

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA PARTNERSHIP

STEERING GROUP

Wednesday May 13, 2009

Performance Reward Grant proposals

This paper invites Steering Group members to consider a number of proposals put forward by the Community Strategy sub group, to be supported by Performance Reward Grant (PRG) from the first Local Area Agreement (LAA1).

For discussion and endorsement

1. Introduction

1.1 Steering Group members will recall discussions at the January meeting concerning the use of possible Performance Reward Grant (PRG) likely to be returned to the Partnership following achievement of stretch targets in the first Local Area Agreement (LAA1). The Partnership agreed that, aside from an initial proposal put forward by the Kensington and Chelsea Social Council which was agreed, any suggestions put forward required further consideration. Members delegated this task to the Community Strategy sub group.

1.2 The Community Strategy sub group has met to discuss further suggestions and prioritise any projects for the Steering Group to consider, ahead of undertaking further detailed research. This paper outlines any suggestions which the sub group has considered and notes two projects which the Steering Group is asked to discuss and endorse in principle, subject to further research.

2. Background

2.1 Steering Group members will recall that the minimum amount of PRG likely to be returned to the Partnership is approximately £1.5million, and the maximum figure is likely to be £2.2million. PRG payments will be made in two instalments following audit requirements, at the end of each financial year 2009/10 and 2010/11. PRG can be allocated as the Partnership wishes and does not have to be spent within a specified period. As a result, Community Strategy sub group members agreed that time should be taken to carefully consider any proposals for allocating this sum.

3. Options for consideration

3.1 The Community Strategy sub group agreed that any PRG paid to the Partnership should be allocated wisely in light of the current economic climate. Projects and activities supported should represent genuinely new activity and be able to demonstrate added value. The sub group also expressed a preference to support options which may mitigate the impact that the economic downturn will have on unemployment and could help to alleviate any additional pressure some statutory sector services and voluntary and community sector organisations may experience as a result.

3.2 Options considered by the sub group include: developing a partnership apprenticeship scheme that would offer apprentice placements across the organisations represented on the KCP; enhancing volunteering opportunities in the borough with a specific focus on encouraging newly unemployed people to take up volunteering opportunities and enabling those with limited or short-term availability to take up opportunities that suit their availability; and a small grants programme that would support voluntary and community groups, including a possible capital grant, commissioning contracts and dedicated officer support for this programme.

3.3 Sub group members agreed to investigate the viability of two of these options further – a partnership apprenticeship scheme and increasing volunteering opportunities. Officers have since conducted further research and can report the following:

3.3.1 Increasing volunteering opportunities

An organisation called Slivers-of-Time have developed job-skill matching software than enables employees with small pockets of time to take up opportunities offered by employers who require staff on a casual or ad hoc basis. Slivers-of-Time attended the March sub group meeting to demonstrate their software to the group and outline how this could be adapted for the volunteering market, to increase volunteering opportunities for people with limited availability and to fill any short term requirements within organisations who recruit volunteers.

Early indications are that the software could be easily adapted to suit the volunteering market and the Volunteer Centre in the borough report that there is demand for short term volunteering opportunities and for volunteers who could be available at short notice. The Volunteer Centre is also currently running a 'City Skills' project which aims to determine the demand for volunteering opportunities amongst the highly skilled population, particularly those who have become newly unemployed.

The success of any project which focussed on increasing volunteering opportunities would depend on collaboration with the Volunteer Centre to ensure that Slivers-of-Time could offer something to enhance the work of the Volunteer Centre, and compliment any projects currently being delivered that are aimed at increasing volunteering opportunities.

To this end, officers have met with staff at the Volunteer Centre and set up a further meeting with Slivers-of-Time to assess the viability of this proposed project. A draft project brief outlining further detail is attached at Annex A.

3.3.2 Partnership apprenticeship scheme

London Councils has committed to increasing the number of apprenticeships available in London through local authorities and their contractors to 2000 by 2012. The Council is currently considering how to enhance its apprenticeship offer in order to meet this challenging pledge.

The Council does not currently offer a dedicated apprenticeship scheme but has similar employment and training schemes in place such as Head Start Traineeships. Although other organisations in the borough – such as NHS Kensington and Chelsea – offer apprenticeship schemes, there are currently no ‘partnership’ apprenticeship schemes in operation.

Apprenticeships can be offered across a range of professions and disciplines, including generalist fields such as Business Administration, but have to be subject to a standardised framework in order for the skills and qualifications to be recognised. The framework ensures that each apprenticeship has common components which include an employment placement and a skills and training element. Apprenticeships need to be hosted by an organisation who adopts the employer responsibilities and good practice suggests that there should be adequate support in place within the host organisation for the apprentice and line management staff.

The cost of an apprenticeship per head would include the salary and on-costs of the employee at lower than, or the same as minimum wage. Training costs are provided by the Learning and Skills Council and the host organisation provides support costs for the apprentice and line manager, as necessary. An organisation named the London Apprenticeship Company currently operates on a regional basis – although based in Westminster – to encourage apprenticeship placements across a number of organisations, acting as the host employer in some instances where this is preferred.

A Partnership Apprenticeship scheme could follow two possible models;

- a centrally hosted scheme (hosted by one of the organisations represented on the Partnership or a third party such as London Apprenticeship Company) offering generalist apprenticeships with a variety of placements across a number of organisations represented on the Partnership. The advantage of this model is that the apprentice gains experience in several organisations which broadens understanding of how services are delivered in a local area and varies employment prospects following completion of the apprenticeship; or
- a joint scheme offering a certain number of apprenticeships to each organisation represented on the Partnership, either hosted by that organisation or a third party. The advantage of this model is that the organisation gets the benefit of a full time apprentice for the period of that apprenticeship, anything from 1-4 years.

The success of a partnership apprenticeship project would depend on the ability of a host organisation to take on employment responsibility and to provide the necessary support for the duration of the scheme. Officers are due to meet with the London Apprenticeship Company shortly to assess suitability as a third party or host organisation. A draft project brief outlining further detail is attached at Annex B.

3.4 At the most recent sub group meeting in April, members also put forward a number of additional options which could be supported by PRG. These include:

- supporting North Kensington Environmental Improvements;
- supporting 'Recession resilience', which would include extra support for voluntary sector services under increased pressure as a result of the economic climate;
- support for the Realising Potential programme – operated within Family and Children's Services, RBKC - which includes a personalised package of support to families experiencing a range of risk factors including over-crowding, educational disadvantage, and dependence on welfare benefits; and
- support for the Patient Advice and Liason Service (PALS) – operated by NHS K&C - to run a community assistance programme.

4. Issues to be resolved

4.1 Sub group members agreed that partnership apprenticeships and increasing volunteering opportunities should be put to the KCP for discussion and endorsement, subject to resolving the following issues:

- both projects require further research, including detailed cost proposals;
- the degree to which both projects are able to support local residents and local organisations needs to be further investigated;
- the size of each project should depend somewhat on unit cost – yet to be determined – to ensure value for money and proposals should be accordingly flexible; and
- final proposals should aim to clarify an overall strategic approach, for example what kind of apprentices would the KCP want to recruit, do the KCP want to increase volunteering amongst a particular proportion of the population.

4.2 The Steering Group is asked to endorse these projects for further research.

4.3 The sub group further discussed the small grants programme option (as mentioned in 3.2) and agreed that this should be considered again once the previous two projects have been further developed and the KCP have a clear picture of the amount of PRG likely to be received. The Steering Group is asked to consider this approach.

4.4 The sub group has had limited discussion of the subsequent list of suggestions at paragraph 3.4, but agreed these should also be considered at a later date once the likely sum of PRG can be confirmed and previous projects have been considered. The Steering Group is asked to consider this approach.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Steering Group members are asked to consider the contents of the report and in particular to:

- endorse the projects outlined at paragraphs 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 for further development; and
- discuss and consider the sub group's approach to additional projects as outlined in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4.

FOR DISCUSSION AND ENDORSEMENT

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