

Title of Report	Hackney a Place for Everyone – Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme 2024/25		
Key Decision No	CED S294		
For Consideration By	Cabinet		
Meeting Date	22 January 2024		
Cabinet Member	Cllr Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture		
Classification	Open		
Ward(s) Affected	All wards		
Key Decision & Reason	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">Yes</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards
Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards		
Implementation Date if Not Called In	31 January 2024		
Group Director	Dawn Carter-Mcdonald, Interim Chief Executive		

1. Cabinet Member's introduction

- 1.1. I am very pleased to be introducing this report that sets out how we intend to invest in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in 2024/25 and our plans to continue to reflect and learn from the past few years.
- 1.2. Despite the unprecedented budget pressures that the Council is now facing in 2024/25 we will again invest a total of just under £2.5m in the VCS through the Council's dedicated VCS Grants Programme. To maximise the impact of investment from the VCS Grants Programme £120,000 of Public Health funding will complement the advice system grants, providing services in GP surgeries and health settings. Additionally, £200,000 of the previously commissioned Children and Young People's activity based grants will continue to be available as well as the project based grants from the VCS Grants Programme, along with £280,000 (over 2 years from 2023/24) from Public Health for a Physical Activity grants scheme.

- 1.3. Work on reviewing how we invest in the VCS has continued. Building on our learning from the pandemic we introduced Community Infrastructure Grants in the 2022/23 programme. These recognise the unique strengths of the VCS to work in partnership with each other and statutory agencies to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The grants have enabled organisations to continue to work holistically with residents and to enable new ways of working with the Council, collaborating with them to learn how we can better support residents who are furthest from our services and/or with complex needs.
- 1.4. Significantly, our officers are learning about the importance of trust and how to fully collaborate and co-produce with VCS partners. Working relationally is leading to increased levels of good will, and reciprocal trust enabling better outcomes for residents, which is proving critical to the Council's response to the Cost of Living Crisis (CoLC) as we continue the focus on those residents experiencing the material impacts of poverty.
- 1.5. This activity and what we know about how we need to shape public services continues to inform our approach to the review of the grants programme and wider work on transforming Council services. As a Council we need to continue and extend the collaboration we have undertaken with the sector during the pandemic to ensure that we carry on learning and adapting with them to meet the needs of residents now and in the future. We are developing new approaches and ways of working together as a system that transform the experience of support for our residents and build upon the assets and strengths within communities.
- 1.6. Although we have protected the grants programme from any reductions throughout the last 13 years of austerity we know that the local VCS has experienced greater competition for resources available from other funders. As a Council we are having to find significant savings over the next three years despite having made over £150m savings over the last 13 years. It is probable that the grant programme may have to contribute to those savings, but we will always work with colleagues in the Voluntary and Community sector to ensure that all our grants contribute to a system that provides support to those in our communities who most need it. Paragraph 4.1.6 of this report sets out how we will undertake this ongoing review work
- 1.7. We know that the cost of living crisis is putting further pressures on the resources and finances of our Voluntary and Community Sector partners. In view of this last year we added a 10% uplift to the grants to our Specialist Grant organisations that provide second tier infrastructure support and animate our heritage and amenity sites. This uplift was also applied to existing and new Community Infrastructure organisations. In addition to this, in October 2022 Cabinet gave officers authority to assess organisations at risk of closure against a set of agreed principles that could lead to some limited financial intervention from the grants programme budget. We are continuing to set aside funding from the programme in 2024/25 to continue to manage this risk.

- 1.8. In 2022/23 we increased the proportion of funding from the Grants Programme that we invest in the advice system in Hackney to over £1m of the £2.5m of available budget, in recognition of the demand now being placed on our partners. Last year we also concluded an open application process for funding of the advice system for three years from 2023/24. This has ensured that we continue to invest in a system that responds to the needs of the communities in Hackney and which will build on the person-centred and collaborative work of the Community Partnerships Network.

2. Group Director's introduction

- 2.1 This Council has a strong financial track record but over 13 years of austerity and the cost of keeping people safe during the pandemic much of which fell to the Council, has taken their toll on public services. More and more people are turning to councils for support, with less and less money available to help them, especially now that we are in a cost of living crisis.
- 2.2 Despite this the Council has again protected the budget for the Voluntary and Community Sector grants programme. However our Council grants are only one of the ways in which the Council continues to provide financial support. The annual subsidy to voluntary sector organisations occupying Council buildings is estimated to be £400,000 based on the difference between market rent and rent payable. This does not include some buildings where long term plans are being established, playgrounds and several short term VCS lettings. A total of £507,941.80 discretionary rate relief was awarded in respect of 2022/23 with the Council contributing 48% of the rate relief under the rules of the London Business Rates pool. This is in addition to significant levels of commissioning of the VCS to deliver services all of which add up to approximately £20m of investment.
- 2.3 The sector is itself currently operating in a highly constrained financial environment which is likely to become more difficult as a result of CoLC. However in light of the financial challenges outlined all areas of the Council's budgets remain under review. The grants programme continues to enable activities and services defined and designed by the VCS, in line with borough priorities and which complement our own statutory service delivery.
- 2.4 This report includes proposals that continue to align the Council's grant programme to support the response to the CoLC whilst extending the funding stream for organisations that are part of the local community infrastructure, to apply for core funding. This enables organisations to continue to develop community support and social networks which are proving so important to residents during the CoLC but also contribute to the development of 'healthy systems' which is seen as increasingly important to the transformation of public services. The grant review is now running alongside work that is looking at how as a whole Council we should invest in the sector in the future

to support the transformation of public services so that as a system of support we are able to continue to meet demand for services, despite the budget pressures we face.

- 2.5 We are committed to working across the system to explore how prevention, early help, community wellbeing and resilience are built into the procurement and grant funded activity delivered by the VCS, the efficacy of the current approaches, and how investment could be more effectively deployed with the VCS towards strength based approaches and tackling the system failures that drive escalation into our services. We know that we need to undertake preventative work that builds our communities and protects residents, and the review is helping us to identify the role of the grants programme within the wider reprioritisation of investment that is needed.
- 2.6 We intend to continue funding project based activity recognising the value that these grants add, often reaching communities furthest from our services and complementing Council and commissioned activity. However in order to align these more fully to the CoLC there has been a greater emphasis on funding organisations whose beneficiaries are particularly impacted by the CoLC, ensuring that funding is reaching those organisations that work with residents experiencing the material impacts of poverty.
- 2.7 Changes in the way that we work with and fund Advice Services were developed over three years and new grants were allocated in 2019 following an open process. An interim review was undertaken in 2021, requiring advice partners to complete a self-evaluation to understand how advice partners were progressing to achieving the objectives of the advice framework.
- 2.8 Understanding the pressures advice partners were experiencing to meet increasing demands for support as a result of the pandemic, the Council decided to increase the proportion of the grants budget dedicated to funding social welfare advice grants to over £1m. In July 2022 the Council's Cabinet agreed to open applications for a new round of three year advice grants. These new grants commenced in April 2023 with funding from the grant programme remaining at its current level of just over £1M with an additional £120,000 from Public Health to reflect the demand that has remained since the pandemic as well as that created by the CoLC. The partnership amongst advice services is progressing well as are the relationships with Council Officers and the wider Community Partnership Network.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to :-

- 3.1 Agree the timetable for the Hackney Voluntary and Community Sector Open Grants Programme for 2024/25**

- 3.2 Agree that the following funding streams can be launched through the programme:**
- **Project Grants for up to £20,000 for one or two years from April 2024.**
 - **Community Chest grants for up to £1,000 for one year for short term projects or one-off activities from April 2024 (with four grant rounds spread throughout the year)**
 - **Children and Young people activity based grants of up to £20,000 over one year totalling £225,000 from April 2024.**
- 3.3 Agree the second year of funding of advice grants as set out in Appendix one, totalling £922,500.**
- 3.4 Note that £77,826 remains set aside to meet some of the identified gaps in provision and provide additional capacity to the advice system.**
- 3.5 Agree one year funding for Specialist grants totalling £719,066 as set out in Appendix One.**
- 3.6 Agree in regards to Community Infrastructure grants to award a third year of funding (of a total of three) for 20 Community Infrastructure organisations at £19,800 each per annum and a second year of funding (of a total of two) for four community infrastructure organisations at £19,800 each.**
- 3.7 Note the carry over of £25,000 development funding for Community Infrastructure that can be deployed to support development and capacity building to enable gaps in geography or community to be addressed.**
- 3.8 To continue to set aside £200,000 of the grant programme budget provision for financial intervention for organisations at risk of closure and delegate authority to approve grants to the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, adult social care, voluntary sector and leisure.**
- 3.9 Agree to use £65,000 of the grant program reserves to increase organisational capacity in order to undertake a council wide review of our investment in the VCS**
- 3.10 Agree to contribute to the London borough's grant scheme administered by London Councils 2024/25 and note that the contribution will be in the region of £208,093**
- 3.11 To delegate authority to approve the Project Grants 2024/25 including Community Chest, Physical Activity and Children and Young People's Grants, as well as the deployment of resources to address and/or meet any gaps and capacity in Advice Services or Community Infrastructure**

grants, to the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, adult social care, voluntary sector and leisure, and the Portfolio Holder for education, young people and children’s social care

4. Reason(s) for decision

4.1. Cabinet is asked to agree the funding criteria, timetable and details of the Hackney Voluntary and Community Sector Grants programme for 2024/25 as a key decision of the Council as it affects two or more wards and is related to Council spend. The indicative timetable is set out below:

Timetable

	Project Grants*
Applications open	February 2024
Applications close	March 2024
Delegated authority decisions	May 2024
Recommendations to Cabinet	N/A

*Please note that 3 further rounds of Community Chest grants will take place later in the year.

VCS Grants Programme for 2024/25 including Public Health and Children and Young people grants

Grant Programme	Core Budget	Other funding*	Total
Project Grants (including general, Community Chest, Children and Young People* and Physical Activity**)	£216,000	£207,500	£423,500
Advice Services (total budget including Public Health contribution*** and funding to fill gaps thorough development work)	£1,000,326	£120,000	£1,120,326
Community Infrastructure	£500,200	£0.00	£500,200
Specialist Grants	£719,066	£0.00	£719,066
Financial Intervention Support Grants	£200,000	£0.00	£200,000

Total Grants Programme	£2,635,592	£327,500	£2,963,092
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*£200,000 for the Children & Young People’s Fund is from Young Hackney’s budget.

**7,500 from the Public Health Physical Activity budget for the

***£120,000 contribution from the Public Health budget

4.2 Reviewing how we invest in the VCS

4.1.3 The review of the grants programme has enabled further exploration and opportunities to build in equality focussed and anti-racist approaches to the delivery of the investment. For example, assessor training now involves a section on intersectionality and institutional racism. We have also placed more emphasis on supporting groups who are led by those with lived experience, and have used information on organisational leadership and beneficiary groups to make decisions in a more targeted way. We will continue to build upon this for the 2024/25 programme.

4.1.4 Given the complexity of the challenges we are seeking to address in the community and public sector, there are much more effective and impactful ways to invest in the VCS than the traditional approaches to commissioning through grant making or procurement. Traditional approaches are transactional and arms length and assume complex challenges can be addressed through short term activity, focussing on a narrow set of issues through simple projects and measurable outputs. It also feeds into a wider set of behaviours and attitudes that maintain a “parent child” relationship between the public sector and the VCS.

4.1.5 Funders have been working on more effective models for a number of years, and this very much aligns with the thinking outlined about new approaches to public service. The grants programme has been changed to take account of our experience of working with the sector during the pandemic, the knowledge we have gained from working with Advice providers and Community Infrastructure partners, and the change and transformation we are trying to achieve as a Council in how we work with communities. The review has provided an opportunity to reflect on the ‘how’ and not just ‘what’ we fund

4.1.6 This report proposes the use of £65,000 from the VCS grants program reserves in order to increase capacity from March to June 2024 to undertake a full review of cross Council investment in the VCS. This will enable us to understand in quite granular detail what is procured and grant funded across the council and the intended outcomes from this investment. Learning from the council's work on anti-racism and other areas such as the Public Health Match projects, as well as established thinking about what approaches and service design are needed in the reform of the public sector, supported by the RSA, New Local and the LGA, will enable us to begin to redesign investment in the VCS that works better for our residents. This thinking places greater value on addressing system failures, working across silos and taking a more

strength based and long-term view than the current system which places greater value upon ease of measurement and accountability.

4.2 Community Infrastructure Grants

4.2.1 In 2023/24 we funded 24 Community Infrastructure organisations. These are locality or community based organisations that work preventatively, working with communities at grassroots level to co-design services, build local systems of support and help the Council to improve reach. During the pandemic we were able to witness the expertise and reach that these organisations have in their communities along with the person-centred ways of working they adopt to meet the presenting need and work with complexity. This was seen in place-based organisations but also those working with particular communities e.g black led organisations. This range of community infrastructure utilised its strengths and assets, flexing and adapting to the needs of individuals and communities. At the same time they were promoting social inclusion, building relationships with people and creating new connections. Community infrastructure proved to be a crucial resource during the pandemic and yet for many years there has been little or no direct investment in this.

4.2.3 This activity is key to a preventative agenda that seeks to build upon the assets within communities, as well as helping to respond to the Cost of Living crisis. Although our commitment to fund is over three years in the first year our focus has been to collaborate with each organisation to explore and identify,

- What they need to measure in order to reflect on their practice and improve outcomes for residents through their activity and across the system
- More systemic collaborative ways of working and what challenges/benefits does this bring
- The sharing of learning and influencing practice.

4.2.4 The Community Infrastructure organisations have been partnered with 24 Relational Leads. These are all volunteer officers from across the Council committed to developing the programme further, developing ways of helping Council services to work more meaningfully and effectively with community partners, and strengthening our way of working on early help and prevention across the lifecourse. The work of the Relational Leads is supported and coordinated by the System Convenor roles within the Policy and Strategic Delivery Team.

4.3 Project Grants

4.3.1 As already set out, we intend to broadly continue with our existing programme objectives and equality aims, which guide applicants on the outcomes we are seeking to achieve from the grants programme, but with a renewed focus on specific beneficiary groups who are being particularly affected by the cost of

living crisis. Whilst we are reprioritising our investment to protect and develop community infrastructure we will continue to invest part of the programme in short-term project based activity.

4.3.2 We will continue to run our open programme as our Project Grants rather than Main and Small Grants from previous years. The Project Grants strand will encompass generic Project Grants, Children and Young People's Grants (discussed further in 4.4), and Community Chest Physical Activity grants. Responding to feedback from applicants last year it is intended to offer two year grants where possible for the Project Grants in 2024/25 to ensure alignment and consistency between the funding streams.

4.4 Grant funding Children and Young People's activity

4.4.1 Building on the last 2 years this grants scheme specifically for children and young people will use a budget that in previous years had been deployed for one-off commissioning of youth activity by the Children and Families Service. The funding will be prioritised for the identified health and wellbeing needs of young people within the eight Primary Care Networks of the Integrated Care Partnership. However as with all grants in the programme the ability to ensure geographical spread across the borough will be dependent upon the spread of applications received.

4.4.2 The grants will be for one year youth work projects. Applicants will be asked to focus on youth work methodology and may include specialist providers for a variety of activities including sport, drama and film. As with the wider grants programme the activities for children and young people should speak to anti racist and anti oppressive practices so that provision is inclusive and seeks to promote equality. Grant funding rather than commissioning should enable more collaborative working both with the Council and between VCS organisations that are funded. This in turn should ensure additionality from the resources being used.

4.5 Advice grants

4.5.1 Our advice partners continue to be central to the vital work of the VCS in supporting residents through the CoLC. Ongoing work with organisations has increased the levels of collaboration and partnership within the advice system but also other VCS organisations responding to the material impacts of poverty in Hackney. Last year we conducted an open application process to ensure that we have a network of advice partners that can respond to the various needs of the communities of Hackney.

4.5.6 The process resulted in funding to nineteen advice partners outlined in Appendix 2. Of these advice partners one was new to receiving a social welfare advice grant. To determine the level of funding to award the panel, focused on funding an advice system for Hackney, considered shortlisted advice partners' capacity, specialism and potential increases demand for

support from particular Black and Global Majority communities or those affected by legislative changes (e.g. No Recourse to Public Funds, Employment Rights).

4.5.7 Following completion of the assessment process it was identified that although officers have recommended funding for an extensive advice offer there is a noticeable gap in provision in the north of Hackney. Some work has been undertaken to remedy this by embedding an advice worker in a health setting in the north of the borough in partnership with the Together Better initiative which includes immigration advice. Recognising the likelihood that serving specific cultural and religious residents/ communities in this area of the borough will not readily travel to funded provisions located elsewhere or due to unfamiliarity with particular advice partners, officers propose to continue to retain some funding from the advice budget specifically to explore possible options with organisations established in that locality.

4.6 Specialist Grants

4.6.1 Following the full review of Specialist Grants completed in 2017, another review was initiated last year in order to identify where investment should be focused in the future. A local Community Anchor organisation assisted the Council in this review. This not only ensured external challenge but drew upon the organisation's understanding of the local VCS as well as their learning from the different perspectives from working directly with communities, the providers of services and the investors in communities. The findings will help inform proposals in 2024/25 on the implementation of the grants review.

4.6.3 As we continue through the 2024/25 Grants Programme to focus on CoLC, Specialist Grants are also being considered in this context. Through the relational ways that the Council's Grants Team work with partners they will be exploring on a case-by-case basis how each organisation is responding to the CoLC. These organisations have been funded at the current rate for a number of years, which effectively means that their grant has decreased in value quite significantly. Last year given the rising costs for VCS organisations a 10% inflationary uplift was applied.

5. Details of alternative options considered and rejected

5.1 Given the budgetary pressures facing the Council the future of the VCS Grants Programme is regularly reviewed. However consideration has been given to the reductions in public spending through welfare cuts and reduced grants to local government which can lead to increased demands upon the VCS. The unique position of the VCS to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents as well as its ability to deliver added value e.g. through inward investment and volunteering necessitates a grant programme that ensures that the sector can continue to thrive and build

resilience to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and in the face of further budget reductions.

- 5.2 Whilst procurement resources the VCS, the investment through the Council's grants programme helps to maintain a thriving third sector and a wide range of suppliers. Funding the sector through grants ensures that it can identify new needs and new ideas and innovate and test new solutions. It enables added value activity that complements direct or procured service delivery and can fund open universal activity. The sector is also able to use grant funding to respond to specific challenges in regards to community cohesion by providing grassroots community based activity that builds cohesion and community action and the support that is needed by our most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents.

6. Background

6.1 Policy Context

- 6.1.1 The VCS is well placed in its ability to reach and work with some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents of the borough and is therefore often best placed to provide a service or to ensure that other services are accessed. Funding for the sector is best deployed to fully realise the sector's potential and play to these strengths. The priorities of the grants programme supports the wider agenda of the Council and our partners with a focus upon intervention and prevention and building resilience within communities.

6.2 Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.2.1 The Council's support for the VCS is a major expression of Hackney's commitment to making social inclusion and community cohesion a reality. This is demonstrated by the wide diversity of organisations recommended for funding and the requirement for each application to demonstrate its contribution to meeting at least one of the grant priorities and equality aims.
- 6.2.2 In recognition of the potential barriers facing applicants a number of interventions are put in place to ensure that the grant investment is planned and delivered to positively benefit as wide a range of equality groups as possible and to mitigate negative impacts. The programme is advertised widely across the VCS in Hackney using the VCS networks, the Council's website and the councils community partnerships newsletter. Workshops and one to one surgeries on the applications process are also run by Hackney CVS. Officers from the Policy Team also run workshops to ensure that all of the groups applying have the best possible opportunity for success.
- 6.2.3 The increase in funding for advice services will be having a positive impact on residents who are financially disadvantaged and experiencing poverty which is often the result of inequalities such as structural racism. However the overall envelope of the grants programme remains the same so there is a

reduction in the open elements of the grants programme. Last year's application process has led to a gap in provision in the north of the borough with no dedicated provision to serve the Orthodox Jewish and the South Asian Muslim community. A new service in the north of the borough has been introduced but this is limited in its reach and therefore a budget remains set aside within the advice grant envelope to work with communities to address this gap.

- 6.2.4 The local community infrastructure organisation grants will also benefit residents experiencing multiple disadvantage as the funding aims to ensure that local community organisations are more responsive to their needs. In particular the grants aim to recognise the role of black-led organisations and those with particular expertise and cultural competency and which have reach within communities that are furthest from statutory services.
- 6.2.5 The increase in funding for advice services and the additional allocation of budget for community infrastructure has meant less funding directed to the project based grants. The reduction could potentially impact upon those equality groups that benefit from initiatives and projects which have been identified as needed by the sector. These often reach communities furthest from our services or below access thresholds and complement Council and commissioned activity. However the physical activity and Children and Young People activity grants go some way to remediate this.
- 6.2.6 Across the Main and Small Grants since 2016 (excluding crisis funding during the pandemic) the main beneficiaries have been young people under 25 as both recipients of services and as volunteers. Some mitigation for this is presented through grant funding organisations using Young Hackney's Lot 2 budget. The Orthodox Jewish Community submits a significant proportion of applications for project based grants the majority of which are for children and young people. The Lot 2 funding that is being used to allocate grants of up to £20,000 will help to ensure that this part of the community continues to benefit from support through the grants programme. This method has been successfully tested over the last year.

6.3 Sustainability

- 6.3.1 The Council will continue to administer the programme electronically through the use of the Blackbaud Grants Management software, which eliminates the need for paper applications, thus contributing to the Council's commitment to reducing carbon. Additionally, all grant agreements are now completed electronically which has resulted in no longer using any paper or postage to undertake this process.
- 6.3.2 The VCS in Hackney plays an important role in the local economy, supporting both individuals and groups and makes a significant contribution to the

community and civil life. Continuing to nurture and support the sector is fundamental to achieving sustainable communities in the borough

6.4 Consultations

- 6.4.1 Extensive engagement was undertaken to inform the VCS Strategy 2019 including a day-long workshop attended by a range of local VCS organisations followed by four open invites focus groups. A series of discussion papers were then developed based on the findings and a series of five further workshops including one focussed upon Council investment in the sector were used to test and develop the papers. The findings were then used to develop the discussion papers into key themes within the strategy.
- 6.4.2 The strategy sets out the shift needed in the way that we invest in the sector that encourages more collaboration, shared learning and enables the sector to be more person centred and responsive to residents. It recognises that the current way that the grant programme funds organisations pushes them into narrower more transactional relationships, creates siloed working and is not funding an approach that fully enables a more preventative approach within communities.
- 6.4.3 The introduction of community infrastructure grants also acknowledged the unique ways in which the sector works which was a key message in the consultation and has continued to be a central theme in feedback from the sector. The funding stream supports organisations whose role extends beyond the service that they deliver and reflect the strategy's focus upon a different approach to investing that funds purpose and longer term outcomes.
- 6.4.4 Whilst all of the above was set out in the VCS Strategy the feedback from VCS organisations on their experience of Covid and working with the Council suggests that the way that they were funded enabled them to be more effective. By changing the relationships and the ways in which we managed and monitored grants, organisations felt empowered to use their expertise and reach within their communities along with the person-centred ways of working that they could adapt to meet the presenting needs of residents.
- 6.4.5 Further engagement with the sector is planned to reflect on delivery over the past few years and build upon the VCS Strategy e.g. through a shared Theory of Change. A communications and engagement plan has been developed by the grants team to better understand the experience of applicants and to ensure that the Policy and Strategic Delivery Team continue to have a good understanding of the most effective ways of investing in grants.

7. Comments of the Interim Group Director, Finance

- 7.1 This report seeks approval for the local grants' programme for 2024/25. The total cost of the proposed plan of grants is within the available current budget of £2.663m.
- 7.2 The report also seeks approval to contribute to the London boroughs' grant scheme administered by London Councils. There is currently a £208k budget available for this contribution.
- 7.3 The report notes contributions from Public Health for advice system grants (£120k) and physical activity grants (£280k over two years 2023-24 to 2024-25). It also notes £200k of Children and Young People's activity based grants.
- 7.4 The report requests a contribution from one-off reserves of £65k for a council wide review of our investment in the VCS. There are sufficient one-off resources for this.
- 7.5 It should be noted that the Council is facing very challenging times in the current year and medium term. It cannot be assumed that unspent revenue funding and reserves available in 2023/24 will be carried forward into future years. Carry forward of any unspent funds will be considered by the Interim Group Director Finance as part of the annual closing of accounts process and in the context of the Council's medium-term financial plan.
- 7.5 Whilst the Council's Budget for 2024/25 has not yet been approved there are no proposals within the Budget report to make savings from the budget that supports the Voluntary Sector Grants Programme in 2024/25. However, it should be noted that due to the outlook for local finance settlements going forward, the Council will need to make further savings from 2025/26 onwards which may impact the budgets supporting this programme.

8. Comments of the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

- 8.1 The recommendations in this Report concern the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme for 2024/25. Agreeing the award of grant aid from the voluntary sector grants programme is reserved to the Mayor and Cabinet under the Mayor's Scheme of Delegation (January 2017) so the awards in this Report will need to be approved by Cabinet.
- 8.2 The award of a grant is a discretionary function. Details of the grant programmes and payments proposed in this Report are set out in paragraph 3 above.
- 8.3 Paragraph 2.4 of the Cabinet Procedure Rules states "If the Elected Mayor delegates functions to a Committee of the Cabinet, the Committee may delegate further to an officer, except where the Elected Mayor has said that

they are not allowed to delegate further.” Therefore, subject to the approval of Cabinet, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery is permitted to award the Grants to be delegated in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.11 of this Report.

Appendices

Appendix One - Recommended Grants for 2024/25

Background documents

None

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