

## Camden Council Voluntary Sector consultation paper 2015

### Questions and Answers

These questions were asked at public events. They are collected here with answers to assist other respondents to the consultation.

#### Questions about the consultation process

Are the questions in the boxes in the consultation document the same as in the online questionnaire on the website?

Yes. Also, a Word document at the foot of the webpage can be downloaded, completed off-line, and emailed to [vcs@camden.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@camden.gov.uk).

The consultation closing date is 4 November and the Cabinet is meeting mid-December. Will there be time for all responses to the consultation to be considered before the Cabinet report is written?

We are looking at responses as they come in, rather than waiting for the closing date. Even if there is a final rush of responses we will have time to consider them all.

Can there be more than one submission to the consultation per organisation?

We would prefer one collective response but any individual from an organisation can respond.

#### Questions about the eight Investment Zones

Would a strategic partner have to cover the whole zone?

No. We expect the VCS to know who is doing what in their geographical area to meet the need and therefore not duplicate. It's about having the right organisations delivering the right services for local people. You would not need to be based in an area to serve that area's needs.

What is the purpose of identifying eight zones?

It is a framework to enable us to use data about residents' needs to allocate funding across the borough. In the long term this would enable us to develop more collaborative working across zones.

Have the eight investment zones been developed just for this exercise or do they relate to other Council zoning of the borough (e.g. Children, Schools and Families' split the borough into five zones)

The eight zones have been developed to enable the funding programme that we are proposing. They are based on 22 neighbourhoods which reflect residents' perceptions of areas rather than ward boundaries.

Is it possible that a zone with a few small pockets of deprivation within it could lose out because overall it scores well for deprivation, masking the deprivation in those 'lower super output' areas? In particular, is there a risk that this might result in an area missing out on the proposed voluntary sector funding at the same time as Council Children, Schools and Families funding is withdrawn?

The eight zones were set up to target funding where there is greatest need, at the same time as not making the system overly complex as it would be very difficult to take every single eventuality and nuance into account. However adding context like this is a legitimate view and we encourage you to feed this into the consultation by filling out the questionnaire.

The zones are different sizes - how will funding be allocated?

The proposal is that the funding amount per zone would be informed by the overall Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) figure for the zone, and that other factors such as population in that area would be taken into account. So an area which does not score highly on the IMD, and does not have as high population, would be allocated relatively less money.

Will the Neighbourhood Data Maps be updated to include 2015 IMD data?

Yes, as soon as possible.

### **Questions about the proposed seven-year programme**

If funding from the proposed Strategic Partners Fund is unrestricted, how will it be monitored in terms of what the Council expects to be delivered and how it meets local needs? What will happen if an organisation is failing to deliver during the proposed seven-year funding period? How will you adjust the programme as needs change, especially if there are drastic changes?

The details of the programme are still to be designed once responses to the consultation have been received. But the Council would need to balance the desire to give recipients of funding maximum stability and discretion to organise the way they deliver outcomes, with the need to properly account for public money and be responsive to change.

There would be an outcomes framework, with indicators, based on current needs. The Council and successful applicant organisations would identify which indicators are relevant to the needs in each area, so that both parties can see whether organisations are meeting those needs as time passes and identify any unmet needs which emerge over time. The outcomes framework would be reviewed periodically and adjusted to reflect changing needs. Organisations which are unable to deliver the necessary outcomes are unlikely to be successful at the application stage, but we do not want to exclude interested organisations, and we propose to keep the current 'funder-plus' approach in which the Council provides successful applicants for funding with expert help to ensure that their governance etc is suited to delivering good outcomes.

Will all funding decisions be made at the beginning of the seven years? Will there be opportunities to apply later? Will the level of funding remain the same for seven years?

The Council is committed to some form of funding to the voluntary and community sector for seven years so that organisations can build resilience, and certainly for the first three years of the programme. But the Council's funding to the voluntary sector is 'discretionary' and we are anticipating further cuts to our funding from central Government. Therefore we have proposed a tapering of funding to reflect this. There would not be a new application process. Any views on other issues that should be taken into account given the longevity of funding are welcome as part of the consultation.

In terms of opportunities for new organisations to receive funding; Community Impact funding would offer an ongoing potential opportunity for relevant organisations to access funding. It is also our intention to develop a new initiative independent of the Council, similar to Islington Giving, which could attract new funding from a broad range of 'givers', including Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities.

### **Questions about the budget and Rent Relief**

The consultation paper mentions £5.1m funding, but the two funds only add up to £3m – where is the missing £2.1m?

The £1.25m of the remaining funding is not within the scope of this consultation. It includes money currently allocated to Welfare Advice contracts, along with a compulsory contribution to the London Councils Grants Scheme (which gives more back to Camden organisations than we pay in to it). The remaining £0.85m would be allocated between the contracts for voluntary sector infrastructure, and the Council's Communities and Third Sector Team (which is likely to reduce from £0.8 to £0.6 at least). However apart from the £1.25m stated above, these figures are approximate until the funding required for the Strategic Partners and Community Initiatives is decided on.

Is the £1.3m spent on Rent Relief part of the current £5.8m Communities and Third Sector Team budget?

Just under £1 million of Rent Relief is included in the current £5.8m Communities and Third Sector Team budget (see Appendix C of the consultation paper). Another £0.3m of Rent Relief currently comes from the Council's Housing and Adult Social Care and Children Schools and Families budgets.

If the Communities and Third Sector Team only needs to save £700,000 (reducing from £5.8m to £5.1m), why is it proposed to save £1.3m by ending Rent Relief?

£700,000 of savings is needed from the overall budget of the Council's current VCS Investment and Support programme. As explained in the previous answer, £1m of the £1.3m currently spent on Rent Relief in the Council comes from the Communities and Third Sector Team budget. The £700,000 savings will also be contributed to by the reduction in the team and infrastructure contracts.

As the Council has never received this rent money, and it has been a journal transfer from one Council department to another, how can it be regarded as real money?

The Council is required to achieve an income on its property assets. Properties are given a value by Property Services. That value then creates an income expectation. Every year a budget is allocated for rent relief from the overall Council budget. This is then paid from the service with a rent relief budget to Property Services. So it is real money. Under the proposals in the consultation paper, funds would in future be paid to organisations which occupy Council premises and are being awarded support. They would then have to pay rent to the Council.

If an organisation currently receives a £100,000 core grant and £50,000 Rent Relief, should it be applying for £150,000 under the proposed Strategic Partners Fund?

We propose that the Strategic Partners Fund would take over some of the functions of Rent Relief. However, as the sort of organisations who can receive support would be broadened, and the overall budget is reducing, it is very unlikely that all organisations who currently receive Rent Relief and/or 'core' funding would continue to get the same amount as at present.

Will the Council be taking into account whether organisations will already be able to "keep the lights on" if their current funding changes?

Yes. For over a year the Council has been mapping the complex funding relationships and interdependencies between the whole VCS and all parts of the Council, not just the Investment and Support Programme currently administered by the Communities and Third Sector Team. Appendix B of the consultation paper gives a summary of this mapping. Discussions are taking place within the Council to identify strategically important VCS organisations that are at risk.

Why is it difficult to assess the value created by the current Rent Relief system?

Camden Plan outcomes are the results which the Council's Cabinet have agreed to be the most important focus for Council investment. In some cases it is easy to see that a VCS organisation receiving Rent Relief is delivering such outcomes. But in other cases it is less clear. Rent Relief also often cross-subsidises Council commissioning, by enabling an organisation to exist and therefore be commissioned by the Council to provide services. It would therefore be important that colleagues in other departments in future operate full cost recovery when commissioning. For organisations currently in receipt of Rent Relief that are not eligible to apply to the strategic partners fund or equalities fund, it is proposed that there would be transitional funding available from January 2017 for three years. We would work with the organisations to absorb the cost within their business model. If you are an organisation that currently gets community centre funding and Rent Relief, it is unlikely that you would get the same overall amount that you are currently getting. In some parts of the borough, with few VCS organisations but high levels of need, there is less funding. This new funding (made possible by repositioning Rent Relief) is an attempt to redress this – without affecting the existing situation too much. Therefore some organisations, where there are significant needs to address, may get more funding if they can demonstrate they can meet that need.

If Rent Relief ends, will Community Centres have to stop offering small groups free or concessionary rates to use their spaces in order to earn more money to pay their rent?

As explained above, the budget currently used for Rent Relief would be merged with other budgets within the proposed replacement for the Council's current VCS Investment and Support Programme. If a Community Centre or other organisation occupying Council premises receives funding under the proposed Strategic Partners Fund, it would have considerable freedom to spend that money how it wishes in order to achieve agreed outcomes for residents. That could include paying its rent to the Council and subsidising free or concessionary space for small groups or activities which best address residents' needs. One of our expectations of those organisations who are successful in applying to the Strategic Partners fund is that they are willing to share space where possible with other local organisations.

Is it possible to negotiate a reduced rent for Council premises occupied by voluntary sector organisations?

The Heads of Terms of the lease which the Council offers to voluntary sector organisations who occupy Council premises explains that the lease already sets the rent at 35% below the market value. The market value is agreed between the Council and the tenant before the lease is completed.

### **Questions about Council buildings and assets**

The Council has a rich portfolio of buildings, including schools and Tenants and Residents Association premises. Is it possible to get a list of the 100 Council buildings occupied by VCS organisations? If we know where they are, we could see how they map onto the areas of most need.

Overall, the Council knows the location of the 100 buildings occupied by the VCS, who occupies them, and whether they pay rent. But we don't always know how well the properties are used. This is one of the challenges that we want to address, with the help of VCS tenants. Add in schools, TRA premises and buildings from which the Council delivers its own services, and the picture becomes very complex. We are still thinking through the best way to progress the idea of better linking and use of assets. We hope that if we set up a VCS advisory group they could help with this thinking.

### **Questions about the Strategic Partners Fund**

(See also 'Questions about the proposed seven-year programme')

Is the Strategic Partners Fund only for core funding?

It would be unrestricted funding. Organisations which receive it could still also apply for funding from other Camden departments to deliver commissioned services. However, recipients of Strategic Partners funding would not be allowed to use it to subsidise delivery of other services commissioned by the Council or other bodies. Instead, organisations would need to operate Full Cost Recovery budgets when bidding to run commissioned services. This means factoring in a percentage of central costs like administration and rent. The Council's new Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Board (see page 15 of the consultation paper) will be attended by Council Directors and Assistant Directors and the process of which that is a part is led by the Deputy Chief Executive, all of whom will be aware that commissioning of the VCS will need to be on a Full Cost Recovery basis.

The consultation paper seems to imply that applications from partnerships will be preferred rather than from individual organisations?

To help organisations make the connections they need to successfully deliver the outcomes we need for residents, we propose to have a two-stage application process. At the first stage we would prefer applications from individual organisations and existing partnerships. At the second stage we would develop the outcomes framework and indicators with applicants and match-make to ensure that the necessary collaborations and networks are in place between the successful applicants, both within and across the investment zones.

In some parts of the borough rents are high, and this will be reflected in the applications for funding by VCS organisations located in those areas. Will such organisations be discriminated against?

We would take all costs into account when making funding decisions, in order to get the maximum strategic value for all residents within our limited and shrinking budget.

To get core funding, will Community Centres or other organisations with premises have to 'share' them?

We aim to maximise the benefit that residents receive from all Council assets, including buildings. So we will look at whether there is scope for organisations to better use the Council spaces which they occupy.

### **Questions about Community Impact Initiatives**

Is this funding just for new initiatives or can it be used for existing work that needs more resources?

It could be for new initiatives or to enable existing initiatives to work together in a more coherent way to tackle ingrained problems.

As this funding is about getting different sectors together, can you confirm that this part of the funding will only be allocated to the VCS?

This funding would only be for the VCS. If a problem would be better addressed by public or private partners, not the VCS, different budgets would be used.

Is there a danger that Community Impact funding is used to plug Council cuts or to pay for a politician's pet project?

No. It is about doing things differently to get better outcomes for Camden residents. We would want to work with the sector to make sure that process is set up in the right way that enables this.

Will the VCS have an opportunity to see a more worked up proposal before the Council's Cabinet meets in December?

The final proposals for the Council's Cabinet, which will be based on the results of the current consultation, will be public five working days before that meeting.

### **Questions about Interim Funding Awards**

Are any women's organisations getting transitional funding?

One such organisation has been identified and will get an interim grant award to bridge the gap between April 2016 and January 2017 when the new programme begins.

### **Questions about Equalities Groups**

Will there be funding available before 2017 for equalities groups not deemed to be 'at risk'?

No

What equality work will be supported?

We propose to end the current system of project funding to VCS organisations which would be replaced by the Strategic Partners fund which includes an equalities focus.

The Council's Adult Social Care directorate delivers services for elderly people and people with disabilities. The Children Schools and Families directorate delivers services for children and young people. Investment and support to the voluntary sector, currently delivered by the Communities and Third Sector Team in the Culture and Environment directorate, is about prevention and equality. With reducing budgets, we need to ensure that the latter 'discretionary' funding really supports or is complementary to the statutory work done by the other Council departments. So a strategic partner could still be one that works with young people or the elderly, but the outcomes from the Strategic Partners would be prevention and addressing inequalities focused.

Will organisations (particularly small organisations working with BMER communities) get support to enable them to become sustainable in future?

There are several ways we can work together and offer support in the long term. Page 15 of the consultation paper mentions the possibility of the Council and other partners creating a place-based giving vehicle that could attract additional, non-Council investment to address local needs. In other boroughs similar vehicles such as Islington Giving tend to focus on inequality and exclusion.

### **Questions about Commissioning and Social Value**

When will commissioners take more account of social value?

The Council recognises that we need to work on this. It would be part of the remit of the new Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Board (see page 15 of the consultation paper).

**End**