**MG consultation filming 3-3\_45pm, then meeting re Neighbourhoods planning and guidance-20250507\_150742-Meeting Recording**

0:06  
So welcome to the Lewisham Council Main Grants 202026 to 2029 consultation.

0:13  
In this session we will be doing an introduction to the Main Grants consultation and how you how you help to shape the grants programme.

0:22  
We'll be doing a an overview of the Main Grants programme of 2022 to 2026.

0:29  
We will also be looking at the key learning and challenges of the programme to date, the advice provision, programme delivery and infrastructure support options and how you can engage with the consultation.

0:50  
So here's how you can help shape the main grants programme for the re letting of the next programme.

0:57  
The aim of this consultation is to gather your comments and feedback to the proposed priorities to help ship the next programme.

1:06  
The consultation is literally open to everybody, primarily Lewisham's voluntary and community service of community organisation, local residents, beneficiaries and service users, volunteers and other stakeholders.

1:21  
We are seeking your feedback on our proposals so that we can ensure that your voices and of the community and stakeholders are heard and considered when we're looking at the design of the the Next programme.

1:36  
So what are the priorities and what was the priorities and the fund allocation for this current round that we're in?

1:44  
It was an economically sound future that included our borough wide advice services, digital access for all, a healthy and well future which include which includes coordinated social, prescribing, physical and mental health being provision and services.

2:03  
A future that we all have a part in.

2:06  
And that's that's our Black LED or BISP as you might know, IT infrastructure programme, our volunteer brokerage programme, our community directory and our community fundraisers.

2:19  
We also included our arts and culture fund and that was aligning the arts and culture fund with the London Borough of Culture to invest in our cultural infrastructure and diversity.

2:35  
So let's look at the evaluation and impact.

2:41  
We evaluate the programme every year and that's based on a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework which is aligned with the theory of change and some of you may have well taken part in the consultation around that and the design of that prior to as designing the this current round.

3:03  
Each year, as I've just said, we have an annual impact review of those funded organisations and we've been doing that since the end of year one in 2023 to be able to ensure a consistent approach to evaluing, evaluating the programme effectiveness and impact.

3:21  
And the framework also facilitates the regularisation of data, allowing us to compare insights across various organisations and and grant types.

3:31  
And the findings.

3:33  
The findings are used to improve the current programme and feed into the design of the re letting of the main grants programme in the next round for 2026 and 2029.

3:43  
But in amongst that, one of the things that we also do is that we talk to a lot of organisations and across the piece, both those funded and non funded organisations that lots of events that we go to and when we have local meetings in our in our local neighbourhoods.

4:00  
So what are some of the positive impacts?

4:02  
Well, we've got quite a few, but I'll just do some of the highlights.

4:06  
So there's been increases in the following areas, a massive upshift in the in the demand for services.

4:14  
So beneficiaries are accessing lots of borough wide services, but also local services as well.

4:24  
And over the two years to date we have had over 110,000 individuals who've accessed the grant funded programmes.

4:34  
We've there's been more partnerships create created and there's more enthusiasm to collaborate around funding bids but also around the delivery of service and provision.

4:47  
There's also a lot of community support and assistance.

4:51  
We've had a huge number of volunteers supporting projects.

4:56  
There's been a lot of support between Lewisham's voluntary sector organisations and community projects and initiatives.

5:04  
Network working, sharing resources, whether that be sharing a venue or a community building or sharing back office or doing some more holy realistic things around looking at how we can provide more of a service to an individual who's using a number of those services and also knowledge and skills.

5:25  
So we've had a lot of mentoring and coaching and sharing of good practise during the two years.

5:33  
So we've had this smaller support from larger organisations to smaller organisations and that's been really successful.

5:42  
So what are some of the challenges?

5:43  
And I think that these will probably not be new to you.

5:48  
So there's an increased, massive increased demand for services due to the cost of living crisis.

5:54  
As we came off the back of COVID, we went into a cost of living crisis and that has actually affected lots of people across, across all social strata.

6:06  
Funding is highly competitive as we all know, and it's been.

6:10  
It's made it much more difficult to be able to secure necessary financial support.

6:16  
Support, especially for core costs, Recruitment and retention of skilled staff has become increasingly competitive, particularly in some critical sectors and things like advice sectors, finding people to work in funding, funding programmes etcetera.

6:35  
That's become much more difficult.

6:37  
Place based services, identifying and providing local services in areas of greatest of need.

6:45  
There's less, there's been less capacity, but also we have seen where there are some gaps to be able for services to be able to be delivered flexibly across a range of settings.

6:57  
And also one of the things that's perennial and that's the ability to be able to identify venues to deliver services and manage increasing rental costs that and that's posed a lot of significant logistical challenges for service providers.

7:19  
So I'm going to take over here.

7:22  
I'm Satya Suryaprakasma, I'm Head of Culture and Community Development.

7:27  
And I just wanted to move into the next bit of our kind of consultation, which is really getting to what are the key considerations that we looked at in relation to the next round.

7:41  
So in terms of learning from this round, we know that cost of living and financial hardship have an ongoing impact on residents.

7:50  
Therefore it's something we really need to think about in the next round.

7:54  
We know there's an increasing demand for advice and for support that is more complex.

8:00  
On average, Citizens Advice report that it takes them 20 more minutes per call than it did before, and that's because each case is more complex than it was before.

8:14  
We know there's an ongoing need for preventative services on health and well-being, and this is primarily about supporting residents to remain well and to be engaged in their local communities, which ultimately reduces the need for more intensive adult social care and health services.

8:33  
We know the community fundraiser programme is doing well, which they've definitely shown the value of capacity building and support to bring in external income.

8:44  
We have significant amounts that we know have been raised by the community fundraisers with our local organisations and this programme really has benefited primarily smaller organisations that we know would otherwise have struggled.

9:04  
But for example, they have also brought in and supported the bringing in of some extra money around black infrastructure.

9:12  
So we we are proud to say that it's a programme that's worked well.

9:19  
There's an ongoing need for the support for black LED organisations.

9:25  
That was one of the key things that we wanted to fund through the last programme.

9:30  
This is not an equality issue that is going to disappear with one round of the programme.

9:35  
We know that consistent support is needed for black LED organisations for them to develop and become resilient in this particular environment.

9:48  
We know that there is a disconnect between our funded VCs and just to give you an idea, we believe there's about 1000 VCs organisations, 800 to 1000 probably.

10:04  
We fund a very, very small selection of those, I think probably 40 maximum and there is definitely a disconnect here between the funded VCs and the wide, really large variety of activity that happens at local level through organisations like churches or or less formal, less constituted or not non constituted, voluntary and charitable organisations.

10:33  
We know that our arts and culture funding needs to be much more closely aligned to the wider main grants programme, but also to our newly developed Cultural Strategy and the Cultural Strategy Action Plan.

10:50  
We know that there is a continued need for capacity building.

10:54  
This one doesn't ever go away.

10:57  
And this is needed both at a geographical level, IE in areas with limited provision overall or for communities or certain certain communities or communities with protected characteristics and and these are groups of people whose needs are not met well at a local level.

11:23  
OK.

11:26  
So that was from the learning from our last round or or the current round I should call it.

11:33  
But some of the other wider considerations for us is that there is generally a move to a more place based model across the system.

11:45  
And some of the examples of that are development of family hubs, the integrated care system, neighbourhood working, there's a town centre focus through economic development, healthy neighbourhoods and sustainable streets.

12:02  
Some of these you will have definitely heard of and they may have engaged you.

12:07  
Our, our local council, Lewisham Council and health may have engaged you in some of these initiatives, the Catford Forum for example.

12:19  
And you know that the neighbourhood community infrastructure levy that we've just given out operates at ward level, so much more local than our main grants programme.

12:31  
And as an example, the adult community mental health pilot, which also operates at a local level, neighbourhood level.

12:42  
So given that, we know that the VCs needs to be more aligned to the integrated neighbourhood model, but generally needs to be aligned to a more place based model.

12:55  
But we also know that some areas have a better infrastructure and capacity than others and the South of the borough is an example of that.

13:09  
And then a couple of other things that are contextual really for the council in, in terms of decreasing council funds and they we have had cuts year on year for a number of years.

13:24  
We are really need to consider how we continue to fund diminishing frontline services, whether that's even possible or whether we need to look at investment in capacity building with the money that we do have so that we really build the capacity of the sector.

13:45  
And then finally with the ending of the assemblies programme, which very much had a focus on a local level, at ward level, where are where do we have the capacity at local level for people to connect with others, to connect with residents, to connect with other organisations?

14:04  
Where does that happen?

14:06  
So these are all the considerations we thought about in relation to the next round, the first key thing.

14:17  
So now I'm going to move into talking about the consultation itself and some of the significant things we are asking for feedback on.

14:26  
The 1st is our proposed investment in advice services.

14:31  
In previous rounds, roughly 25% of our grant was allocated to advice services and that indicates our commitment to this area of work.

14:43  
We know that advice services can be delivered at scale.

14:47  
We know that they are a very effective solution to our cost of living crisis.

14:56  
So the our advice service sees roughly 20 to 25,000 people per year.

15:03  
They offer advice through telephone, a telephone service, they provide it in person and at local level, and they provide an online website provision that's been very, very well accessed since it was developed.

15:22  
So what we're asking for is to hear your views about maintaining the current level of funding through advice services to deliver advice services to support residents and what your views are on that.

15:39  
Here are some proposed changes to advice services.

15:42  
So because of the scale and really over time our ideas around what kind of advice is needed having become much more specific, we want to offer this as a procured opportunity.

16:04  
So we're going to move it to a commissioned based model.

16:09  
So we're going to remove the advice services from the main grants programme to procure it and that is for those reasons.

16:17  
Basically we recognise that it's got to be delivered at scale 20 to 25,000 people as I've said previously, and we know that there are very specific things we want advice services to deliver and that doesn't really fit well with a funded model.

16:38  
Your feedback on the consultation will help us really identify the right balance between face to face, online and telephone provision and to find out whether we continue our stand alone service or align the service more to family hubs or local community programmes or basically the more neighbourhood model that we've talked about.

17:03  
And we want to know whether we can continue to invest the same level of funding in advice as our key solution to support and help those in financial hardship.

17:17  
So we want to hear from you about our advice services.

17:21  
Then the second thing that we really want to hear about from you is about our the way we fund through with the rest of the money, the rest of the funding in the pot.

17:37  
And here we are proposing two different options.

17:41  
Option one is around basically funding more of the same under the so frontline services under the same broad categories and criteria as we did before, albeit at reduced levels because we have less funding.

18:03  
So the services will be delivering against the current programme criteria and we are proposing continuing to fund those infrastructure programmes that we know have worked well.

18:16  
So that's social prescribing, community fundraisers, digital inclusion support, black LED infrastructure and the arts and culture grants as well as grants for health and well-being.

18:32  
We have actually identified a particular gap around voice and representation of the VCs.

18:38  
So that is something we want to fund at borough wide level, although that may work across neighbourhoods as well.

18:47  
So that's our option one.

18:51  
Option 2 is here because we want to really recognise the fact that as our funds are diminishing and may continue to diminish, we want to use our money more effectively to really build the resilience of the sector.

19:10  
So this is about two things.

19:14  
First of all, moving to a model around capacity building and infrastructure, but move moving also to a focus on integration with neighbourhood teams and locality based capacity building.

19:30  
And the purpose of it all, as I've said, is to build a stronger and more integrated volunteering community sector, but also to seek to align our voluntary and community sector more closely to the whole place based approach and specifically to the four integrated neighbourhood teams.

19:53  
So that is all of our key things that we want to hear your views about.

20:00  
I'm going to hand you back to Jenna B, who's going to talk to you about how to engage with the consultation.

20:08  
So what we'd really like you to do after you've.

20:12  
After you've heard this presentation, perhaps you've also attended one of the in person meetings or the online meetings.

20:20  
We'd like you to go online to the survey, share your views, ideas and comments with us to help shape the future main grants programme.

20:30  
If you could provide some information, in particular around option one, option 2.

20:38  
Also, what are your thoughts around the advice service?

20:42  
As Sakthi said, is the funding at the right level?

20:45  
Have we got the right balance?

20:48  
When you're looking at option one and option two, you may want to consider not just from your own individual perspective, but also around the perspective for the entire sector and also the borough.

21:04  
The other ways to that you can respond.

21:07  
You can also send us your responses by post to our team Community Development Team Third Floor Lawrence House 1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU.

21:19  
If you have some issues around accessing or it's problematical for you to access the questionnaire, the survey online or you might want to talk through some of the content with us, please do contact us by e-mail main.grants@lewisham.gov.uk and you you'll be able to contact one of the officers in our team.

21:46  
So we have got two more sessions left.

21:51  
Can we go back to the previous slide?

21:53  
We've got two more sessions left of consultation.

21:57  
So we've got one on the 8th of May, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM that's online, but there's one on the 15th of May that's in person, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM, and that's at the Civic Suite in Catford.

22:14  
Please do contact us by e-mail to register and you can also contact us by phone.

22:24  
If you've got some questions, want to talk to somebody, talk to somebody about your thoughts or your feedback, do contact us on 02083147249.

22:36  
That telephone line is open Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 5:00 PM, and we're looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

22:45  
But we'd really like for you to go online to the survey and complete the questionnaire.

22:51  
Just finally, on the questionnaire, you don't have to complete it all at once.

22:55  
You can complete bits of it and then come back and all the information that you need.

23:02  
You can have a quick look at the questions beforehand because we've got that inner Word document also on site.

23:11  
It's absolutely vital this is this is a real dive diversion from what what we have been delivering under our grants programme.

23:20  
So it's really vital for the design of the programme for you to be able to tell us what you think and to influence what the programme will look like.

23:32  
We'd like everybody to engage with us on this journey.

23:38  
Your comments, feedback, insights are essential for us to understand not just about the needs of the sector, but also in going forward, the needs of the beneficiaries as well.

23:54  
So that we know what the priorities are on top of the ones that we already know about.

23:59  
And that will lead us to some better funding outcomes for the programmes that are going to be developed for 2026 to 2029.

24:11  
So thank you all very much for watching our presentation.

24:16  
There will be a set of frequently asked questions that we've been collecting from across the online and in person consultations that we've been holding across the last month, and they will be up alongside this presentation.

24:33  
Thank you very much.

24:35  
Bye bye from Sakthi and Genevieve Community development team.