

<p style="text-align: center;">Grants Determination Sub-Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">08 November 2023</p>	
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie, Acting Director of Strategy, Improvement & Transformation</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Local Community Fund (LCF) Performance Report – January 2023 – March 2023</p>	

Executive Summary

The performance report for the Local Community Fund programme covers the period January 2023 to March 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 January 2023 – March 2023
2. Note the performance of the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project as set out in 3.9.
3. Note the current Red RAG rating for Real DPO's two LCF projects due to premises issues, as outlined in paragraph 3.2 (b).

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee (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 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.
- (b)** 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 (now re-scheduled to commence in November 2023). The cost of this extension amounts to £1,329,616.
- (c)** 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.
- (d)** Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 29th 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 30th September 2023. This was agreed to enable these services to remain in operation until the new Mayor's Community Grant Programme starts 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. The Council is expecting its VCS funded projects operating in October 2023 to be delivering on a basis which is proportionate to a standard month of activity for individual projects.

3.2 Overview of January-March 2023

- (a)** LCF providers are making good progress towards delivering their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and project outcomes, enabling local residents to fulfil their potential and access required support. They have supported local residents in need during the cost of living crisis.
- (b)** 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 LCF projects 47 were classed as Green for the January 2023-March 2023 quarter, as was Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service's (THCVS) Infrastructure & Capacity Building Project, enabling payments to be made for these projects for that quarter. Two LCF projects, managed by Real DPO have, post October 2022-December 2022 quarter, been classified as Red due to premises issues – the NOW and THEN project and Taking Control of Your Life projects. A satisfactory agreement is not yet in place between the Council and Real DPO for its premises at Jack Dash House on the Isle of Dogs. The Council is liaising with Real DPO to reach a satisfactory agreement.

3.3 Theme 1 Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing

- (a)** This theme involves 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 January-March 2023 quarter included:
 - Canaan Project - Isle of Dogs project launched a new girl's lunch clubs in St Pauls Way Trust School in partnership with East London Tabernacle

- Newark Youth London's Girls in Action project organised two foodbank days with partners - one on the Isle of dogs and one on Stepney
- Age UK East London's Caxton Hall project enabled 31 older people to feel more included and integrated through participation in a community cohesion project
- Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours' Older People's Befriending Project distributed over 200 gift packs to beneficiaries, many of whom live alone and who spent Christmas without any company
- London Tigers / Exercise for health: BAME Women, Children and Young People project celebrated International Women's Day, where its female beneficiaries were recognised for their efforts to participate in workout classes and other events.

3.4 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness

(a) This theme involves two schemes whose focus includes 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 January-March 2023 included:

- Limehouse Project's DigiTIES project enabled eight older people to make new friends and learn how to use communication platforms, such as Skype and WhatsApp
- 11 older people on Wapping Bangladesh Association's Digital First project developed a better understanding and appreciation of the benefits of learning how to use computers and navigate around the internet
- SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets's E-Safety Champions project trained eight women to become e-champions in the community.

3.5 Theme 3 Advice and Information (Two projects)

(a) This theme has 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) End Citizens Advice Bureaux-led Advice Tower Hamlets Consortium:

- assisted 5,351 clients with social welfare advice
- supported 1,514 beneficiaries to increase or maximise their income.

- enabled £4,543,298 of beneficiaries' income to be increased or backdated
 - secured £1,190,861 in reduction or write off of personal debt for beneficiaries.
- (c) Island Advice Centre's Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project delivered 11 Advice Workshops on benefits issues to 174 people working in the borough's advice sector on a range of issues.

3.6 Theme 4 Employment and Skills

- (a) This theme involves 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 January-March 2023 included:
- Real DPO's Then and Now project delivered its highest quarter total of one-to-one support for employers (118 hours) to enable them to be more confident and competent in employing disabled people
 - five beneficiaries of SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets's Job Club obtained Level 2 qualifications
 - 14 socially and economically disenfranchised beneficiaries on Stifford Centre's BAME Women's Employment Support Programme completed ESOL training and felt able to communicate in English
 - seven trainees on Magic Me's Artworks project - which supports residents from black, Asian and multi-ethnic communities and working class backgrounds to gain knowledge, skills and confidence to access careers in the arts – were recruited or selected for relevant work placements
 - six beneficiaries on Four Corners Ltd's ZOOM Film School successfully completed their accredited training programme.

3.7 Theme 5 Community Safety

- (a) This theme involves three schemes whose work includes 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 January-March 2023 included:
- 100% of the 26 young people who received education and support from Osmani Trust's Schools and Community Resilience Programme showed an improvement in attitudes and outlook on life
 - six of the young leaders on Streets of Growth's Young Influencers Programme planned and led on a leadership scholarship exchange trip to Belfast and the development of a young people led film to explore the issues and consequences of exploitation and harm
 - young people on the Leaders in Community's Project Connect responding to older beneficiaries' concerns about local littering by cleaning up the local area and improving the local environment
 - Hestia Housing and Support's Families Safe and Secure in Tower Hamlets project delivering 11 community awareness events, attended by 184 adults and 26 children, on Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment.

3.8 Premises update

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. As outlined in paragraph 3.2 (b) above, payments are currently suspended for Real DPO's two LCF projects, post-October to December 2022 quarter, due to the absence of an agreement between this organisation and the Council for its premises at Jack Dash House.

3.9 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS), in partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH), delivers an 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. Its main achievements in January-March 2023 included:

- supporting 43 VCS organisations, with 88% of these organisations providing positive feedback on this support.
- delivering training to 26 volunteer managers, courses covering volunteer management and recruitment
- advertising volunteering roles on behalf of 49 VCS organisations
- advertising 83 unique volunteering roles on behalf of VCS organisations

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 January 2023 – March 2023**.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The programme continues 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. 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 2 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.
- 7.3** The Council was obliged by a previous Best Value review to ensure that use of Council buildings was subject to an appropriate property use agreement. Therefore, entering into such an agreement was made a mandatory part of the relevant grant agreements. It is therefore lawful for the Council to withhold payment until such time as the lease is concluded in accordance with the grant terms.
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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 January 2023 – March 2023

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A