

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Vineyard Congregational Church

Adv: Jack Joslin

Amount requested: £100,000

Base: Richmond

Benefit: Richmond

Amount recommended: £100,000

The Applicant

The Vineyard Life Church (VLC) is a registered charity and owner of 19th Century Church premises comprising of upper ground and lower ground floors and garden in an area of conservation in Richmond. The lower ground premises are occupied with a non-exclusive 12 year lease by the Vineyard Community Centre, a separate charity that was founded and overseen by the Church. VLC is managed by a board of 8 Management Trustees but also has a Custodian Trustee, the Congregational Federation. This arrangement safeguards and protects the rights of the building and requires that the disposal or amendments of any of the charity's assets is not done without agreement. The Congregational Federation are not involved with the day to day running but do provide training to staff and trustees.

The Application

This application is seeking your support towards the costs of improving the access to the Church building to make it more accessible to the local community. Neither the upper ground or lower ground premises are currently step-free, except one level of the public garden at the back of the site. The improvement of access to the premises will open up both the upper and lower ground premises to the wider community. On visiting, your officer was struck by the amount of activity taking place at the Community Centre on the lower ground. Daily, before 11am, the Centre is open to homeless people to access cleaning facilities, showers, breakfast and free coffee. The lower ground floor is also home to the local Trussell Trust foodbank as well as housing a youth service in the evenings. The upper floor is where the Church is based but the space has community facilities and kitchen adjacent to the main hall. This application will improve the accessibility of all levels.

The Recommendation

This application fits with your programme outcomes for making London more inclusive as it will be making a community asset more accessible. At assessment your officer determined that this funding would lead to wider use of the space to the community and will not be focused on expanding the accessibility for the Church and its congregation. On visiting, your officer was impressed with the range of community activity on offer at the space. All other funding for the project has been raised to date. Funding is recommended as follows:

£100,000 to improve the access to both levels of the Vineyard Congregational Church providing two new lifts, improved accessible toilet facilities, new doors and widened entrances.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
16/07/2014	£5000 for the costs of an independent access audit.

Background and detail of proposal

An independent access audit was funded by your Committee in 2014 with the access report updated in October 2017 by Chris Harrowell Architects which outlined practical solutions to improve the access of the whole Church. The existing building is inaccessible due to stepped access to all entrances. There is an accessible WC in the entrance of the Church but this cannot be accessed from the basement below. The plan involves putting in two lifts to ensure access to both levels of the building. A new accessible toilet will be fitted with access from both the Church and from the outside which is close to the entrance of the Community Centre. The anticipated budget for all the work is £220,000 with the Church already securing £120,000 from a variety of other funds. A grant as advised would complete the funding required to ensure this building is as accessible as possible to the community it serves.

The upper ground Church is a place of worship, with community rooms for hire alongside other public use such as by children's groups, NHS self-help communities, a choir, winter night shelter and space for addiction recovery groups. The lower ground floor Community Centre offers a wide range of public benefit but is principally known for crisis support, that your officer witnessed on his visit. The Community Centre offers borough wide support to the impoverished and marginalised while also housing agencies such as CAB, Housing, Community nurses. The Community Centre also operates a café, foodbank and gardening programme. In the evening and at weekends the space is used by a local youth service.

Financial Information

The Charity's accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis and the forecast deficit of £100,000 for the year ending 31 March 2019 is the unconfirmed income being requested from your committee. The Charity run a lean turnover but hold adequate reserves for the purposes of their operation. Funding secured already for this project is £99,000 from the London Borough of Richmond under their Village Plan Scheme, as this is not restricted to any particular aspect of the project it will provide cash-flow for the overall project.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Examined Accounts £	2018 Draft £	2019 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	171,980	224,863	227,296
- % of Income confirmed as at 23/05/2018	n/a	n/a	56%
Expenditure	(226,438)	(170,610)	(321,946)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(54,458)	54,253	(94,650)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(64,711)	59,211	(100,000)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	10,253	(4,958)	5,350
	(54,458)	54,253	(94,650)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	0	0
- % of income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	134,694	126,926	121,946
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	12,832	7,874	13,224
No of months of operating expenditure	1.1	0.7	1.3
Reserves policy target	11,224	10,577	10,162
No of months of operating expenditure	1.0	1.0	1.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	1,608	(2,703)	3,062