

## Report of the Head of Equality

## Report to the Chief Officer Communities

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019

## Subject: Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund Grant for 2019/20 to Voluntary Action Leeds

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. Leeds City Council award an annual grant from the Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund to Voluntary Action Leeds from the Communities and Environment Directorate and in 2019/20 the amount of grant awarded is £221,001.00.
2. The allocation of this grant funding was made subject to the production of a delivery plan for 2019/20 which specifies agreed work priorities and outcomes; and continued compliance with conditions of funding.

### Recommendations

1. The Chief Officer Communities is requested to approve grant funding to Voluntary Action Leeds from the Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund Grant Fund from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. The maximum grant payment will be £221,001.00.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report outlines the proposal to approve grant funding to Voluntary Action Leeds from the Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 Recipients of the Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund provide crucial support to frontline organisations delivering services in some of the city's most disadvantaged communities.
- 2.2 Voluntary Action Leeds provides key support and development support to the Third Sector in Leeds, which includes the provision of capacity building, business support, group development, and training; as well as facilitating and supporting the Third Sector to have an important voice into, and influence over, the strategic direction of the city, including the redevelopment of the BME Hub; and delivering the Volunteer Centre as a city wide volunteering service.
- 2.3 The funding provided through the Infrastructure Support Fund specifically includes targeted work to ensure the support and development of the smallest of Third Sector organisations; those in disadvantaged wards; and excluded groups. The funding will also support and enable positive social action to build thriving, empowered and inclusive local communities and will support groups and organisations in local communities, of place and interest, to develop and achieve positive social change from within.

## **3.0 Summary of Main issues**

- 3.1 The delivery of this work is an important part of the Third Sector work the council are undertaking and more importantly will ensure all third sector organisations in Leeds have access to the skills, resources, support and voice to achieve their aspirations.
- 3.2 The funding also supports and enables positive social action to build thriving, empowered and inclusive local communities and will support groups and organisations in local communities, of place and interest, to develop and achieve positive social change from within.
- 3.3 During 2018/19 a review was undertaken of the Third Sector Infrastructure Support grant which was overseen by the Chief Officer Communities. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the Infrastructure Support grant continues to support the council to meet its priorities outlined in the Best Council Plan and provides value for money.
- 3.4 The review process included establishing a cross council working group with representatives from Directorate Commissioning Teams and Procurement who scoped the review of the Infrastructure Support Fund investment.

The group agreed:

- A schedule of key Infrastructure Support Activities
- An approach to the delivery of Infrastructure Support
- The proposed outcomes from the delivery of Infrastructure Support

3.5 Options appraisals were undertaken to understand the risks and opportunities of adopting different approaches to the future investment in generic infrastructure support.

Following this exercise it was agreed that VAL is recognised as the preferred provider, based on:

- lack of any obvious alternative local organisation that could challenge to deliver the contract
- that the ISF offer across the city needs to be coherent and seamless
- their track record, including the flexible response to emerging needs and demands
- proven provider with the necessary specialist experience and established relationships and the positive feedback they receive on their current support offer
- the added value multiplier where every £1 of council investment is matched by £2 of external funding
- the requirement that the city wide generic infrastructure support should not be delivered by an organisation that could be in competition for contracts with the organisations that they are supporting
- concerns about the ability of organisations external to Leeds to deliver continuity of service, comparable added value and sustainability
- the increased opportunity for a co-production approach and greater flexibility available to respond to emerging and changing needs through a grant arrangement

3.6 The council with support from Voluntary Action Leeds developed an online survey to gauge views from the sector. The survey set out a range of support that may be required by Third Sector organisations depending on their size, stage of development or need at a particular point in time.

The survey asked participants to:

- Rate the options under each category to identify which are the most important for their group, project or organisation;
- Comment and add anything they felt was missing; and
- Review the category headings, identify their priorities and add anything they felt was missing

In order to ensure that this work was informed by responses from a cross section of organisations participants were asked to provide some basic information which included client groups, income levels and geographical location.

The questions for the survey were based on the current infrastructure support offer, nationally recognised infrastructure support categories and activities identified by council colleagues.

The online survey was circulated in December 2018 and the closing date was 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019. Paper copies were available for participants who could not access the online form.

Information and invitations to complete the survey were publicised and circulated by VAL through the Doing Good Leeds website, the direct e newsletters and via their social media accounts. Council Directorates cascaded information about the survey through their networks and contacts. Information about the survey was circulated by other third sector routes, like the Forum Central newsletter.

In total there were 130 completed responses to the survey.

- 3.7 In addition to the survey 8 focus groups were convened to enable more detailed feedback from a cross section of organisations. Respondents to the survey were invited to register their interest when completing the questionnaire and invitations were widely circulated to target groups.
- 3.8 The outcomes of the survey and focus groups were analysed and the outcome of the review demonstrated that there is still a need for Infrastructure Support for the Third Sector and the City. It was agreed that the outcome of the review would need to be discussed with VAL and prioritisation of future work would need to be negotiated with them.
- 3.9 Discussions took place with VAL at the end of March 2019 to share the review findings, discuss priorities, council expectations, added value and deliverables.
- 3.10 The discussions around prioritisation and deliverables considered outcomes, areas of activity, particularly impact and how it could be delivered. It is recognised that there may need to be re-aligning of capacity within VAL.
- 3.11 In order to allow VAL the opportunity to develop a delivery plan for 2019/20 taking into account the outcomes of the review it was agreed that during this transition period an extension of their 2019/19 grant agreement was extended for one month for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019. During this period work continued using their 2018/19 delivery plan This enabled VAL to produce a delivery plan for 2019/20. This also overlapped with the notice they were given for the grant reduction of 10% for 2019/20. VAL were also given 6 months' notice in line with compliance with the Compact for Leeds as the 10% reduction will start on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019.
- 3.12 The extension of the 2018/19 contract for one month enabled VAL to continue to deliver the contract and produce a delivery plan that will ensure continuity of support services, continuity of purpose for the council and be consistent in their relationship with the Third Sector and the outcomes of the review.
- 3.13 VAL received one month's grant payment of £22,323.33 to cover the delivery period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019.
- 3.14 As a result the contract for VAL for 2019/20 will be awarded for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 The Infrastructure Support Fund Grant ensures that the council has strong local leadership, increased community conversations to resolve problems and conflict locally, maximises the use of local intelligence, raises aspirations and creates better links to social and economic opportunities, and improves the city's resilience to extremist narratives. This will help to reduce dependency on public services and increase community engagement and participation.

### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 The issue of supporting Third Sector clearly is a significant aspect of equality and cohesion and this will be carefully considered during the roll out of the project. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken on specific pieces of work as required.

### **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

4.3.1 The grant funding process supports the council's values of spending money wisely and being open, honest and trusted.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The resources to fund this project will be via grant funding from the Communities and Environment Directorate and the Children's and Families Directorate.

### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications with this report. The report is subject to call-in.

### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 The grant funding review process has been undertaken in a fair, open and transparent way.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 Voluntary Action Leeds provides key support and development support to the Third Sector in Leeds, which includes the provision of capacity building, business support, group development, and training; as well as facilitating and supporting the Third Sector to have an important voice into, and influence over, the strategic direction of the city, including the redevelopment of the BME Hub; and delivering the Volunteer Centre as a city wide volunteering service.

5.2 The funding also supports and enables positive social action to build thriving, empowered and inclusive local communities and will support groups and organisations in local communities, of place and interest, to develop and achieve positive social change from within.

5.3 The outcome of the review demonstrated that there is still a need for Infrastructure Support for the Third Sector and the City. These outcomes have been discussed with VAL and in particular prioritisation of future work to meet the needs of the council and the Third Sector. There is a need for them to continue to deliver the contract and produce a delivery plan that will ensure continuity of support services, continuity of purpose for the council and be consistent in their relationship with the Third Sector and the outcomes of the review.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 The Chief Officer Communities is requested to approve grant funding to Voluntary Action Leeds from the Third Sector Infrastructure Support Fund Grant Fund from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. The maximum grant payment will be £221,001.00.