

MEETING: 24/11/2016

Ref: 13531

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Wandsworth Citizens Advice Bureaux

Adv: Tania Bronstein

Amount requested: £64,299

Base: Wandsworth

Benefit: Wandsworth

Amount recommended: £64,300

The Charity:

This is a partnership bid from Wandsworth Citizens Advice Bureaux (WCAB) and Wandsworth Foodbank (WF). WCAB, the lead partner, provides free, independent advice on a variety of issues including money and debt, welfare benefits, housing employment and immigration, annually helping 8,000 local residents. WF is part of the Trussell Trust's network of foodbanks. It was launched in 2013 with five churches hosting food distribution sessions seven days a week. WF provided three days' worth of emergency food parcels to 4,078 people in 1011 households in 2015-16.

The Application:

WCAB seeks funding for a third and final year of a project funded by the Trust which supports people in crisis to address the underlying problems that cause them to need emergency food. WCAB has trained 42 WF volunteers to offer initial "first aid" advice to WF visitors, and an experienced WCAB advisor at the premises conducts follow up casework on more complex issues such as benefits appeals and debt restructuring. Your current grant is in its second year and ends on 31.03.2017.

The Recommendation:

This project is trailblazing a successful model that up-skills Foodbank volunteers, offers visitors much more than emergency hand-outs, and fast-tracks visitors to expert advice and lasting, long-term solutions to their problems. This application presents two issues as regards your policy to provide only one grant to any organisation at any one-time:

- (a) Your previous award acknowledged that because this is a partnership and as neither partner would be making an application in their own right, a yearly grant higher than you would usually provide for work in a single borough is warranted;
- (b) As noted under the "Financial Observations" section, WCAB recently merged with another organisation you fund. However this application was invited and received before the merger took place, at which time this policy issue did not arise.

£64,300 for the third and final year of meeting staffing and overheads costs of an advice service for Wandsworth Foodbank users

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
28/01/2015	£130,000 over two years (£68,000; £62,000) towards an advice service for Wandsworth Foodbank users.

Background and detail of proposal

According to Wandsworth Food Poverty Report (May 2016), the number of local people receiving emergency food increased by 25% in 2015/16. This report highlights delays and changes in benefits amongst the most common reasons why

people have to resort to WF for food parcels. This project therefore sensibly focuses on helping WF visitors in tackling the root causes of their difficulties e.g. ensuring receipt of benefits due; challenging adverse benefit decisions, or helping people to negotiate affordable debt and/or rent arrears repayments. In its first year, WF volunteers advised 585 households, and the WCAB advisor dealt with 626 complex advice issues presented by 160 people. A survey of WF guests in October 2015 identified that 67% of those acting on advice received reported improvements in their situation. At this point, the financial gain achieved for visitors totalled £85,740. The monitoring report for the first year of your current grant was very satisfactory and shows that expectations were surpassed e.g. WCAB had trained 42 WF volunteers against the original target of 28. The second year's report is not due yet, but interim figures show steady service up-take.

Financial Observations

Forecast income in 2017/18 (the year relevant to this request) is £1,197,527, of which £810,404 (67.7%) was confirmed as of 20/09/2016. At that date, 98.9% of forecast income for 2016/17 was secured.

As from 01/10/2016, WCAB merged with Disability and Social Care Advice Service (DASCAS), a smaller charity also funded by the Trust. Your officers regard the merger as a positive development and have agreed to transfer funds awarded to DASCAS (£16,375 in 2016/17 and £33,409 in 2017/18) to WCAB. Increased income and expenditure levels shown in 2016/17 and 2017/18 include these sums and other funds secured and committed towards DASCAS' services from other sources.

The seemingly low percentage of cost of generating funds in respect of turnover below is explained by the fact that significant funds have been already secured for the period 2013 - 2018 via commissioning contracts with LB Wandsworth, which is providing £445,100 to WCAB and £59,775 to DASCAS in 2017/18.

Year end at 31 March	2015/16 Audited Accounts £	2016/17 Current Year Forecast £	2017/18 Next Year Forecast £
Income and Expenditure			
Income	922,096	1,079,338	1,197,527
Expenditure	951,225	1,074,040	1,179,503
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	17,033	631	13,357
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(46,162)	4,667	4,667
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(29,129)	5,298	18,024
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	3.16%	0.49%	1.5%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	20,930 (2.3%)	26,210 (2.4%)	27,612 (2.3%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	349,770	350,401	363,758
How many months' worth of expenditure	4.4	3.9	3.7
Reserves Policy target	237,806	268,510	294,876
How many months' worth of expenditure	3	3	3
Free reserves over/(under) target	111,964	81,891	68,882