

Appendix 3 – Proposed Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme Activity In Extension Period (October 2022 to March 2024)

1. Programme Extension

- (a) Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee (GDSC) approved at its meeting on 9th March 2022 the extension of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme from October 2022 to March 2024. The Programme supports a wide range of local VCS organisations and is delivered by a consortium of Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) and Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH).

2. Previous Grant Variations for Infrastructure & Capacity Building Project

- (a) The grant for the above Programme has been subject to a variation in its lifetime, that was subsequently extended, to enable the Project to fund the work of the VCTH Volunteer Hub between October 2020 to September 2022 to recruit volunteers to support VCS organisations to respond to the demands of the pandemic and the recovery process in the borough. This funding involved the reconfiguration of annual VCTH funding of £37,800 to be used on Hub activities.
- (b) The Hub has been a major success, both in supporting the response to the pandemic and the recovery process in the borough. It has secured 3,985 volunteer registrations from March 2020 to July 2022. of its Project

3. Proposed Focus of the Volunteering Hub Going Forward

- (a) The proposed work of the Hub between October 2022 to March 2024 will be on supporting the recovery process in Tower Hamlets, including responding to the cost of living increase, with a new focus on economic and wider social activity. It has already begun refocusing its work through the help of Council contract funding, which concludes in March 2023. Future Project support for the Hub would be primarily concerned with work relating to this new focus.
- (b) Future proposed Hub work for October 2022 to March 2024 would include:
- linking volunteers to education, employment and training. The Hub would send monthly Employment Support and Training Alerts for volunteers seeking employment/training and deliver regular presentations to groups of marginalised residents to raise awareness of volunteering.
 - developing relationships with employment and skills brokerage and support services, such as Jobcentre Plus, WorkPath, VCS-provided services and education services, including Queen Mary University London and New City

College Tower Hamlets, to help it link volunteers to opportunities with these organisations.

- providing assistance to volunteers with CV writing, enabling them to link their volunteering experiences to applications for employment
 - increasing the levels of volunteering by Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic Communities to ensure that the borough's volunteer pool is reflective of its population.
 - supporting the economic recovery in the borough by recruiting volunteers to support foodbanks, food pantries and other essential food services for local residents
 - promoting a healthy borough by recruiting volunteers to provide support on mental and physical health through supporting helplines, wellbeing activities and mentoring services
 - securing volunteers to address loneliness among older and isolated residents by helping to improve their digital skills and providing group, online and face-to-face support for them.
- (c) Project support would also help maintain the Hub website to register local residents wanting to volunteer.

3. Additional Volunteer Hub Activities To Be Delivered Between October 2022 to March 2024

- (a) Between October 2022 to March 2024 additional Volunteer Hub activities supported by the Project would include.
- an increase in the number of VCS organisations supported by the Hub: from 75 to 100 organisations a year
 - an increase in the number of volunteers registered with the Hub from the current target of 500 per annum to:
 - 250 volunteers for October 2022 to March 2023 (pro rata equivalent of 500 volunteers per annum)
 - 660 volunteers per annum between April 2023 to March 2024
 - an increase in the number of VCS organisations receiving best practice support, from 18 organisations over 30 sessions to 24 organisations over

40 sessions 90% of VCS organisations receiving this support will report improvements in their volunteering practices

4. Summary

- (c)** The Volunteering Hub has played a crucial role in the life of Tower Hamlets over the past 2.5 years. Its importance was recognised in Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024 which highlights the need for partnership work to ensure that volunteer engagement is sustained and developed. There is a need to approve the continuation of the above grant variation to fund Hub activity between October 2022 to March 2024 and contribute to the development of the VCS and the recovery process in Tower Hamlets.