

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector Fund Task and Finish Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2018

Present:

Councillor Rawlins – In the Chair
Councillors Clay, M Dar, Kirkpatrick and Russell

Councillor S Murphy, Statutory Deputy Leader
Councillor Craig, Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing

CESC/OMVCSF/18/01 Overview of the First Round of Funding Applications

The Committee received a report of the Programme Lead which provided an overview of the process for the first round of applications to the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Fund, including information on the spread of funded groups across different areas of the city and different Communities of Interest.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- The co-design process for the new Fund;
- The establishment of the Programme Board;
- The first round of applications to the new Fund;
- Communication with Members; and
- The decision to provide funding for 12 months to previously funded VCS groups which had been unsuccessful.

Some of the key points that arose from the Task and Finish Group's discussions were:

- Why it had been decided not to fund one of the groups following the due diligence process;
- Concern that smaller VCS groups without specialist knowledge of how to write funding applications were at a disadvantage;
- To request a list of the groups which were not successful in securing funding;
- That the heat map referred to in the report had not been provided to Members;
- That if there were areas of need which did not have sufficient VCS organisations or where the VCS groups had weaknesses, for example, in their governance arrangements, which meant that they were not funded, support was needed to develop the VCS sector in that area;
- Whether the successful organisations had received the amount of funding they had asked for;
- To request a copy of the Decommissioning Guide (2011) which was referred to in the report;
- Whether sufficient notice had been given to the groups which were previously funded that they had not been successful;

- What support the Council and Macc (the local VCS support organisation for Manchester) had provided to VCS organisations during the process;
- To request that Members be provided with any further documentation relating to the process which could assist Members' understanding of the process; and
- As 21% of applications had been deemed ineligible for further consideration, had any feedback had been provided to these VCS groups to enable them to improve and re-submit their application.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing noted that a number of the Members of the Task and Finish Group had not been Members of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee in the previous municipal year and that it would be useful to provide Members with a pack of the information which had been provided to the Committee previously.

The Programme Lead advised that one of the VCS groups had been unable to meet the due diligence requirements which related to governance and finance. He reported that the application process focused on evidence, rather than who could write the best bid, in order to address the disadvantage that smaller VCS groups could face; however, he advised that smaller VCS groups could benefit from support from larger VCS organisations on developing good governance arrangements. He reported that further information on the first funding round, including information on unsuccessful groups, had been provided in reports to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee during the previous municipal year and he offered to re-circulate this information. He also stated that he would circulate the heat map to Members.

The Statutory Deputy Leader informed Members that the previously funded organisations had been awarded funding until March 2018 and were aware that they might not receive funding beyond that date. She reported that this uncertainty over funding was normal within the VCS sector. The Programme Lead advised Members that the organisations had been given the agreed 90 days' notice that their funding was ending. He outlined work taking place to develop the capacity of these organisations to help them to meet the criteria for future funding opportunities. The Statutory Deputy Leader advised that this would include helping them to look for other sources of funding, as there was only limited funding available through the Our Manchester VCS Fund. The Programme Lead advised that the prospectus and guidance which had been provided to all organisations which wanted to apply for the Fund could be shared with Members.

The Programme Lead informed Members that, while some smaller VCS organisations had advocated for a two-stage process, enabling organisations to receive feedback on their application and make improvements, the co-design group had decided to use a one-stage process. The Statutory Deputy Leader emphasised that support had been made available to all the VCS groups applying for the Fund and that the assessment had focused on the evidence provided, not how well the application was written. The Programme Lead advised that that this Fund only awarded medium to large grants and that there were other schemes offering small grants.

The Programme Lead informed Members that the aim had been to achieve an even spread of funding across different geographical areas and Communities of Interest but that there were some gaps. The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing suggested that in future some money could be held back for allocation to areas and communities which were under-funded. She reported that all of the successful organisations had received at least the same level of funding that they had received previously but that there had been a cap on how much their funding could be increased by. The Programme Lead advised that the Fund received fewer applications from some areas and that work was now taking place to identify and address the gaps.

Decisions

1. To request that the Programme Lead provide Members with the information previously provided to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.
2. To request that the Programme Lead circulate the heat map and the De-commissioning Guide referred to in the report to Members.
3. To request that the Programme Lead provide Members with further information on what support the Council and Macc had provided to VCS organisations during the process.
4. To request that the Programme Lead circulate to Members the prospectus and guidance on the Fund.

[Councillor S Murphy declared a personal interest as a Board Member of Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH).]

[Councillor M Dar declared a personal interest as a Board Member of the Manchester Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Network.]

[Councillor Russell declared a personal interest as a Board Member of the Wythenshawe Community Housing Group.]

CESC/OMVCSF/18/02 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Task and Finish Group reviewed its terms of reference and work programme.

Members discussed the next meeting, to which representatives of VCS groups would be invited, including those which had been successful in the first round of funding applications, those which had been awarded 12 months of funding and those which had not been awarded any funding. The Statutory Deputy Leader suggested that a couple of representatives be invited under each of these categories but that questions be sent out to all affected VCS groups so that they could all have the opportunity to feed into the process.

The Chair requested that Members send her their suggested questions for the VCS groups. She advised that the list of questions would be sent to all VCS groups involved in the first round of funding applications and that some of those who responded would then be invited to attend the meeting.

Decisions

1. To request that a list of questions be sent to all VCS groups involved in the first round of funding applications and that some of those who respond then be invited to attend the next meeting.
2. To ask Members to send their suggested questions to the Chair.
3. That the next meeting be held on Thursday 27 September 2018 at 2.00 pm.