

**MEETING: 27/07/2017**

**Ref: 14021**

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

**Aston-Mansfield**

**Adv: Sandra Jones**

**Base: Newham**

**Amount requested: £143,496**

**Benefit: Newham**

**Amount recommended: £144,000**

**The Charity**

Aston-Mansfield (A-M) was formed in 2000 from the merger of two well-established local organisations: the Aston Charities which had long assisted the poor of the East End; and the Mansfield Settlement which was an initiative of Oxford's Mansfield Hall (now College). Both bodies were firmly rooted in nineteenth century Christian-based philanthropy. The main home for Aston-Mansfield is Durning Hall in Forest Gate. Its activities include arts, dance, sports and health sessions; play schemes, basic skills classes, after school clubs, community café etc. It provides a space for hundreds of small local groups to meet each year as well as office space for small charities, which also benefit from A-M's in-house Community Involvement Unit (CIU) whose main programmes are: community development, lifelong learning, and healthy living.

**The Application**

The applicant is seeking support to provide a range of finance services and tools to local organisations over a three year period. This will be achieved through the employment of a part-time Project Lead (3 days per week), part –time Project Worker (2 days per week), 2 volunteers for 3 days per week and associated running costs.

**The Recommendation**

A-M is a well-established infrastructure organisation which has a strong track record of delivery in Newham. It is considered to be the Borough's chief infrastructure group as there has not been a Council for Voluntary Service for some years. The charity's CIU has experience of offering capacity-building support for over 25 years working with over 200 small and emerging groups. The project was worked up following information from the sector, as well as feedback from a number of funders in the borough which identified a consistently poor standard of financial reporting and funding applications. The charity submitted an earlier application in March (subsequently withdrawn) that was requesting 2 f/t staff and a large amount towards core costs. This has now been revised down, with the outcomes remaining the same and outputs only slightly lower. Given the financial position of the organisation's free reserves it is recommended that release of the grant should be subject to the submission of satisfactory quarterly management accounts, including the cash balance held.

***£144,000 over three years (£48,000; £47,000; £49,000) towards a 0.6FTE Project Manager, 0.4FTE Project worker, volunteer expenses and associated running costs. This is subject to the submission of satisfactory quarterly management accounts, including the cash balance held.***

### **Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
11/05/2017	Application withdrawn
13/02/2013	£32,350 over two years (£16,450; £15,900) for a p/t (2dpw) Outreach Worker and running costs to engage minority organisations in Newham ESOL Exchange.

### **Background and detail of proposal**

A-M will deliver a comprehensive programme of activity that includes workshops, training sessions, 1-2-1 surgeries and mentoring; providing a project that is tailored to the needs of the participants. Targeting small and emerging groups, the charity will deliver services that cover budget planning and writing for funding bids, full cost recovery principles for fundraisers, understanding financial reports for trustees and management committee members, recording finance. Specific workshops on pensions, opening bank accounts, building and investing reserves and selecting auditors/independent examiners will also be offered. Two larger conferences will be held, aimed at bringing together the sector and developing networks, sharing good practice and exploring ways of working together e.g. sharing 'back office' services. Corporate volunteers from the Finance Sector will be recruited to offer additional support. The organisation is very well networked and has contacts with CRS and local partners.

### **Financial Information**

A-M is not reliant on statutory sector funding, which is less than 10% of their income. The largest contributor is their sister organisation Aston-Mansfield Charitable Trust, set up to hold the assets and investments from Aston Charities Trust. AMCT is a grant-giving trust whose largest single grant each year is to A-M (between £400,000 - £500,000 per annum). During 2015/16 the organisation explored new business models and has been supporting the children and young people's element to turn into a social enterprise 'from cradle to career'. This began to be implemented in the current year, and will continue into 2017/18. A-M stated that if they were to get into financial difficulties they could approach AMCT for additional funds as is the case in implementing their new strategy. If the position were to deteriorate further ACMT will step in and oversee remedial action to return the charity to the agreed level of reserves and ensure that operations are viable.

Year end as at March	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	Audited Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	1,323,109	1,516,634	1,604,557
- % of Income confirmed as at 05/07/17	n/a	n/a	100%
Expenditure	(1,335,262)	(1,543,167)	(1,736,103)
Total surplus/(deficit)	<b>(12,153)</b>	<b>(26,533)</b>	<b>(131,546)</b>
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(11,660)	(16,658)	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	26,516	(9,875)	(131,546)
Endowment Fund	(27,009)		
	<b>(12,153)</b>	<b>(26,533)</b>	<b>(131,546)</b>
Cost of Raising Funds	78,201	79,172	75,486
- % of income	5.9%	4.9%	5.0%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	1,220,488	1,457,601	1,492,070
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	385,478	376,353	250,051
No of months of operating expenditure	3.8	3.1	2.0
Reserves policy target	305,122.0	364,400.3	373,017.5
No of months of operating expenditure	3	3	3
Free reserves over/(under) target	80,356	11,953	(122,967)