

Place Board

(incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Board)

DATE	7 th September 2020
REPORT OF	Cllr Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Director of Health and Wellbeing
SUBJECT	Voluntary and Community Sector Covid 19 Sustainability Grant
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	N/A
CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS	

The report proposes a support grant scheme that ensures the sustainability of VCS organisations that played a key part in the response to Covid 19 and that will play a key role in working collaboratively with public sector partners in the recovery phase. This will contribute directly to our health and wellbeing aims and will also support and enable stronger communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report proposes to use the remaining VCS funding from previous Health and Wellbeing grants to establish a sustainability grant. The funding for the scheme is currently held within an earmarked reserve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board agree to use £250,000 previously ring fenced for VCS support to establish a new VCS Covid 19 sustainability fund.
2. That a short set of eligibility criteria is drawn up and shared when the fund is promoted to the VCS sector.
3. That the Board agrees to the proposed representatives to sit on a panel to consider and approve applications.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Voluntary and Community sector have played a key role in supporting vulnerable individuals and families across the borough during the Covid 19 pandemic. At the same time they have had to deal with falling income and increased demand. Some organisations are starting to struggle as a result of this double hit and will need support if they are to continue to work with the Council and other partners in the ongoing recovery work.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

A number of Voluntary and Community organisations have played a critical role in supporting and enabling vulnerable people to manage with a range of issues resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic. A lot of the work has been delivered from within existing resources but has put a strain on the long-term sustainability of some organisations. Other VCS organisations are now playing a key role in recovery but

are struggling to deliver services due to a loss of income during the pandemic.

The Health and Wellbeing Board still has £250,000 available to support VCS organisations which is the remaining funding from the previous Health and Wellbeing grants. It is proposed to use this funding as a one-off fund to support organisations that have been impacted by the pandemic. It is proposed that the request for funding will be via a “Sustainability Plan” outlining how the funding will help the organisation to continue to operate over the next 12 months including an indication of the numbers of people that will be supported, how they will be supported and what benefit that support will deliver. They will also be asked to outline of what funding sources are being looked in to / bid for to enable ongoing delivery after the 12-month period that the grant will help support.

The fund is aimed at supporting those organisations that have collaborated so effectively over the first few months of the pandemic and those that will play a key role in supporting people as the future impacts of the pandemic become clearer over time. Eligibility criteria will be drawn up to give a steer to organisations around the type of things that will supported. It is suggested that the maximum level of grant to be awarded is set at £15,000. A panel will receive the sustainability plans and make a decision on whether to award a grant or not.

It is suggested that the panel includes the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Director for Communities, a representative of Sector Support, a nominated officer from Public Health and anyone else the Board wishes to put forward.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Using the earmarked funding in this way means that it will not be used for the original intended purpose. There is a risk that some organisations will see the change of focus as a negative as they may not be able to access the funding based on the new agreed criteria. This has a reputational risk for both the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Council.

The new funding recognises organisations that have and could play a key role in the borough’s response to Covid 19. The new fund has the opportunity to build on successful practice established over the last 5 months and also to ensure that key community based organisations are able to continue to provide vital community support and services in accessible locations for people experiencing difficulties as a result of the pandemic.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative options include;

1. Holding the money for the original intended purpose.
2. Looking at alternative ways of using the funding to support VCS organisations
3. Looking to use the funding to support other Health and Wellbeing Board priorities which may result in the funding not being invested in the VCS

It is felt that given current circumstances and ongoing work that will be needed to support the Covid 19 recovery the best option is to establish the new fund.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

As outlined within the risk section there is a potential reputation issue from organisations that could have accessed the original Health and Wellbeing grant but may not be a high priority for the new grant. We will need to provide clear eligibility criteria for the funding and may need to signpost any organisation not successful in securing a grant to alternative help and support in terms of identifying and bidding for alternative external funding. This support is already freely available through Sector Support.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal within the report is to use an existing ear marked reserve for a different purpose. It is using an existing budget to respond to an emerging issue that has arisen directly as a result of Covid 19.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There should be some minor positives in that the grants will enable people to access support either digitally or close to where they live meaning less car journeys.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

The proposed scheme will be shared with the Health Scrutiny Panel if approved by the Board.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None, the proposal is to use a pre-existing reserve for another purpose. The reserve in question currently has a balance of £260,000.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal will be consulted on the eligibility criteria and bidding process.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

None directly from the report.

11. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The fund will be available across all wards.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

(List the background papers/documents relevant to the report. Background papers are not to be confused with appendices. An example of background papers are previous Cabinet or Committee report, minutes, public consultation documents or publications. Web links should be provided and if the document is confidential or exempt from press and public, this should be stated.)

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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