

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services	07/02/2020
<b>Subject:</b> Stronger Communities and Small Grants Programme	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Jack Joslin, Head of Central Grants Programme, Central Grants Unit	

### Summary

The integration of the Small Grants Scheme into the Stronger Communities Programme took place in February 2018. The Central Grants Unit (CGU) devised a new and accessible online application form for the Small Grants Scheme with a lighter-touch, but still robust assessment process. The CGU is seeking approval to offer the Small Grants Scheme on a rolling basis from 1 April 2020. The Stronger Communities main grants programme will continue to maintain its two deadlines each year for larger applications.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- approve the new Small Grants process
- note the revision to the criteria for the Stronger Communities Programme to outline change for the Small Grants Programme
- note the Small Grants Application form.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Stronger Communities theme is a strand of the City of London Corporation's (CoLC's) Central Grants Programme (CGP) that awards grants to projects or services that are being delivered for the benefit of communities or individual beneficiaries within the City of London and its housing estates across London.
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 CGU. It draws on the unit's expertise in the field of grant-making and demonstrates good practice.
4. Grant applications are subject to a series of due diligence checks by the CGU to ensure compliance with the established eligibility criteria. Applications will pass a financial assessment by the Head of Charity and Social Investment Finance (Chamberlain's Department). All eligible applications are then considered by a panel of expert officers.

### **Small Grants Programme**

5. In February 2018, the Community and Children's Services Committee agreed to add Small Grants to the Stronger Communities Programme, as there was no longer resource in the Department to deliver a Small Grants Scheme of its own. A discreet budget was made available to ensure that Small Grant applications would be available under the main programme.
6. In November 2019, Members of this Committee agreed that the CGU should explore the possibility of offering the Small Grants Scheme on a rolling basis. Members approved delegated authority to the Director of Community and Children's Services on all Small Grant applications of £3,000 or less.
7. A proportion of the Stronger Communities funding was agreed to be allocated to smaller projects.
8. The CGU developed a new online application form for small grants of £3,000 or less, and agreed a lighter-touch financial assessment with the Chamberlain's Department. This application is the same as the previous form used by the Department, but in online format. Due diligence checks are in line with grant-making best practice and to protect against fraud.
9. It is recommended that the Small Grants Programme be offered on a rolling basis from 1 April 2020.
10. The Small Grants Programme will be available to applicants throughout the year to ensure that community activity can be supported with a shorter planning period. Applicants will be able to:
  - a) apply online throughout the year
  - b) apply for a grant of up to £3,000 in line with the Stronger Communities eligibility criteria
  - c) access advice and support on applications from the CGU throughout the year

- d) receive support with applications provided on request from the Community Engagement team
  - e) engage in a proportionate but robust assessment process
  - f) receive a decision within eight weeks of applying for a grant.
11. To ensure that decisions on the rolling Small Grants process can be made punctually and within the outlined timeframe, it has been approved that grant decisions be delegated to the Director of Community and Children's Services.
  12. Members are requested to note the amendments to the Stronger Communities eligibility criteria to incorporate the new scheme at Appendix 1.
  13. Members are requested to note the Small Grants application form at Appendix 2. This is an online version of the application form used under the previous departmental scheme. Accessible versions of the application form will be available on request.
  14. Updates on the scheme will be provided on a bi-annual basis in line with the other Stronger Communities reporting.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

15. The CGP Stronger Communities funding strand was created to promote a fair system of grant-giving by the CoLC.
16. The Small Grants Programme will become a rolling programme, making it more accessible to the City of London communities and those who live in its housing estates across London.

### **Conclusion**

17. The Small Grants Programme will be established on a rolling basis to ensure consistent community access. A revised application form will be looked at in line with best practice, and a package of support will be explored for small organisations that may have issues accessing funding.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Stronger Communities: criteria for funding (changes highlighted)
- Appendix 2 – Small Grants Application Form

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