

MEETING: 02/05/2018

Ref: 14395

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Whittington Park Community Association

Adv: Shegufta Rahman

Base: Islington

Amount requested: £100,000

Benefit: Islington

Amount recommended: £100,000

The Applicant

Whittington Park Community Association (WPCA) was set up in 1972 by local residents when plans were set out to further expand Whittington Park. Registered as a charity in 2006, WPCA is based in three buildings on the edge of Whittington Park, North Islington, offering services around health, combating isolation and supporting families and children.

The Application

The three buildings that make up WPCA have been utilised as far as possible for the benefit of the local community. However, each building requires refurbishment, and in recognition of the scale of work involved in servicing each building, the charity has phased the work required. Phase one will focus on Hocking Hall which needs more urgent improvements to access.

The Recommendation

Following a few years of financial difficulty, WPCA has demonstrated a recent track record of bringing its finances closer to stability. The community use of WPCA is evident from its schedule of services to provide health and wellbeing support across all ages, especially those experiencing health inequalities. Over 50% of the cost of phase one has been secured, including £500,000 from the London Borough of Islington. The request is for the cost of accessible elements on this capital project, as evidenced in the Access Audit you funded in 2014. A grant is recommended:

£100,000 for access and improvement works at Hocking Hall, Whittington Park.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
19/06/2014	£5,000 for an access audit and disability awareness & safety training

Background and detail of proposal

Within a mile radius of WPCA are three local wards with a population of approximately 20,000. The charity aims to bring users together to experience opportunities for personal enrichment and well-being, by providing a well-run centre for individuals and groups in Islington to sustain and develop a vibrant community. A comprehensive assessment of the three local wards has been carried out, feeding into the design and implementation of WPCA services principally around health; combating isolation; and supporting families and children. The three buildings that make up the charity (Whittington Park Centre and Café, the Early Years Hub and Hocking Hall) offer a range of services including free, high quality nursery care to low income families, chair-based exercise classes, and a daily lunch club for over 60s. The charity also hosts an annual, one-day public festival called 'Big Day Out'. This event attracts hundreds of local residents to a day of free activities and workshops, showcasing local activities, classes and clubs at the centre.

The services on offer are increasingly provided to support health and wellbeing. The outside park setting makes the organisation ideally located for such programmes, especially those experiencing health inequalities. This includes the prevention of isolation amongst older and younger people by providing social, cultural and other events that bring different parts of the community together to promote a feeling of connection and belonging. Over a third of service users are 65+ and up to 20% have a disability.

Financial Information

The charity has had some financial difficulties in the past due to poor management, controls, rapid expansion of staff via Future Jobs Fund, losses in the café venture, and no reductions in staffing or services as local authority grants decreased. The previous management team mistakenly believed pay-as-you-earn tax (PAYE) was not due on Future Jobs Fund employees. This resulted in significant debts to HMRC and the London Borough of Islington. The former debt was fully repaid 18 months ago while the latter will be repaid by September this year. The current management team was brought on to deal with these difficult financial issues, and the charity has done well to manage tight finances; running services with static or reduced grants, whilst building its financial resilience.

The charity's reserves policy is to hold £20,000 of unrestricted funds. For the past five years WPCA has demonstrated a gradual building of its reserves position. Although projected to end 2019 still below target, it is notable to have increased its reserves to this figure given that it had significant unrestricted fund deficit a few years ago. The London Borough of Islington's commitment of £500,000 towards the cost of this project is recognition of the charity's ability to manage this capital project with the substantial funding required.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Independently Examined Accounts £	2018 Forecast £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	319,456	322,826	573,583
- % of Income confirmed as at 19/02/2018	n/a	100%	79%
Expenditure	(296,413)	(310,848)	(569,664)
Total surplus/(deficit)	23,043	11,978	3,919
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	11,931	494	337
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	11,112	11,484	3,582
	23,043	11,978	3,919
Cost of Raising Funds	0	5,425	3,500
- % of income	0.0%	1.7%	0.6%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	106,925	168,168	158,742
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	(3,606)	7,878	11,460
No of months of operating expenditure	(0.4)	0.6	0.9
Reserves policy target	20,000	20,000	20,000
No of months of operating expenditure	2.2	1.4	1.5
Free reserves over/(under) target	(23,606)	(12,122)	(8,540)