

Committee	Date:
The City Bridge Trust Committee	24 May 2016
Subject: Review of eligibility cap on capital requests	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision

Summary

Following a request by your Committee this report reviews the appropriateness of the current £10m eligibility threshold on the total cost of redevelopments in relation to your funding for capital, access, works.

Recommendation

That the current threshold of £10m for the total cost of building developments eligible to be considered for a capital grant should remain at 10m and that it be reviewed again as part of the next Quinquennial Review.

Main Report

Background

1. The Trust funds capital and revenue, though usually not both at the same time. In certain circumstances (eg where all of an organisation's work meets your priorities) you are able to contribute to the general capital costs of a redevelopment or refurbishment. Most of your capital funding, however, is for costs directly related to improving access for disabled people and is conditional on those works being informed by an independent access audit.
2. Your policy states that you can award up to £100,000 for works which are part of a redevelopment or refurbishment of an existing building (not stand-alone, new build); and that the total cost of such redevelopments usually must not exceed £10m. At your meeting in January 2016 officers were asked to explore whether or not this cap of £10m was still appropriate.
3. Providing capital funding for access works has been an extremely successful and valuable programme for disabled Londoners and, from the earliest days of the Trust, has enabled hundreds of community buildings and services to be more inclusive. When you first agreed your current policies, following the last Quinquennial Review in 2013, you set a threshold of £5m on the full cost of redevelopments. The principle behind the threshold was to target your funds at smaller, local, developments which were more likely to serve local communities and which, by their nature, would find it harder to raise the necessary funds than would the larger, regional or national, organisations which, in most cases, could call upon professional fundraising staff and would be more likely to offer services to significant numbers of non-Londoners.

Current Position

4. A year after the introduction of your current *Investing in Londoners* programmes in late 2013 you undertook a mini-review of how the new programmes were faring in their application. A number of elements for fine-tuning were then agreed by your Committee and ratified by Court in October 2014.
5. One of these elements included the increase of the threshold of £5m to one of £10m. This was to take account of the general and not insignificant increase in building costs since the lower threshold was first considered and because an increasing number of local, community-based, schemes were struggling to be eligible.
6. Whilst the current £10m threshold has rendered some applications ineligible, analysis of applications made to the Trust shows that this has affected no more than 10% of bids. Indeed, the threshold is not applied strictly to the letter of the law in that your policy states that £10m is the threshold that is *normally* considered. Developments a little in excess of this or with a sound, exceptional, reason may have their application considered.
7. Your officers have also consulted the Centre for Accessible Environments where, you will recall, you have funded the post of Access & Sustainability Advisor for several years and whose job it is to provide advice and guidance to potential applicants and those seeking information on good practice, etc. The Advisor has confirmed that there have been few enquiries (again no more than 10%) made of them for developments in excess of £10m.

Proposal

8. Given that your policy is to support improved access to community buildings of benefit to Londoners and that this policy has excluded comparatively few schemes, it is proposed that the current threshold remains. It is also sensible to maintain the status quo in view of the fact that this policy, along with all others, will be reconsidered when your next Quinquennial Review process commences later this year.

Conclusion

That the current threshold of £10m for the total cost of building developments eligible to be considered for a capital grant should remain at 10m and that it be reviewed again as part of the next Quinquennial Review.

Appendices

None

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