

Grants Determination Sub-Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
25 January 2023	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
infrastructure & capacity building grant	

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	
Reason for Key Decision	N/a
Community Plan Theme	All

Executive Summary

The Grants Determination Sub Committee (GDSC) at its meeting on 9th March 2022 agreed to extend the schedule end date of the Infrastructure & Capacity Grant by 18 months, from 30th September 2022 to 31st March 2024. At the GDSC meeting on 9th November 2022 the Mayor requested that the end date be amended to coincide with the end date of all other grant programmes – September 2023 – which would enable the new programme of grants to commence together from October 2023.

This report seeks agreement for the revised programme between October 2022 to September 2023 and proposes a continuation of an existing variation for the Programme during the revised extension period.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the revised extension period for the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme of October 2022 to September 2023.
2. Approve the proposed provision and the continuation of a grant variation for the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project for the new extension

period for this project, from October 2022 to September 2023, as outlined in paragraph 2.3 and Appendix 1.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There is a need to ensure that the timetable for the extension for the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme is consistent with the other main Council funding programmes for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) – the Local Community Fund (LCF) and the Innovation Fund – i.e. all of these programmes are extended to September 2023.
- 1.2 There is a need to agree to the activities that are proposed to be delivered by the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project for its proposed new extension period of October 2022 to September 2023. This should include continued Council support for the activities of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlet's Volunteering Hub to support volunteering within VCS organisations in the borough.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme adheres to its originally approved timetable for its extension – October 2022 to March 2024.
- 2.2 The Infrastructure and Capacity Building project does not provide continued funding for the Volunteering Hub between October 2022 to September 2023 to support volunteering within local VCS organisations. This would result in the removal of Council funding for a centralised volunteering recruitment system for VCS organisations in the borough.

2. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

2.1 Background

- (a) At GDSC meeting on 9th March 2022 it was agreed that the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme would be extended by 18 months, from October 2022 to March 2024. It had been proposed that this extension be approved beyond September 2023 in order to provide continued support to VCS organisations, particularly those who would experience a reduction in funding on commencement of the Council's new funding arrangements for the VCS in October 2023. This was to include providing support to those VCS organisations whose Council funding would conclude with the ending of the LCF programme in September 2023 and their applications for funding under the new arrangements being unsuccessful.

2.2 Revised Timetable for Extension of Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme

(a) At GDSC meeting on 9th November 2022 the Mayor requested that the timetable for the extension of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme end date should be revised from March 2024 to September 2023. The Committee is asked to approve this revised timetable which would:

- Ensure that the extension timetable for the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme is consistent with that of the Council's main funding programmes for the VCS – LCF - and the Innovation Fund;
- Enable the Council to review all VCS grants funding together and ensure new programme is consistent and complementary across the different grants programmes;
- Enable the commencement of a new Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme in October 2023, at the same time as the other proposed Council funded programmes for the VCS.

2.3 Continuation of variation for Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme

(a) The grant for the current Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme, managed by Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service, in partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH), 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. The Hub has been focused on recruiting volunteers to support VCS organisations to respond to the demands of the pandemic and the recovery process in the borough.

(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 4,101 volunteer registrations from March 2020 to October 2022.

(c) The proposed work of the Hub between October 2022 to September 2023, supported by Programme funds of £49,800, would be primarily focused on supporting voluntary and community organisations with volunteer recruitment which will contribute to responding to the cost of living crisis and emphasis on supporting residents gain experience to enable them to secure jobs and skills.

(d) The Volunteer Hub work would also 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
 - Providing support to respond to the costs of living crisis 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.
- (e) Appendix 1 outlines the proposed KPIs for the Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme between October 2022 to September 2023, comparing it with the KPIs that it was initially scheduled to deliver, prior to the variation.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct equalities impact arising from the change in end date of the Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant.
- 4.2 The whole programme has a focus on reducing inequality through support to small VCS organisations from multi- ethnic groups and recruiting more volunteers from different communities. The revised focus of the Volunteering Hub to support residents into employment will support the Council's aims of reducing unemployment amongst particular groups such as women and Black, Asian & Multi Ethnic residents.

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. If report implications were to lead to re-alignment of funding then it would need to be within the agreed grant budget.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council is required to ensure it obtains Best Value in the administration of the various grants referred to in this report. A significant part of demonstrating Best Value is ensuring that the recipient organisations perform in accordance with the original applications and to take action where performance does not meet the required standard. This report shows compliance with this legal duty.

7.2 It is also part of the Council's overall duty to the burgesses of Tower Hamlets that its assets are appropriately safeguarded. It therefore continues to be in the Council's interest to ensure that written agreements are in place for the use of all the Council's buildings by VCS organisations as referred to in this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Activity for Infrastructure and Capacity Building Programme in October 2022 to September 2023

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A