

# LONDON COUNCILS GRANTS COMMITTEE

22 November 2017

Minutes of the Grants Committee held at London Councils, 59½ Southwark Street, London SE1 0AL on Wednesday 22 November 2017

London Borough & Royal Borough:

Representative:

Barnet	Cllr Suri Khatri (substitute)
Bexley	Cllr Don Massey
Brent	Cllr Margaret McLennan
Ealing	Cllr Ranjit Dheer
Enfield	Cllr Yasemin Brett
Greenwich	Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald
Hackney	Cllr Jonathan McShane
Islington	Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz
Kensington & Chelsea	Cllr Mary Wheale
Kingston upon Thames	Cllr Hugh Scantlebury
Merton	Cllr Edith Macauley
Newham	Cllr Forhad Hussain (Chair)
Redbridge	Cllr Bob Littlewood
Richmond	Cllr David Linette
Sutton	Cllr Simon Wales
Tower Hamlets	Cllr Abdul Mukit MBE
Waltham Forest	Cllr Liaquat Ali
Wandsworth	Cllr Paul Ellis
Westminster	Cllr David Harvey

London Councils officers were in attendance.

Cllr Hussain confirmed that as deputy he would be chairing the meeting in the absence of Cllr McGlone.

The Chair informed the Committee that Cllr Maddan (LB Wandsworth) had passed away in September, and extended condolences to Cllr Maddan's family. He also thanked Cllr Maddan for his contribution to Grants Committee over the years; he had joined Grants Committee in 2009 and was also a Grants Executive member.

The Chair also thanked Cllr Carr (LB Bromley) for his service on Grants Committee and Grants Executive for over 13 years, and as the Conservative Group Lead. It was confirmed that Cllr Don Massey (LB Bexley) would be taking over as the new Conservative Group Lead on Grants Committee, and Cllr Colin Smith would be replacing Cllr Carr as the Grants Committee representative from LB Bromley.

## 1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Saima Ashraf (Barking & Dagenham), Cllr Richard Cornelius (Barnet), Cllr Colin Smith (Bromley), Alison Gowman (City of London), Cllr Yasemin Brett (Enfield), Cllr Sue Fennimore (Hammersmith & Fulham), Cllr Sue Anderson (Harrow), Cllr Paul McGlone (Lambeth), Cllr Joan Millbank (Lewisham) and Cllr Barrie Hargrove (Southwark).

1.2 Because of an issue relating to some Councillors not receiving invitations to all meetings, it was agreed that London Councils Corporate Governance team would ensure that all members were aware of Committee dates.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 Cllr Massey declared an interest in item 4 as he was employed by a charity. Cllr Comer-Schwarz declared an interest in item 6 because Islington ran the NRPF Network.

## **3. Minutes of the Grants Committee AGM – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

- 3.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the deletion of the duplication of Cllr Massey's name, and the inclusion of Cllr Mukit in the apologies for absence.

## **4. Final Performance Report of the London Councils Grants Programme 2013-17**

- 4.1 The Chair introduced the report, noting the key successes of the programme: 80,000 homelessness interventions; over 300,000 sexual and domestic violence interventions; and 11,558 poverty interventions, including 1,457 people gaining employment. He also referred to the lessons learned draft response to the Charity Commission's consultation on charities annual submissions, which he hoped members would agree to.
- 4.2 Cllr Comer-Schwartz asked how the successes of the programme were being publicised. Although the Chair mentioned the use of members' briefings, it was agreed that Yolande Burgess, London Councils Strategy Director, would discuss publicity options with the London Councils Communications team and report back to Committee members via the Chair. The Chair felt that a handout summarising successes would be useful.
- 4.3 Cllr Massey thanked staff for the report and the honest way in which all the issues had been set out in it. He stressed the need for this balance to be maintained in the wider publicity about the programme.
- 4.4 Cllr Wales noted that the formation of consortia was crucial to the programme's success, and felt that an understanding of how partnerships, which levered in funding, was important in any evaluation. Katy Makepeace-Gray, Principal Programme Manager, confirmed that the information would be included in feedback to the Committee at its July 2018 meeting. Cllr Wales also wanted to be reassured that any consortia publicity should make the involvement of London Councils clear. The Principal Programme Manager confirmed that this was a requirement of funding, set out in the provider handbook and checked via evaluation reports, and that any leaflets recognised London Councils input and included logos. The Chair felt that this visibility should also extend to social media.
- 4.5 Cllr Comer-Schwarz congratulated London Councils providers on the success of the recent Homelessness launch event, and felt that the meeting of many different organisations to discuss the impact on young people in particular was very positive.
- 4.6 Cllr Khatri identified a number of small errors in the figures within the report, which London Councils staff agreed to change. In addition it was confirmed that the total figure of £5.32 million in section 5.4.1 of the report could not be broken down further as this represented one specification.

### **4.7 Members:**

Noted the summary of final performance data provided in section five of the report

Noted the assessment on the extent to which themes drawn out in the 2012 Grants Review were addressed in the 2013-17 Programme as outlined in sections two to four

Noted the lessons learned from the 2013-17 Grants Programme, particularly those identified through the Grants Review 2015-16 as outlined in section four of the report

Endorsed the continued approach to addressing lessons learned as set out in section four (this is also outlined in the report on the 2017-21 Programme on this agenda)

Agreed that officers submit the draft response to the Charity Commission consultation on charities annual submissions, included at Appendix One of the report

## **5. Performance of Grants Programme 2017-21**

5.1 The Strategy Director introduced the report, commenting that it covered Quarters 1 and 2 of 2017/18.

5.2 Members were informed that while Priority 1 and 2 elements of the programme were above profile, Priority 3 (ESF) was underperforming. This had largely been due to changes in ESF eligibility criteria not being understood within London Councils, but it was stressed that project partners had worked hard to address the issues. Historical issues had now been addressed, and regular liaison with partners at Chief Executive level was now taking place as well as re-profiling meetings, and there was a better level of confidence than a few months previously. Consideration had been given to extending the programme for 6 months and utilizing flexibility in the ESF. An issue for the partners was that the current target group was not as broadly defined as the previous programme and employment levels have improved. In January there would be a focus on engagement strategies with partners, including talking to the DWP to improve referrals.

5.3 The Chair thanked the Strategy Director for her explanation, commenting on the similarity to pensions issues where performance sometimes dipped, which was not necessarily representative of the fund's overall health.

5.4 Cllr Massey was pleased to learn of the recovery plan in relation to the ESF element of the programme and also that lessons had been learned. He recognised that although there was quite a volume of information this was useful, and that he encouraged other members to make use of the borough grants officer in their borough. He felt that it was a challenge to get the balance right in terms of the level of information, and that this should be kept under review.

5.5 Cllr Littlewood felt that it was important to be upfront regarding difficulties experienced, and recognised the pressure on partners while the issues were being resolved. He felt that reasonably regular updates should be given to the Committee on this issue and was worried about progress. The Chair agreed that members of the Executive should be updated monthly on progress.

5.6 In response to a question from Cllr Wheale, the Strategy Director confirmed that the issues with ESF related to not correctly picking up the change of London Councils status from co-financier to direct bidder, which meant that the programme needed to be retrofitted, placing pressure on partners. It was also confirmed that management issues had been addressed.

5.7 The Committee:

Noted the outcomes for Priority 1, 2 and 3 projects

Noted the number of interventions delivered in the relevant quarters

Agreed to continue to endorse the approach highlighted in section two of the report relating to the addressing of the issues raised in the Grants Review

Noted the progress on the administration of £100,000 per year for two years on behalf of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to enhance training to front-line professionals on identifying harmful practices, as set out in section six of the report

Noted the annual performance report provided by London Funders included at Appendix Three of the report

Noted the discussions of the first performance report for the 2017-21 Programme and agreed the format for future reports.

## **6. Thematic Review: No Recourse to Public Funds**

- 6.1 The Committee was informed that this report was the first of the 'thematic review' papers and the choice of 'No Recourse to Public Funds' had been made because of its impact across London. A survey of boroughs had been carried out and the results would be used by the policy team at London Councils for lobbying purposes. The Chair then introduced Pam Saleem and Lubana Kayani from Ashiana Network, who presented to the Committee about the work of the partnership, followed by an address from a recipient of the organisation's services.
- 6.2 Pam Saleem, Housing and Advice Services Manager, explained that the Network had started with one bedspace, but now had 32. Referrals were between the ages of 16 – 35 years; 6 bedspaces were reserved for people with 'No Recourse to Public Funds.'
- 6.3 Ashiana provided advice and counselling services and also legal advice and support for clients dealing with the Home Office, who often had little or no support.
- 6.4 In response to a question from Cllr Comer-Schwarz, Ms Saleem commented that a key difficulty facing the Network was the requirement to assist clients before Home Office approval for public funds could be given, plus the provision of sufficient accommodation was also a problem.
- 6.5 Cllr Scott-McDonald asked what had changed regarding the provision of the service since the Network started in 1989. Ms Saleem responded that the main change had been the increasing complexity of issues faced by clients and the increased numbers of women approaching Ashiana with NRPF. Ms Saleem also reported increasing delays in terms of Home Office responses, and increasing pressure on services due to legislative changes relating to public funds.
- 6.6 Cllr Dheer recognised the issues covered by Ms Saleem as important and relevant to his own borough, and across London. He felt that the Grants Committee should lobby the government on the issue of NRPF and immigration law reform, stating for example that in his opinion asylum seekers waiting to hear a decision regarding Public Funds should be able to work. Cllr Comer-Schwarz felt that the bullet points in section 3.12 of the report summarised the lobbying issues well. Cllr Massey suggested that it was more appropriate to raise this issue with Leaders' Committee after raising it with the political groups, and it was agreed that officers should action this via a report to the Corporate Management Board.
- 6.7 It was agreed that Members should feed ideas for future thematic reviews to officers, and for officers to bring suggestions to the next Grants Committee meeting.
- 6.8 Members thanked the representatives from Ashiana and the service recipient for attending the meeting. They agreed that it would be useful to receive updated information on this area via the equalities report.

## **7. Leadership in the Third Sector: Work Plan Progress**

- 7.1 The Chair informed members that a number of meetings had now taken place regarding the work following publication of The Way Ahead; the report to this Committee detailed progress on the workplan previously agreed by Grants Committee.
- 7.2 The Principal Programme Manager reported that: the key findings of the recent survey of boroughs regarding third sector infrastructure had been published in a members' briefing; the boroughs Grant Officers' group had now met four times; and that the Grants programme had been published in open data format on a database run by 360 Giving.
- 7.3 Members were informed that representation was required for The London Hub Advisory group and The Way Ahead System Change Group. Members agreed the nomination of Cllr Paul McGlone and Cllr Bob Littlewood respectively for those groups, and noted the remainder of the report.

## **8. Month 6 Revenue Forecast 2017/18**

- 8.1 Frank Smith, Director of Corporate Resources, introduced the report, commenting that the Section 48 funded services (Priority 1 and 2) and administrative costs were projected to break even, but overall there was a projected surplus of £541,000 because of slippages in the ESF programme. By the end of the programme this position would have recovered as the project was now up and running, although this may now complete in 2019/2020.
- 8.2 The Director of Corporate Resources explained that projected reserves at the end of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 were likely to be £333,000. A question was asked whether the reserve percentage of nearly 5% was appropriate. It was felt by the Director that this could be reviewed now that the monitoring process was in place, which was designed to flag up issues at an early stage, with a policy of withholding payments where problems have occurred, pending investigation.
- 8.3 It was also reported that the most recent Executive Committee meeting had agreed not to return funds back to boroughs and to freeze subscriptions – reserves should remain healthy.
- 8.4 The ESF element of the programme would be completed by 2019/2020 but the financial commitment from the boroughs had now been discharged and all money collected. The performance challenges facing the ESF element of the programme had been discussed earlier in the agenda.
- 8.5 In response to a question from Cllr Scantlebury it was confirmed that the £541,000 surplus was ringfenced to ESF, and that there was no real risk to that ringfencing if the programme was extended, as both the criteria and the claims process had been previously agreed, and was unlikely to change. However there was a potential risk of some future costs being ineligible in light of the rules, and this was being currently looked at.
- 8.6 Cllr Scantlebury felt it important to keep the reserve percentage at a low rate because of the perception from boroughs that the money could be better spent by them. Cllr Massey felt that 3.75% was realistic. The Director of Corporate Resources also commented that administration costs needed to be reviewed. It was confirmed that the administration costs were limited to the grants programme, but were not included in the percentage. These were due to be reviewed in 2018, but it was important that London Councils' administrative overheads should be seen to stand alone from boroughs.
- 8.7 Members noted the report.

## **9. London Councils Grants Scheme – Budget Proposals 2018/19**

- 9.1 The Director of Corporate Resources reported that the overall level of expenditure for 2018/19 was recommended as £8.668 million, which, less any one off payments, was broadly the same as the current expenditure, and was also likely to be the same for 2019/20.
- 9.2 Members agreed the report, which was due to be discussed at Leaders' Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017

**The meeting finished at 12:25pm**