

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report Title	Mayoral response to the comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Community and Voluntary Sector Review.		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	-
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services		
Class	Part 1	Date: 11 July 2012	

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the response to comments on the Community and Voluntary Sector Review, made by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee at its meeting on 28 February 2012.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor:

- 2.1 Notes the response from the Executive Director for Community Services to the comments from the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee as set out in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.13.1.
- 2.2 Agrees that this report should be forwarded to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Lewisham has a strong history of working with the third sector and empowering residents and communities. The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the LSP's commitment to creating a borough that is:

'Empowered and Responsible: where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities.'

This is reflected in Lewisham's Corporate priorities:

'Community leadership and empowerment: developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.'

- 3.2 It has long been recognised in Lewisham that citizens themselves have the ability to transform lives and build communities that are tolerant, caring and supportive. Involving communities is fundamental to the

borough's approach to improving citizens lives and permeates all parts of local service delivery. The Voluntary and Community Sector plays a vital role in this.

- 3.3 Lewisham is fortunate to have a strong and thriving third sector which ranges from very small organisations with no paid staff through to local branches of national charities. The third sector includes charities, not for profit companies limited by guarantee, faith organisations, civic amenity societies as well as social enterprises. What all these organisations have in common is their ability to bring significant additional value to the work that they do through voluntary support and raising funds from sources not available to other sectors such as charitable trusts.
- 3.4 As well as being directly involved in delivering services to citizens in the borough, third sector organisations also provide the essential infrastructure to allow the sector as a whole to develop and support individual citizens to be able to play an active role within their local communities.
- 3.5 Lewisham was the first London Borough to develop a compact with the third sector in 2001. The compact seeks to support a positive relationship between the sector and key statutory partners. It includes expectations around the management of grant aid as well as broader partnership working principles. The compact was further developed in 2010 with the addition of guidelines for commissioning with the third sector in recognition of the important contribution that the third sector should play in identifying needs as well as potentially delivering service solutions.

4. Background

- 4.1 As part of the work programme for 2011/12, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee agreed at its meeting on 31 March 2011 to carry out a review looking at the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector within Lewisham and issues to do with their capacity to provide services and perform their functions. A series of evidence sessions were held by the Select Committee over the course of the year.
- 4.2 A report on the key findings of the review was taken to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on 28 February 2012. The Select Committee made twelve recommendations for referral to Mayor and Cabinet. These recommendations were initially considered at Mayor and Cabinet on 30 May 2012. At this meeting the Mayor resolved that the views of the Committee be received and that the Executive Director for Community Services be asked to respond.

5. Response to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

5.1 The SSSC made the following recommendations for referral to Mayor and Cabinet. Following each recommendation is the response.

5.2 *Lewisham Council should maintain the current levels of funding for the Community and Voluntary Sector.*

5.2.1 **Response:** The important role that the Community and Voluntary Sector play within local public services is recognised. This can be demonstrated by the Council's main grants and small grants budgets being protected for the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13. However, given the unprecedented pressures on the Council's budget it is not possible to guarantee that current levels of funding for the Community and Voluntary Sector will be maintained.

5.3 *Organisations that are stable and are providing recognised good quality services must be supported by Lewisham Council. Funding from Lewisham should aim to ensure there is a balance between new, innovative projects and stable, proven approaches that work.*

5.3.1 **Response:** The current funding approach is a mixture of main grants to established organisations which makes up the majority of the grants budget and investment funding for new initiatives in priority areas.

5.4 *Lewisham Council should continue its collaboration with other funding bodies and pass on information about funding that is available to organisations within Lewisham..*

5.4.1 **Response:** The Community Sector Unit has well established links with the London Funders Group and hosts funders events for the sector in Lewisham. They also facilitate partnership bids to external funders. The Council will continue to work with Voluntary Action Lewisham to disseminate information about funding opportunities.

5.5 *The Community and Voluntary Sector should not be expected to supply services that are currently provided by the Council unless there is an appropriate transfer of funding made and standards set out.*

5.5.1 **Response:** The Council anticipates that the Community and Voluntary Sector will continue to play an important role in service delivery in Lewisham. Where the Community and Voluntary Sector take on providing a service that had previously been provided by the Council a thorough process to establish the necessary level of funding for the service delivery and the standards to be met would be undertaken. This may however not be identical to the previous in-house arrangements as the change in service delivery may well coincide with a service redesign.

- 5.6 *Lewisham should encourage greater awareness of and participation in the Community and Voluntary Sector. To aid this, a borough-wide initiative to increase the visibility and awareness of the sector should be developed, expanding on already in place events such as Make a Difference Day and Compact Week.*
- 5.6.1 **Response:** Officers from Community Services and the Council's Communications Team will work with Voluntary Action Lewisham and the Stronger Communities Partnership Board to explore how such an initiative could be taken forward.
- 5.7 *Organisations that support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Lewisham, such as Voluntary Action Lewisham, should review the support that they offer to the sector especially in relation to capability and capacity building. The Committee feels that provision of more intensive and individual support including advice, training and guidance would create better results for organisations.*
- 5.7.1 **Response:** Voluntary Action Lewisham is currently undertaking a strategic review to inform what support and services it will be offering the sector over the next three years. Officers will work with Voluntary Action Lewisham on this strategic review and undertake similar work with other second tier organisations in Lewisham.
- 5.8 *Lewisham Council should work with the Community and Voluntary Sector to challenge the sector to step-up to the new challenges and pressures that are being faced at this time. There should be realism within the Community and Voluntary Sector on what it will and will not be able to do.*
- 5.8.1 **Response:** The Council will continue to work with Voluntary Action Lewisham and other agencies on supporting Community and Voluntary Sector organisations to adapt to the current economic and social climate. One example of this is a partnership with Simple Business Solutions to deliver marketing to the sector. Another example is a partnership with Pilot Light, a national organisation that supports charities to rethink their business models. They are currently working with a number of Lewisham organisations.
- 5.9 *Collaboration between organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector should be encouraged and increased in order to increase capacity and meet funding challenges.*
- 5.9.1 **Response:** The Council will continue to work with Voluntary Action Lewisham to encourage and support appropriate collaboration between organisations. The Community Sector Unit also holds a number of functions and networking events to support organisations in seeking funding, investment and reciprocal funding arrangements.
- 5.10 *The role that Local Assemblies play in supporting the formation, growth and support of community and voluntary groups should be reviewed,*

with an aim to expand its role. A wider definition of volunteering reflecting giving of time should be part of this review.

5.10.1 **Response:** The Council is currently exploring the best way to enhance the community development support available at a local level within available resources. The Local Assemblies are part of this review.

5.11 *Lewisham Council should review its interactions with the Community and Voluntary Sector across the entire organisation in order to ensure that the approach taken is consistent and sufficiently promotes and supports the sector's work and role.*

5.11.1 **Response:** The interactions of all parts of the Council with the Community and Voluntary Sector are continuously under review by the Compact Steering Group. The group will continue to consider any concerns about inconsistency in approach.

5.12 *Further scrutiny should be carried out looking at the shifting patterns of funding for the Community and Voluntary Sector, including payment by results and personal budgets.*

5.12.1 **Response:** The Communities that Care strand of the Investment Fund is enabling some community and voluntary sector organisations to develop services that could be purchased through personal budgets. These development projects will be evaluated to see what impact they have had. The use of payment by results has increased and a Council wide officer group is looking at impact across a number of services.

5.13 *Further scrutiny should be carried out to look at the role of social enterprise, increased entrepreneurialism and generating income.*

5.13.1 **Response:** Further scrutiny of social enterprise is included in the Safer Stronger Select Committee workplan for 2012/13.

6. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this response.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Constitution provides that the Executive respond to reports and or recommendations by the overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications

There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this response.

9. Equalities Implications

There are no direct equalities implications arising from this response.

10. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

Background Papers

For further information please contact Liz Dart, Head of Community & Neighbourhood Development on 020 8314 6115.