co-commissioning such that delivery of the commissioned work on cohesion will now commence from 1st September 2017 rather than 1st April 2017.
2. An update on progress of the project to date
3. Details of the support that will be provided to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to enable them to participate in co-production and to tender for commissioned contracts.

Recommendations:

The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the new timetable for the Co- Production Pilot Project
2. Note progress on the project to date
3. Note support which will provided to voluntary and community sector organisations to participate in the co- production process and bid for future funding

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 This report is for information only. No decisions are required.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 Not applicable.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Background

3.1 The Council's Mainstream Grants (MSG) Programme is one of a range of funding sources available to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations within the borough to support their work on community engagement, cohesion and resilience. The Mainstream Grants Programme 2016-18 was restructured initially into 4 Themes but following a consultation event, the programme was structured into 5 themes with the additional theme 5 being Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience. This theme therefore does not have a history of being funded prior to the 2015/18 programme.

3.2 The 2015/18 MSG programme runs from 1 September 2015 to the end of August 2018. Whilst the grants for the other 4 themes were awarded for the full period of the grants programme, theme 5 only runs for a period of 19 months (September 2015 to March 2017). In the original MSG documentation, the Council's intention to continue to undertake activity in the area of cohesion beyond the period of the current grants was made clear.

3.3 In order to bring this work in line with the funding period for the other MSG Themes it is planned to fund further cohesion activity until the end of August 2018. The budget available for Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience activity is £105,000 per annum, which, over the period of the co-production pilot (until the end of August 2018) amounts to £148,750 in total.

3.4 In line with the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy, it has been agreed that the future of Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience activity will be delivered by a process of co-production and co-commissioning. This will act as a pilot, which will build relationships and generate understanding and learning which can be subsequently used to scale up this approach across other Council areas.

Timetable

3.5 A timescale had originally been agreed for this pilot project, which would have seen delivery of the new contracts agreed under this process commencing on 01/04/2017. Due to difficulties in appointing suitable staff to deliver the project, and the need to ensure minimum standards for the quality of the project, the timescale has now slipped; consequently contract delivery will now commence by 01/09/2017. As the timetable allows a generous 3 months for

contract mobilisation prior to delivery, we will be encouraging funded organisations to commence delivery sooner, and therefore delivery could start as early as 1st June 2017. The delivery period will end at the end of August 2018, in accordance with the original timetable.

3.6 The total level of funding available for commissioning (£148,750) will remain the same as for the original timetable, with delivery over a shorter period (12 months rather than 17 months).

3.7 Overall Project Timetable

Task	Duration (working days)	Start	End
Project Management	24 weeks	18/10/2016	31/03/2017
Co-production and capacity building training and workshops	9 weeks	28/11/2016	29/01/2017
Preparation of tender documentation	1 week	30/01/2017	03/02/2017
Procurement and legal processes	2 weeks	04/02/2017	26/02/2017
Tender period	4 weeks	27/02/2017	26/03/2017
Tender evaluation and moderation	3.5 weeks	29/03/2017	09/05/2017
Procurement and legal documentation and processes to check evaluation and award decision	3 days	10/05/2017	30/05/2017
Contract/s Award by end of May		31/05/2017	31/05/2017
Contract Mobilisation	3 months	01/06/2017	31/08/2017
Contract Delivery Starts	1 year	01/09/2017	31/08/2018

Co-Production Pilot Progress to Date

3.8 The following have been achieved to date:

- Project manager appointed
- Contracts issued to New Economics Foundation (NEF) to provide training and facilitation support; and Professor Ted Cantle to provide cohesion training
- Delivery of workshop to Council Officers to explore co production and outcome frameworks
- 2 workshops developed for community and voluntary sector, key council staff and partners on co-production (Jan 11th and 26th)
- Community cohesion training session with Professor Ted Cantle developed (February 8th-morning)
- 2 facilitation sessions to co- produce an outcomes framework, specification and method statement developed (first session February 8th – afternoon).

Support to Voluntary and Community Sector

- 3.9 A fundamental aspect of effective co-production is building and maintaining trust. It is important that the Council acts in ways, which demonstrates to the VCS that they have a good understanding of the circumstances in which they are delivering services to local people. It is also important that the Council creates an environment, which enables future commissioned projects to have the maximum chance of achieving their outcomes as possible, and consequently obtains best value for the monies spent.
- 3.10 The Committee are therefore requested to note that the following opportunities for VCS organisations and the wider Tower Hamlets community have been created as part of this project:
- Co-production training
 - Community cohesion training
 - Participation in co-production session to develop an outcomes framework
 - Session to feed in comments on the draft specification
 - Training on developing consortia and partnerships with other organisations
 - Training on tendering for commissioning opportunities
- 3.11 Participation in these sessions is open to the public and would not place the recipient organisation in any privileged position in the next bidding round.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the timeline and activities in relation to commissioning the 'Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience' Activity which will now commence from September 2017 rather than April 2017.
- 4.2 There is an annual budget of £105k set aside for this service. The 12 month contract which will span both 2017/18 and 2018/19 is estimated to cost £148,750 in total and can be funded through the budget allocations in those respective years.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 This report is providing an update regarding Mainstream Grants and the planned Theme 5 of the programme: Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience.
- 5.2 There is a need to ensure that the Council is, in fact, making a grant. Whilst there is no strict legal definition of grant, a grant is in the nature of a gift and is based in trust law. However, grants are often given for a purpose so it is sometimes unclear whether a grant has been made or the arrangement is a contract for services. A contract for services is not a grant and therefore, an

arrangement which is classified as a contract for services would be outside the remit of the power conferred upon the commissioners to approve.

5.3 In this case, there will be a commissioning process and an award of a contract for service. This is not a grant and therefore no decision is required.

5.4 The report makes reference to the refreshed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy and a key action within which was to consider moving Council grants, where appropriate, to an outcome based commissioned approach. This was reported to the Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting on 14th June 2016. The nature and timing of the Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience activity is such that it provides a vehicle to pilot this co-production approach that the Council has committed to in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy as referred to in the report.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The nature of the co production pilot is a direct contributor to the One Tower Hamlets vision. In particular, the proposed course of action, in co- producing and commissioning future cohesion activities, directly contributes to one of the One Tower Hamlets elements about developing community leadership.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The course of action set out in the report i.e. co-production and commissioning of cohesion activities is designed to secure greater value for money. Through the commissioning process the Council can pay by results and secure robust outcomes as well as specifying more precisely what is being paid for. Evidence shows that the commissioning process which incorporates a needs' assessment, is more likely to produce outcomes and services that better meet the needs of the community

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

8.1 No environmental implications have been identified.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is a risk that some VCS organisations may choose to not participate in the co-production pilot; thereby the whole process will be weakened by their absence.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 It is hoped that by encouraging a wide as possible participation from VCS organisations and community members, a much more in depth understanding of local community cohesion can be developed, and consequently a joint response by the Council and local communities which more closely addresses local issues to improve long term cohesion outcomes.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

None

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A