

Committee	Dated:
City Bridge Trust	14/07/2016
Subject: Strategic Initiative: Access and Sustainability Advisory Service	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision

Summary

This paper seeks your approval to continue to fund the Access and Sustainability Advisory within the Centre for Accessible Environments (a project of the housing association, Habinteg) for the next five years in order to support applicants to your *Access to Buildings* programme, as well as the wider voluntary sector in London.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Approve the sum of £311,000 over five years (£61,000; £61,000; £62,000; £63,000; £64,000) towards the salary and associated running costs of the Access and Sustainability Advisory Service, with the grant subject to external evaluation after three years.

Main Report

Background

1. Since December 2005, you have commissioned the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) to provide an Access and Sustainability Advice Service in order to support applicants to your *Access to Buildings* programme as well as the wider voluntary sector in London. CAE merged with the housing association, Habinteg, in 2004, to become its consultancy division. Habinteg has been instrumental in developing the concept of Lifelong Homes for disabled people and state-of-the-art design in the built environment. The merger is therefore highly beneficial to both parties.
2. You asked CAE to create the post delivering this service because applicants to your *Access to Buildings* programme often found it difficult to secure the full range of good quality advice and information needed when making access improvements. There was a great need for information on areas such as what an access audit is; how to find an access auditor; finding and appointing architects and quantity surveyors; what is liable for VAT; and disability equalities training. "*Sustainability*" was built into the job title in order to

encourage organisations to consider the environmental impact of their buildings at the same time as when considering making access improvements.

3. This service is one of several specialist projects you fund in order to underpin and add value to your wider grant-making. These include your support for the London Property Service at Ethical Property Foundation; the Cranfield Trust; and the Media Trust. The postholder has good links with the Ethical Property Foundation.
4. In 2007, you published '*Opening Doors Across London*' as a result of an evaluation of your Access to Buildings programme. Although it showcases examples of good practice, it also illustrates just how stressful managing a building project can be, especially for smaller organisations and highlights the importance of accessing good quality advice and information.
5. In 2014 the programme won an international commendation for its inclusive approach to facilitating professional access advice. The commendation was announced at the Zero Project Conference at the UN Headquarters in Vienna.
6. The postholder provides a much needed 'hand-holding' service from pre-application stage through to the completion of the building work, including site visits as required. She also provides workshops for third sector organisations on access and sustainability issues. The service is promoted on your website and applicants are encouraged to contact the postholder prior to submitting an *Access to Buildings* application.
7. Feedback from those using the service during the past year includes:

"Thank you so much for your visit yesterday and for the speedy arrival of useful documents. After you left, we agreed that the church needs to undertake a full access audit as soon as we are able so that we can sort out the priorities for an overall plan and have a sense of the likely total costs."

"...thank you so much for taking so much time on this and sharing so much really useful feedbackI will absolutely take this all on board."

Current Position

8. The last grant approved for this service was in April 2013 when you approved a grant of £192,900 over three years (£65,000; £62,800; £65,100). This grant ends at the end of July 2016. This paper seeks your approval to re-fund this service which supports your *Access to Buildings* programme.
9. To date, your funding commitments to this service have been in three-year tranches, in line with your usual duration of grants. However, in October 2014 the Court of Common Council agreed the following policy:

“Applications be considered for grants of five year duration from organisations that:

- (i) Provide capacity-building services to support London’s voluntary sector at the local borough, sub-regional or pan-London level including, where appropriate, to support the collaboration or consolidation of organisations; or*
- (ii) Can demonstrate that they are uniquely placed (by virtue of the nature of their work) to deliver a particular project or service; or*
- (iii) Are developing high-quality services that can be scaled-up to benefit all of London or which are breaking exceptional new ground.*

These grants are subject to external evaluation after three years.”

10. The Access and Sustainability Advisory Service is building the capacity of London’s voluntary sector, whilst CAE is a leading authority on inclusive design in the UK. It is recommended, therefore, that you commit to funding this service for a further five years in order to provide it with stability and the ability to plan ahead.

What will be provided?

11. If funding is approved today, it is proposed that the Access and Sustainability Advisory Service would continue to offer the same range of services, as follows:
 - Ensuring would-be applicants understand the basic eligibility criteria.
 - Provide alternative potential funding sources for ineligible applicants.
 - Signposting to suitable, relevant professionals, including the National Register of Access Consultants (which is managed by CAE).
 - Helping to bridge the relationship between charitable organisations and access auditors/consultants.
 - Providing fact sheets and guidance to the sector on good access, as well as information on eco-audits, language and communication.
 - One-to-one interpretation of access audit reports and design appraisals.
 - Signposting to equality and accessibility awareness training.
 - Identifying local user groups to help shape access plans, such as a local disability organisation.
 - Helping organisations devise monitoring and evaluation frameworks that are suitable to assess the difference the access improvements have made.
 - Technical advice on access legislation and best practice guidance which covers a wide range of resources as well as bespoke advice, tailored to an individual organisation’s specific circumstances.
 - Training courses for London’s voluntary sector about the Access and Sustainability Service, City Bridge Trust funding and accessibility legislation and implementation.

Future additional services

12. If further funding is approved, CAE would propose to enhance the service by offering:
 - Sharing of knowledge and experience on the challenges of managing building projects.

- A re-fresh of CBT's 'Opening Doors' publication.
- An Access and Sustainability Advisory Service guidance publication as a supporting document to the service to cover such things as access legislation, quick 'access wins', managing inclusive services and monitoring and evaluating inclusion.
- The development of an accessibility awareness training component to underpin CBT's *Making London More Inclusive* programme to help build confidence amongst charitable organisations developing more inclusive services, including putting access audit recommendations into practice.
- Post-grant evaluations. Some post-grant visits are undertaken by the Access and Sustainability Advisory Service, but the proposal is to formalise this with an access review and testimonials from staff and building users, leading to case studies which could be used on the webpages of CBT, CAE and the organisations themselves.

Cost

13. A detailed budget for the proposed five years of the service has been provided and is contained in the table below.

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
IT equipment and support	250	800	250	800	250
Tablets for trainees	2,000	500	500	500	500
Salaries	49,000	49,980	50,980	51,999	53,039
Overheads	6,000	6,120	6,242	6,367	6,495
Training resources	800	816	832	849	866
Refreshments	1,200	1,224	1,248	1,273	1,299
Travel	650	663	676	690	704
Staff training	850	867	884	902	920
Total	60,750	60,970	61,613	63,381	64,072

Financial Implications

14. The Chamberlain has been consulted in the drafting of this paper and makes the following comments:

"Habinteg Housing Association Ltd was registered as a mutual society on 06/02/1970. The latest available accounts are for the year ended 31 March 2015, and indicate that the society:-

- 1) *made a surplus for the year of some £3 million on incoming resources of some £21.4 million (2013/14: made a surplus for the year of some £2.7 million on a turnover of some £21.2 million).*
- 2) *had working capital (current assets exceed current liabilities) of some £6.3 million (2013/14: had working capital of some £6.8 million).*

- 3) *had net funds (total assets less total liabilities) of some £41.3 million (2013/14: had net funds of some £38.2 million).*

Based on these accounts, the organisation appears financially satisfactory to undertake the above grant-funded service.”

Conclusion

15. The Access and Sustainability Advice Service has grown into an extremely important element of your funding portfolio. It adds value to your grant-making by ensuring that those funded on your *Access to Buildings* programme have access to good quality advice and support. It also provides support to the voluntary sector more widely.
16. CAE is a leading authority on inclusive design in the UK and is ideally placed to host the Access and Sustainability Advisory Service over the next three years.

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