

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services	13/09/2019
Subject: Stronger Communities Programme	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Jack Joslin, Head of Central Grants Programme, Central Grants Unit	

Summary

The Stronger Communities grant funding round – part of the Central Grants Programme (CGP) – closed applications on 24 May 2019. Applications were assessed by an officer panel and recommendations made to the Director, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of this Committee for approval. Five projects were successful and have received a total of £29,000 in grant funding.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- approve the changes to the Stronger Communities eligibility criteria
- note the grants approved for Stronger Communities funding.

Main Report

Background

1. The Stronger Communities theme is a strand of the City of London Corporation's (CoLC) CGP that awards up to £10,000 to projects or services that are being delivered for the benefit of communities or beneficiaries within the CoLC and its housing estates across London. It is funded from the City's Cash Grants budget.
2. Members of this Committee agreed in May 2016 that the award of grants will be determined by Officers of Community and Children's Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Grand Committee.
3. The grant assessment process for this and other themes in the programme is overseen by the Central Grants Unit (CGU) and draws on the unit's expertise in the field of grant-making, and demonstrates good practice.
4. Grant applications were subject to a series of due diligence checks by the CGU to ensure compliance with the established eligibility criteria. They passed a financial assessment by the Head of Charity and Social Investment

Finance (Chamberlain's Department). All eligible applications were then considered by a panel of expert officers.

Stronger Communities

Amendment to eligibility criteria

5. Members of this Committee agreed in May 2016 the policy for the Stronger Communities Programme. Since its inception, the Stronger Communities Programme has provided grants of a maximum of £10,000 to be spent over a 12-month period.
6. In February 2018, the Community and Children's Services Committee agreed to combine the Department's Small Grants Programme into the Stronger Communities Programme, and an amendment to the Policy was agreed.
7. The Stronger Communities Programme has consistently underspent since it started in October 2016 in comparison to other CGPs. Officers have done significant work to advertise the programme more widely and encourage more eligible applications.
8. There is a growing body of evidence among funders of small grants that a more significant difference can be achieved over longer periods or more than 12 months. This has been successfully implemented by the Enjoying Green Spaces strand of the CGP.
9. In July this year Officers discussed amendments to the amount of funds that organisations could apply for, which has also been discussed across all Central Grant Programmes managed by the CGU. After some consultation it was agreed that, in certain circumstances, grants of up to £20,000 over a two-year period could be accepted under the programme. Only a certain number of these grants will be made each year, ensuring that plenty of budget remains for the small and medium-sized grants.
10. Members are asked to review and agree the proposed amendments to the Stronger Communities Policy.

Grant allocation

11. In July 2019, the Chamberlain, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance Committee, approved that a City's Cash Grants underspend of £39,000 from the financial year 2018/19 could be allocated to the 2019/20 Stronger Communities funding programme. The overall funding pot available this financial year is £122,600.
12. In February 2018, the Community and Children's Services Committee agreed to combine the Department's Small Grants Programme into the Stronger Communities Programme.

13. Applications to the Small Grants round and main grant round were assessed by a panel of officers representing a range of Community and Children's Services functions and the CGU, chaired by the Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships.
14. The officer-led Grants Panel proposed that five grants totalling £29,000 be awarded. The recommendations were put to, and agreed by, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of this Committee.
15. The remaining Budget for the November deadline of the Stronger Communities Programme will be £93,600.
16. Summary assessment reports of all recommended applications to the Stronger Communities grant scheme are provided in Appendix 2. The successful applications are:

Organisation name	Approved
Aldgate Community Events	£10,000
City YMCA	£3,000
Portsoken Activities Group	£3,000
Portsoken Ward Club	£3,000
Spanish and Portuguese Jews Synagogue	£10,000
Total	£29,000

17. Members should note that the next deadline for the Stronger Communities Programme has been moved back from its originally stated deadline of 1 November 2019 to 22 November 2019. This is to accommodate the launch of the VCSquaremile event on 6 November 2019. The CGU will be presenting at this event and providing advice and guidance to applicants interested in submitting an application to the Stronger Communities Programme. It was felt that sufficient time should be provided after the event to allow for groups to submit proposals.
18. Application deadlines for 2020 will be in April and November and will be available on the Central Grants Website in October.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. The CGP Stronger Communities funding strand was created to promote a fair system of grant giving by the CoLC.
20. The recommendations of the panel support the funding criteria and, in turn, the CoLC's Corporate Plan.

Conclusion

21. Members are asked to agree the amendment to the Stronger Communities criteria.
22. The Stronger Communities and Small Grants allocations will support five projects working in the City's communities.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Stronger Communities: Criteria for funding with amendments
- Appendix 2 – Stronger Communities: Project outlines and grants awarded
- Appendix 3 – Stronger Communities: Table of grants declined, deferred or withdrawn

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