

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services Committee	11/06/2021
Subject: Stronger Communities Annual Report	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 3, 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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) offers the Small Grants Scheme and the Main Grants Scheme on a rolling basis to ensure that funds are more accessible to City of London communities. The CGU is seeking approval to offer the Stronger Communities Programme's 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 it serves.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- note the criteria for the Stronger Communities Programme at **Appendix 1**
- note the Stronger Communities Budget for 2021/22
- note the grants awarded, declined and withdrawn from the Stronger Communities Fund in 2020/21 at **Appendix 2**.

Main Report

Background

1. The Stronger Communities theme is a strand of the City of London Corporation's (COLC's) 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 the Department 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 is a role model for best practice to support the delivery of the City of London's Philanthropy Strategy.

4. The CGU oversees a range of the City of London's grant-making activities which includes the CGP, the management of grant-making on behalf of charities where the City of London is trustee, and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Fund.
5. 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.

Current Position

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. In September, 2020, Members of this Committee agreed that the CGU should offer the whole Stronger Communities Grants Scheme on a rolling basis.
9. Delivering the grants programme on a rolling basis has allowed for communities to seek funding when it is required and receive quicker responses to applications. The budget for financial year 2020/21 was £84,000 City's Cash, the programme also benefitted from additional budget from the closure of the Spacehive programme and the balance pay-back, which was made available to this year's Stronger Communities Programme.

12-month Grant Period April 2020–March 2021		
COLC Programme	Number of Grants	Amount Awarded
Stronger Communities	12	£99,189
Stronger Communities – Combined Relief of Poverty Charity	2	£15,795
Total	14	£114,984

10. Between April 2020 and March 2021 the CGU received 59 applications: 45 were rejected or withdrawn. Analysis of these projects demonstrated that they were responding to the needs of communities across London due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these applications were for projects outside the City of London and its managed housing estates.

11. At the last Stronger Communities panel meeting in March 2021 the CGU officer outlined that, in line with the work of the Fundamental Review and savings required as a result of the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City's cash elements of the CGP and related management costs have been subject to a 12% reduction in line with other departments. The total City's Cash Grants Budget for 2021/22 will be £230,000. This equates to a reduction of £30,000, or £10,000 for each of the City's Cash Grant Programmes. The ongoing budget for the Stronger Communities Grant Programme will be £74,000.

Stronger Communities Programme 2021/22

12. The Stronger Communities Programme will continue to operate on a rolling basis, offering a Small Grant Programme and a Main Grant Programme.
13. The CGU manages the City of London CIL Neighbourhood Fund, which also operates on a rolling basis. Advice can be provided to applicants on the best route for support across all programmes.
14. To ensure that enough budget for grant-making is available throughout the year, the CGU will work with applicants to identify the best route for support. Larger applications will be encouraged to apply to the CIL Neighbourhood Fund if they meet the criteria. £20,000 of the Stronger Communities Programme will be ring-fenced for the Small Grants Scheme.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. **Strategic implications:** the approved grants in 2021/22 support the funding criteria and, in turn, the COLC's Corporate Plan by "maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities".
16. **Financial implications:** all financial implications are contained within the report.
17. **Resource implications:** all resource implications are contained within the report.
18. **Legal implications:** none.
19. **Risk implications:** none identified.
20. **Equalities implications:** the CGP's Stronger Communities funding stream was created to promote a fair system of grant-giving by the City Corporation in the community context. Applications can be prioritised according to those benefitting the City communities most affected by the pandemic, be they residents facing financial hardship, community groups facing digital and/or educational poverty, or those affected by isolation and well-being issues among other themes.
21. **Climate implications:** none
22. **Security implications:** none

Conclusion

23. 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, Rejected and Withdrawn Applications

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