

MEETING: 27/11/2014

Ref: 12406

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Friends R Us

**Adv: Sandra Davidson
Base: Hackney
Benefit: Hackney & Haringey**

Amount requested: £100,000

Amount recommended: £100,000

The Charity

Friends R Us is a youth group based in Stamford Hill catering for Orthodox Jewish girls aged 6-16. It operates from Beth Jacob House (for which the trustees of Friends R Us have the freehold). It was established in response to the need for a safe, culturally appropriate and stimulating place for the target group to enjoy making friends and developing skills and talents. Most service users are part of large, financially disadvantaged families, often living in cramped accommodation. It provides a range of creative and arts focussed activities (including singing, drama, music, dancing, arts and crafts) that allow girls to spend time outside of the home and school. Friends R Us has over 800 members, and whilst the charity charges a nominal annual fee (£10) this is waived in cases of hardship.

The Application

The charity plans to undertake a major capital project to extend and redevelop the building to make it more accessible for members with disabilities. Beth Jacob House is a converted Victorian home still in its original residential layout, and runs over three floors. Whilst there is a lot of usage of the building by the wider community, restricted accessibility means that it is harder to access for some groups than others.

The Recommendation

The total cost of the proposed redevelopment project to renovate and refurbish Beth Jacob House is £750,000 including VAT. The plans include accessible parking facilities, step free entrance, platform lift, accessible toilets, induction loops and sensory play area. Planning consent has recently been obtained.

£100,000 towards the provision of disabled access at Beth Jacob House, subject to Big Lottery funding being secured.

Funding History

| Meeting Date | Decision |
|--------------|---|
| 10/04/2014 | £4,500 to cover the costs of an independent access audit of Beth Jacob House, including the preparation of a Full Access Statement for the charity's planning application and disability and access awareness training. |

Background and detail of proposal

With your funding Friends R Us commissioned an access audit of Beth Jacob House which has informed the planned refurbishment of the building.

After three years of consultation and research to refurbish the property the charity passed the second of the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund and received a grant of £44,000 for surveys and initial building work. The charity is currently being assessed for stage 3 and, if successful, will be awarded a further £456,000 to

complete the refurbishment. A decision is expected in January 2015. It is felt that the scheme as proposed provides a good accessibility while not being detrimental to the existing fabric of the building. By providing a number of features to assist disabled people, the scheme also improves accessibility and usability for a far wider range of people and ensures easier management and operation of the facilities. Architects have been appointed and are ready to start once funds are secured. The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation has awarded a grant of £150,000 towards the costs.

The charity will be heavily supported by Interlink - an umbrella body for the Charedi (Orthodox Jewish) voluntary sector - and by the Ethical Property Foundation, both of whom are currently in receipt of funding from the Trust. In the long term, Beth Jacob House will become a lodestar for charities aiming to provide affordable community space. It will boost opportunities for socialising, improving fitness, reducing isolation and will support creative activities and pursuits for local people of all ages.

Financial Information

Total forecast income in the current year is £853,963, comprising revenue income of £98,423 and capital income of £755,540. Of these sums, £15,000 (15%) and £200,000 (26.5%) had been received respectively by October 2014. Revenue income received is low at present and this is partly due to pending grant applications amounting to £39,000 (40% of total income) with decisions not expected until the new year and because the charity's other income is earned throughout the year, including rental income, ticket sales and membership fees.

Forecast expenditure in the current year comprises revenue costs of £101,341 and capital expenditure of £728,049 for building renovation and extension works.

The cost of generating funds for 2014/15 will be calculated as part of the year end process.

| Year end at 31 October | 2012/13 Independently Examined Accounts | 2013/14 Draft Accounts | 2014/15 Current Year Budget |
|--|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Income and Expenditure | | | |
| Income | 47,218 | 113,039 | 853,963 |
| Expenditure | 50,969 | 63,008 | 829,390 |
| Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit) | (3,751) | 5,571 | (2,918) |
| Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit) | 0 | 44,460 | 27,491 |
| Total Surplus / (Deficit) | (3,751) | 50,031 | 24,573 |
| Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover | (7.9%) | 44.3% | 2.9% |
| Cost of Generating funds (% of income) | 3,910 (8.3%) | 11,031 (9.8%) | |
| Free unrestricted reserves | | | |
| Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End | 14,395 | 19,966 | 17,048 |
| How many months' worth of expenditure (revenue only) | 3.4 | 3.8 | 2.0 |
| Reserves Policy target | 12,742 – 38,227 | 15,753 – 47,259 | 25,335 – 76,005 |
| How many months' worth of expenditure (revenue only) | 3.0 – 9.0 | 3.0 – 9.0 | 3.0 – 9.0 |
| Free reserves over/(under) target | 1,653 – (23,832) | 4,213 – (27,293) | (8,287) – (58,957) |