

Committee	Dated:
City Bridge Trust	9 th July 2015
Subject: Strategic Initiative: Partnership with Prisoners Abroad	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision

Summary

At your meeting on 9th January 2014, you approved a grant of £330,000 over 18 months in order to establish a hardship fund, in partnership with Prisoners Abroad, in order to establish a hardship fund for destitute British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas.

This was one of two initiatives that came out of your 2012/13 Quinquennial Review, the other being your partnership with Buttle UK which you have funded to establish a hardship fund for families rebuilding their lives following domestic violence. Your original award to Buttle UK was also for 18 months initially, and you awarded a second 18 month tranche of £634,400 in November 2014.

This report requests funding of £330,000 to continue your partnership with Prisoners Abroad for a further 18 months.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

Approve a grant of £330,000 to continue Prisoners Abroad's administration of a hardship fund, in partnership with City Bridge Trust for destitute British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas.

Main Report

About Prisoners Abroad

1. Prisoners Abroad (PA) is the only UK charity caring for the welfare of British prisoners held in foreign prisons, often in conditions that seriously threaten their physical and mental health. During 2013/14, it provided assistance to 1,581 Britons detained overseas in a total of 92 countries.
2. It has three main areas of activity:
 - **Working with clients during prison sentences.** PA provides a vital link between prisoners detained overseas and various agencies both in the UK and in the country in which they are held. PA provides specialist advice to

prisoners and their families, including information on foreign criminal justice systems, prisoners' rights, prison conditions, parole, remission and transfer to the UK. It also provides grants to assist those in financial hardship. Last year, this amounted to £250,000 of which £114,000 provided 446 prisoners with survival grants to provide additional food where the quantity and quality of food is inadequate. Last Year, PA provided assistance to 1,745 Britons detained overseas in a total of 95 countries.

- **Working with families and friends of those detained.** Last year, over 2,000 families were registered to receive PA's services, an increase of just under 600 from the previous year. PA provides advice, support and information to friends and family about foreign prison conditions and criminal justice systems. It aims to aid communication between families and the imprisoned family member and to prevent family relationships from breaking down, for example, by developing an interactive scrapbook to enable families, especially those with children, to stay in touch with their relative in prison. It also helps families to book and arrange visits, and last year helped 29 families with grants of £9,400 to visit their relative overseas.
- **Resettlement work following release from prison:** PA's resettlement service provides a range of services designed to prevent homelessness and destitution for Britons returning to the UK. Last year, 156 returning ex-prisoners used the resettlement service and PA provided £82,400 in emergency grants for accommodation, food, travel, clothes, toiletries and other survival items.

- 3 It provides free and confidential services on the basis of need. It does not campaign to get prisoners released and it cannot give legal advice, pay fines or visit prisoners overseas.

About Prisoners Abroad Resettlement Service

4. Many of the people helped by its resettlement service have lived abroad for many years and don't have family or friends in the UK to help them. They are not entitled to statutory support because they have not come through the UK prison system and they are therefore vulnerable to becoming homeless and/or reverting to criminal activity in order to support themselves. PA plays a pivotal role in preventing such a decline through its partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office whose consular staff take PA's registration forms into prison which means it has some information about an individual's needs prior to their release. It also works in partnership with the Travel-Care charities based at airports which will issue returning prisoners with a ticket they can use to travel to the offices of PA. Here they can access crisis support such as a shower, toiletries, clothes and emergency housing, followed by 2-4 months of support from a resettlement officer. Once the client's most urgent needs have been met, that is, they have temporary accommodation, they are claiming benefits and they have received any urgent medical attention they may need, then PA will refer them on to other relevant agencies that can provide further specialist support.

Achievements to date

5. The first year of this project ran from April 2014 to March 2015, a period in which a highly competitive housing market coupled with welfare reforms have made life even harder for those British citizens returning to London from overseas. During the year, Prisoners Abroad have used your funding as follows:-

103 people have been helped to find emergency accommodation.

139 people have received grants to buy food.

The complex nature of the cases PA deals with, means that many clients experience delays in receiving their benefit entitlements, including housing benefits. Consequently, some clients are spending longer in emergency accommodation – up to four months in extreme cases. The Trust's funding has enabled PA to support such clients over a longer period, helping them to survive the first critical weeks and months after release from prison.

43 people have been helped to find permanent accommodation.

PA's clients frequently find it difficult to secure permanent accommodation due to the double stigma of being a benefits claimant and having a criminal record. This has been exacerbated in London with rents rising sharply and homelessness increasing, combined with a lack of social housing. PA has developed good relationships with some private landlords, however, and your funding has increased its ability to help clients with agency fees, deposits and rent in advance and therefore its ability to move clients on to more stable, longer-term accommodation.

53 people have received basic necessity grants.

40 people have received 'starter packs'.

Typically, PA's clients arrive in London with little more than the clothes they stand up in. Basic necessity grants enable PA to provide clients with toiletries and warm clothes where the person has returned from a hot climate. Starter packs help people with move-on items such as a kettle, bedding, mattress etc. Such items play a vital role in the resettlement process.

33 people have been helped to secure passports

Many of PA's clients return to this country on an emergency travel document and must apply for a passport on arrival. This can be a vital first step in helping them to obtain a national insurance number, NHS number etc which are needed in order to access health care and pensions.

Finance

6. All of PA's forecast income for 2015/16 has been secured.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts	2014/15 Draft Accounts	2015/16 Current Year Forecast
Income and Expenditure	£	£	£
Income	1,539,328	1,614,822	1,648,000
Expenditure	1,498,084	1,557,925	1,778,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	34,308	29,038	33,000
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	6,936	27,859	(163,000)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	41,244	56,897	(130,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	2.7%	3.5%	(7.9%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	347,207 (22.6%)	313,731 (19.4%)	356,000 (21.7%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	468,289	497,619	422,414
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.8	3.8	2.9
Reserves Policy target	320,000- 416,000	320,000 - 416,000	320,000- 416,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	2.6 – 3.3	2.5 – 3.2	2.2 – 2.8
Free reserves over/(under) target	148,289-52,289	177,619-1,619	102,414– 6,414

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