

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services	28/09/2020
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 Unit	

Summary

The Stronger Communities theme of the Central Grants Programme (CGP) opened in October 2016. The integration of the Small Grants Scheme into the Stronger Communities Programme took place in February 2018. The Central Grants Unit (CGU) offered the Small Grants scheme on a rolling basis to ensure that the funds were more accessible to City of London Communities. The CGU is seeking approval to offer the Stronger Communities programme both small and main grants on a rolling basis from 1 October 2020. This will allow for the fund to respond to emerging needs in the community that the fund serves.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- approve the new Stronger Communities process
- note the revision to the criteria for the Stronger Communities Programme at **Appendix 1**
- note the recent grants awarded from the Stronger Communities Fund at **Appendix 2**

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 (DCCS) 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.

Stronger Communities 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 February 2020, Members of this Committee agreed that the CGU should offer the Stronger Communities Small Grants Scheme on a rolling basis. Members approved delegated authority to the Director of DCCS on all Small Grant applications of £3,000 or less.
7. Delivering the grants programme on a rolling basis has allowed for Communities to seek funding when it is required and get quicker responses to applications. The Stronger Communities Programme has continued with application deadlines, the last deadline passed at the end of April 2020 during lockdown.
8. During the April Deadline the CGU received 26 Applications, the most received for any Stronger Communities round. Out of the 26 applications received 5 were awarded funding, with one application being a Small Grant. The 5 projects awarded funding can be found at **Appendix 2**.
9. The majority of the 21 applications received by the CGU were ineligible and were for projects responding to the needs of communities across London due to the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Most of these applications were not taking place in the City of London or its managed housing estates.
10. The CGU in consultation with Officers from DCCS responded to these applicants within the first 3 weeks to inform them their applications had been rejected and provide advice and guidance on Covid-19 emergency funds that were available and more suitable to their needs, including the London Community Response Fund.
11. During this period, the CGU worked closely with officers from DCCS to provide funding to Age UK City of London to support the set up and running

costs for the City of London Foodbank. This funding was made available from the Combined Relief of Poverty Charity to respond to this emerging need.

12. Analysis of the activity on the fund during the period of lockdown has given officers a better understanding of how to manage the fund going forward to ensure it can be more responsive to emerging community needs. Members are therefore being asked to approve that the Stronger Communities programme is delivered from the 1st October on a rolling basis.

13. Both programmes will be assessed on a rolling basis as follows:

- i) Small Grants will be assessed within 8 weeks of submission
- ii) Main Grants will be assessed within 12 weeks of submission
- iii) An expert officer panel will be used to make decisions on applications, this will be done digitally and on a rolling basis to ensure that the programme is agile and responsive to community needs
- iv) Small Grant decisions are delegated to the Director of DCCS, Main Grants are delegated to the Director of DCCS in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee as previously agreed.
- v) The Combined Relief of Poverty Charity will work strategically as part of the Stronger Communities Programme to respond to arising needs, a further report at this committee will outline this approach
- vi) A geographically specific criteria has been created to ensure that applicants do not waste energy on ineligible applications

14. The CGU manages the City of London Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund which also operates on a rolling basis, advice can be provided to applicants on the best route for support across all programmes

15. Updates on the scheme will be provided to Committee on a bi-annual basis.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. The CGP Stronger Communities funding strand was created to promote a fair system of grant-giving by the CoLC.

17. The Stronger Communities 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

18. The Stronger Communities Programme will be established on a rolling basis to ensure consistent community access for all levels of funding. The CGU will provide advice and guidance to applicants about all of the funding that may be available to City of London Communities or those living in its housing estates.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – CoLC Stronger Communities Eligibility 2020

- Appendix 2 – Stronger Communities – Approved Assessments

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