

MEETING: 16/07/2104

Ref: 12282

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

Vauxhall City Farm

Adv: Julia Mirkin

Base: Lambeth

Amount requested: £147,273

Benefit: Lambeth

The Charity: Vauxhall City Farm (VCF) refers to itself as 'the farm for London'. Its vision is to allow people from all communities to experience nature by offering educational, recreational and therapeutic activities to address disadvantage, develop environmental awareness and to strengthen community cohesion.

The Application: VCF proposes to refocus its education work to reflect changes to the curriculum that will be implemented from September 2014. VCF's education work will shift away from the farm and its animals and towards horticulture and food production. VCF also proposes to introduce new clubs for young people with learning disabilities or mental ill health, and for families. It will develop green spaces on school sites, for which the organisation can generate income.

The Recommendation: VCF is going through an exciting period, involving developments to its building and its activity programme. The organisation is becoming more entrepreneurial, as seen in this proposal to adapt its education programme to reflect curriculum changes, thereby potentially aligning itself to a greater number of local schools. However, in line with Charity Commission guidelines, VCF needs to update its constitution to allow it work beyond the borough of Lambeth, which, if you choose to award a grant today, is advised be a condition of the grant. VCF has a good reputation and its previous monitoring reports have been rated as 'very good' by your officers. The recommendation is lower than the request as it is your policy for projects such as this is to fund a maximum of 1 fte post:

£116,400 over three years (£38,300; £38,800; £39,300) towards the salary of the full-time Youth & Education Manager and education programme costs. The grant is conditional upon a satisfactory constitution being in place.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
21/01/2010	£91,000 over three years (£30,000; £30,500; £30,500) for the salary of a part-time (30hrs) Education Co-ordinator and a seasonal Education Worker (15 hrs, April-Sept) and associated core costs.
17/05/2001	£66,000 over three years (3x £22,000) for the salary costs of a riding scheme for disabled children.

Background and detail of proposal

VCF requests salary costs of its Youth and Education Manager's salary and a contribution to the costs of the education programme. VCF is in the midst of a period of growth and development, under the direction of the new Chief Executive Officer, who has been in post for 18 months: the organisation's lease has just been extended by a further 125 years; a three-million capital development is commencing this summer, which will create two new classrooms and a café. VCF will deliver cooking and nutrition workshops from the café and make it available for private hires as well as offering visitors a new and improved café facility.

The proposal before you today comprises five elements: an annual programme of 20 workshops for visiting primary or special schools; family learning days; a 12-week programme for young people with learning disabilities or mental ill health and targeted environmental clubs for adults, children or parents and toddlers. Although the school group visits and family learning days are similar in structure to previous education work, the content, as previously mentioned, has shifted to focus on horticulture and its relationship to food production and nutrition.

Workshops for visiting schools will explore the production of milk, butter and cheese, growing food from seeds and preparing healthy meals. Family learning day participants will take part in bug-hunts, prepare window boxes and learn about green spaces near to where they live. The 12-week programme for 16 young people with learning disabilities will be delivered three times per year. The course will introduce knowledge and skills in husbandry; it will involve participants in the work of the stables, as well as supporting aspects of personal and social development.

Financial Information

The 14/15 budget shows that 23.9% of forecast income had been secured at the time of writing. However, as a large proportion of unrestricted income (82.3% in 12/13) is generated through ongoing activities and classes, the proportion of unrestricted income secured to date is considered to be on target. An application for £44.6k is being considered by the Big Lottery and the organisation is developing an application to Garfield Weston.

The draft accounts for 2012/13 and forecast for 14/15 show that the organisation is growing: new activities, some of which are income generating, are being introduced and the frequency of delivery is increasing. New staff have been recruited in response to the organisation's expanded programme. These developments show the organisation realising its potential to engage with wider audiences.

Year-end at 31 st March	2012/13 Audited/Examined £	2013/14 DRAFT £	2014/15 Forecast £
Income and Expenditure			
Income	464,801	566,230	615,910
Expenditure	424,438	472,002	600,314
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	31,977	23,523	(37,259)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	8,386	70,705	52,855
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	40,363	94,228	15,596
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	8.7%	16.6%	2.5%
Generating funds as % of income	5.4%	-	-
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	107,232	130,755	93,496
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	3.0	3.3	1.8
Reserves Policy target (£)	106,110	118,002	150,078
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	3	3	3
Free reserves over target / (under target)	1,122	12,753	(56,582)