

**MEETING: 22/09/2016**

**Ref: 13240**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector**

**Community Links Bromley**

**Adv: Julia Mirkin**

**Amount requested: £66,769**

**Base: Bromley**

**Benefit: Bromley**

**Amount recommended: £66,750**

**The Charity**

Community Links Bromley (CLB) is the CVS and Volunteer Centre for the London borough of Bromley. It aims to reduce disadvantage by supporting the development of Bromley-based voluntary organisations. CLB supports its 300 members, offering regular training courses and networking events; it also publishes a weekly e-bulletin and facilitates online forums. As well as supporting the voluntary sector directly, CLB works strategically with the CCG, Bromley Health Care and the south London CVS partnership.

**The Application:** The proposed project has two aims: to build capacity in evaluation across Bromley's voluntary sector; secondly, to support charitable organisations in Bromley to serve more diverse communities.

**The Recommendation**

This proposal has been informed by recent research carried out by CLB about the sector and Bromley's changing demographics. It boldly addresses a new and specific issue to Bromley, proposing an early intervention and adopting the facilitation role required to embed change.

***£66,750 over two years (£35,250; £31,500) towards project delivery, including tutors' fees, venues and materials, project management and on-costs.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
18/03/2010	£90,000 over two years (2 x £45,000) for the support and continued development of the Funding Information and Advice Service.
05/06/2008	£42,920 for a third and final year of the salary costs of developing a funding information and advice service.
06/04/2006	£80,000 over two years (2X £40,000) for the salary costs of developing a funding information and advice service.

**Background and detail of proposal**

Bromley is a large, outer London borough that fairs well compared to other local authorities: 79.7% of Bromley's population was economically active in 2015 compared with 77.7% for London. Furthermore, 27.8% of the employed population in Bromley have a 'professional occupation' compared to 23.9%, the figure for London. Despite Bromley's relative affluence, it does have pockets of deprivation and is slowly becoming more diverse: in 2009, 85.4% of Bromley's population was White (and conversely 14.6% were non-White) whereas the latest (2015) GLA population estimates project that 17.9% of Bromley's population is from BME backgrounds.

Despite these shifting demographics, the council and the voluntary sector remain largely unchanged, which, according to CLB, is attributed to the sector's inability to engage with Bromley's diverse communities. This proposal is informed by the State of the Sector report that CLB has recently completed: the report stated that although the voluntary sector needs support to connect with more diverse communities, a

great untapped potential exists in terms of volunteering and support for local services, indicating the profitability of this proposal. Finally, CLB has been awarded a two-year grant from Trust for London to promote and develop its policy-related and strategic equalities work, which will dovetail and add value to the planned project.

CLB proposes to work with 18 organisations, targeting those that are small and less well-resourced. A capacity-building programme will be delivered, incorporating monitoring and evaluation, planning and change implementation - to services and operations - with the aim of reaching more diverse communities. By developing the sector's ability to identify its weaknesses in relation to equalities and monitor its efforts to address them, CLB hopes to increase and improve the sector's engagement with diverse communities in the borough.

Voluntary organisations will be supported to establish 'Diversity and Impact Groups', comprising Trustees, staff at different levels of seniority, volunteers and service users. Evaluation training will comprise sessions in 'theories of change'; establishing baseline measurements and target setting. A two-day course in equality and diversity will be delivered alongside the evaluation training, ensuring that groups are aware of best practice in relation to equalities and can identify realistic targets for their development in this area.

CLB will work with each group individually to refine its individual project aims, methodology, targets, evaluation framework and delivery and monitoring plans. A toolkit providing different approaches to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment will be updated and circulated by CLB as part of the project. Groups will also be introduced to digital impact measurement systems and digital platforms through which they can stay in touch with each other and cascade their learning. 18 voluntary organisations will establish baseline measurements and action plans as part of this project. Although targets will be set individually, the key outcome will be increased engagement with diverse communities by the 18 organisations supported.

### **Financial Information**

Audited accounts for 2014/15 show that CLB incurred a total deficit of £41,905 (8.6% of income) for the year. The deficit is largely attributed to the loss of the 'Healthwatch Bromley' contract, which became an independent organisation on 1 April 2015, and the Big Locals contract. This coincided with the end of a number of funding agreements and a period of research and development undertaken by CLB.

Draft accounts for 2015/16 show that CLB's income fell significantly compared to the prior year largely due to the full-year effect of losing the Healthwatch Bromley and Big Locals contracts. Whilst expenditure also reduced, it did not fall in line with income due to several factors: the payment of £87,652 to eliminate the charity's pension deficit, planned use of restricted funds of £36,413 which were received in prior years, and being committed to pay fixed-term contracts for office facilities that were agreed when the staff team was larger.

Forecast income for the current year 2016/17 is £313,191, which the charity advises had all been secured by 10 June 2016. The charity says that its improved financial forecast is due to CLB being a lead partner in Bromley Third Sector Enterprise, through which it will now provide services in care navigation and social prescribing.

A surplus is forecast for 2016/17 of £22,340, which should move free unrestricted funds from the negative position as at 31 March 2016, to a positive holding of £17,099, equivalent to 3 weeks' worth of expenditure. Whilst this would be an

improvement, it is still substantially below the charity's modest reserves policy to hold three months 'core' running costs in reserve (£46,000), which equates to approximately 2 months' worth of total expenditure. The charity intends to review this target in the future to ensure that it is adequate.

<b>Year end at 31 March</b>	<b>14/15 Independently examined Accounts</b>	<b>2015/16 Draft Outturn</b>	<b>2016/17 Current Year Forecast</b>
Income	489,982	231,341	313,191
Expenditure	531,887	385,050	290,851
<b>Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(28,235)</b>	<b>(117,296)</b>	<b>22,340</b>
<b>Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(13,670)</b>	<b>(36,413)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(41,905)</b>	<b>(153,709)</b>	<b>22,340</b>
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(8.6%)	(66.44%)	7.13%
Cost of Gen funds (% of income)	0 (0.0%)	23,401 (10.1%)	39,321 (12.6%)
Unrestricted free reserves at Yr End	112,055	(5,241)	17,099
Months' worth of expenditure	2.5	(0.2)	0.71
Reserves Policy target	46,000	46,000	46,000
Months' worth of expenditure	1.03	1.43	1.9
Free reserves over/(under) target	66,055	(51,241)	(28,901)