

MEETING: 28/11/2019

Ref: 15315

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital

Bellingham Community Project Ltd

Adv: Lily Brandhorst

Base: Lewisham

Amount requested: £175,644

Benefit: Lewisham

Amount recommended: £175,600

The Applicant

Bellingham Community Project (BCP) is an independent registered charity (no. 1036667) and a subsidiary of Trust for London. It was originally set up in 1993 to manage and redevelop the then dilapidated 12-acre Bellingham Playing Fields site in Lewisham. In 2004, with £5.5m of grant funding from Lewisham Council, the Lottery and charitable trusts, it opened the Bellingham Leisure and Lifestyle Centre (BLLC), a much-needed local community leisure facility offering activities for all ages and providing an important communal space. BCP is rooted in its community. It works in partnership with the Council and Fusion Lifestyle to run BLLC; runs a variety of local projects including Bellingham Golden Oldies (BEGO – a member-led voluntary service for older people); and acts as a hub for many local agencies, as described further in the Background section of this report.

The Application

ONS and local authority data shows that there are approximately 1,500 people over 65 living in Bellingham, of whom many are poorly served by existing provision. Over 1/3 of older people in Bellingham are classified as suffering from deprivation; 40% claim pension credit. There are insufficient local services specifically targeting older people who are most in need, in particular those who have difficulty leaving their homes to participate in wellbeing or social activities. BCP requests the Trust's support to recruit a Community Projects Officer (CPO) to develop a range of projects targeting vulnerable and isolated people aged 65 and over. Projects will be focused on health and wellbeing activities. For people who cannot leave the house, a befriending scheme is planned along with equipment and practical support to access services and activities online. The aim is to combat isolation and support improved emotional and physical wellbeing for 300 people a year. BCP will recruit additional volunteers to support these activities. In addition, the CPO will provide much-needed additional capacity to support and expand BEGO. The long-term aim of the project is to create a legacy of durable services for the support and inclusion of the elderly in Bellingham.

The Recommendation

BCP has a strong track record in building robust local services that meet community need, of which BLLC, the Bellingham Gateway Youth and Community Centre and BEGO are examples. The proposed work will draw on this extensive experience of working in Bellingham and on BCP's working relationships with other local agencies, such as Age UK Lewisham. With only two staff at present, the charity achieves a great deal. In order to build on its existing offer and create more services for the elderly, an additional staff member is needed. The charity is in the process of updating its safeguarding policy to reflect its wider range of work, hence a condition that this be received before funds are released.

While a subsidiary of Trust for London, BCP is a charity in its own right that secures and manages substantial grants from various other funders, including the Lottery, London Community Foundation and the London Borough of Lewisham. City Bridge Trust has a long history of successfully collaborating and co-funding work with Trust for London, including the grant made in May 2014 to TFL's other subsidiary Resource for London (ref. 11932). As in that case, this request is an opportunity to join a key partner funder in supporting a valuable community project. A grant is recommended:

£175,600 over five years (£35,900; £33,400; £34,400; £35,400; £36,500) for the salary and on-costs of a part-time (3 dpw) Community Projects Officer, to develop and deliver a range of projects for people aged 65 and over in Bellingham. The grant includes a contribution towards project costs and equipment. Release of the grant is conditional upon BCP submitting a satisfactory safeguarding policy.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

Bellingham is one of the most deprived wards in the London Borough of Lewisham, with several areas among the 10% most deprived nationally according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Bellingham Community Project aims not only to create good quality services that respond to local need, but also to foster a sense of community cohesion and pride. It works with a variety of local partners including housing associations, health providers, schools, places of worship and Lewisham Council. Its projects include:

- Running the Leisure Centre in partnership with the council and Fusion Lifestyle, collaborating with local groups to ensure activities offered meet identified needs;
- Facilitating Bellingham Interagency and Bellingham Health Forum, regular meetings and information exchange for local agencies/voluntary groups;
- Running Bellingham Golden Oldies (BEGO), a member-led voluntary service supporting older people to stay independent and active;
- Working collaboratively with the Bellingham Gateway Youth and Community Centre (originally set up by BCP but now run by independent providers on behalf of the Council) to ensure young people's access to services, activities and opportunities.
- Running the annual Bellingham Community Festival.
- Mapping health and wellbeing provision in Bellingham and other parts of South West Lewisham, commissioned by the Local Authority.

Financial Information

The charity's finances are well-managed and clearly presented. Deficits on restricted funds represent depreciation of the Leisure Centre: liability for 90% of all future repairs has been formally transferred to the Trust for London and BCP retains a small designated fund to cover the remaining 10%. Free reserves are close to target and your officer is satisfied that the charity's financial position is likely to remain stable in 2020 and beyond.

Year end as at 31st December	2017 Signed Accounts £	2018 Signed Accounts £	2019 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	88,434	161,325	116,487
- % of Income confirmed as at 31/10/11	N/A	N/A	75%
Expenditure	(212,828)	(183,287)	(197,931)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(124,394)	(21,962)	(81,444)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(89,170)	(47,336)	(81,444)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(35,224)	25,374	0
	(124,394)	(21,962)	(81,444)
Total expenditure	212,828	183,287	197,931
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	63,904	89,278	89,278
No of months of total expenditure	3.6	5.8	5.4
Reserves policy target	106,414	91,644	98,966
No of months of total expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(42,510)	(2,366)	(9,688)