

GRANT APPLICATION 2016/17 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To empower local residents and the community at large to play a more active role in improving their lives, local communities and public services To improve local people's life opportunities and family and community wellbeing To develop stronger, safe and more engaged and resilient communities	
Organisation	THE HOPE OF CHILDS HILL	ref 371/C/CTY
Address	c/o 45 Templewood Point, Granville Road, NW2	

Corporate policy, aims and objectives

The council is seeking to develop new and effective partnerships to deliver high quality public services having regard particularly to the significant reduction in government funding. As part of the process of delivering more for less, the council is changing its relationship with residents such that they take on more personal and community responsibility for keeping Barnet a successful borough. The development of volunteering supports a range of strategic objectives, encouraging active citizenship; helping build social capital; and promoting pride in the borough through a sense of ownership and identification. It helps people to lead a fulfilling and healthy life; supports skills development; and provides routes into employment and career progression.

The Community Participation Strategy seeks to build a strong civic society by increasing the level of community activity across the borough; develop a stronger partnership between the community and the council; co-ordinate and improve the support the council gives to communities; and help the council to take more account of community activity when it makes decisions about how it delivers services and outcomes.

Activities / proposal

The Hope of Childs Hill (THOCH) is an unincorporated volunteer-led not-for-profit group set up in January 2016 "to create partnerships and facilitate a wide range of community initiatives to strengthen the local area socially, economically and culturally and create a vibrant community", using volunteering and social action as a key enabler, linked to the regeneration of the area. It has applied to be a charitable incorporated organisation, a newer type of legal entity designed for not-for-profit organisations, involving registration with the Charity Commission.

Childs Hill is one of Barnet's more socially deprived wards with a high concentration of social housing and households where no-one speaks English as their first language and unemployed residents who claim employment & support or job seeker's allowance.

THOCH has spent the last twelve months engaging and networking with residents of the area, organisations and stakeholders. Leaflets have been distributed to households seeking their views on activities and services in the locality and focus groups held with social housing residents' associations; voluntary groups, including the Friends of Childs Hill Library and the Friends of Childs Hill Park; settings attended by older residents; and parent-teacher associations. The objective has been to identify gaps in local provision and galvanise a co-ordinated response from within the local community.

A bid by THOCH to run Childs Hill Library as a new community partnership venture following the submission of an expression of interest was ultimately unsuccessful, although the group has been invited to join the library's new steering committee.

This application seeks a grant to appoint a paid part-time community development worker to make the group's aspirations a reality, work that THOCH states is beyond the capacity of its volunteers, embracing themes that have emerged from its consultations which include:

- * improving community safety
- * expanding the range of provision and activities for young children
- * developing opportunities for young people to enjoy a digital experience
- * creation of an educational hub to support young people's academic studies
- * increasing provision for healthy leisure activities and the socially isolated

The primary responsibility of the incumbent will be to empower local residents to seek solutions to the problems that they face and to recruit and train volunteers to become 'community champions', drawing on the support of a small group of local volunteers who backed the bid to run the library and will now form the core of developing a wider volunteer platform in the area. The initial focus will be on creating a more active, healthy and vibrant local community through the creation of:

- * a volunteer-led walking club for all ages, embracing regular brisk walks in the locality and longer rambles further afield
- * a volunteer-led cycling club for all ages, offering cycling opportunities for road and mountain bike cyclists
- * a health and fitness club for the elderly, aimed at reaching out particularly to isolated older people in the community

To be promoted in conjunction with Barnet Homes and local stakeholders and by way of local publicity and social media, the activities will seek to enhance the use of publically accessible resources in the area such as Childs Hill Library and Childs Hill Park. They will aim to promote the adoption of healthier lifestyles and encourage residents to take responsibility for their own health, key elements of Barnet's Health and Well-Being Strategy and Integrated Care Model, whilst increasing community participation, connectivity and resilience.

Phase two of the community development worker's remit will be to address the identified needs of children and young people in partnership with other voluntary groups, using the local network of volunteers that it will create to increase the capacity of existing service provision.

The proposal is endorsed on the basis of how community action networks like THOCH seek to encourage and develop volunteering and civil activity, complementing the strategic vision of making Barnet a place where responsibility is shared fairly. Some like THOCH require start-up funding or facilitation; others help at a later stage to embed and expand upon what has been achieved through voluntary endeavour. The work of The Friends of Childs Hill Park has exemplified what may be achieved by the local community when given an opportunity.

Cost and financial need

THOCH has operated on an entirely voluntary basis over the last twelve months, the only material costs incurred, such as on the production of consultative leaflets, having been met by members of the management committee. The group has yet to produce its first year's accounts, which will show that it has no reserves.

The request is for a grant of £10,000, of which £8,646 is to engage a part-time worker for one year. The balance of expenditure comprises provision for hiring office facilities for a few hours each week, possibly at Childs Hill Library; the purchase of a laptop and printer for the incumbent; and administrative expenses.

The expectation is that the self-help networks of volunteers and 'community champions' that the worker will train and establish over the next year will play a big part in sustaining the group's work beyond the expiration of any grant awarded, to be supplemented by an investigation of the scope for converting THOCH into a social enterprise and what future funding opportunities may exist.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£10,000

Start-up grant

One-off grant

Special conditions:

Payment of the award should be made subject to (a) agreement of a job description for the community development worker and a work plan, with targets and milestones for monitoring purposes, for the next twelve months; (b) the submission of a strategy for collaboration with partners and stakeholders, including Barnet Homes; (c) validation of the group's management and recruitment procedures against Barnet's multi-agency standards for safeguarding the care of vulnerable adults, young people and children; (d) elaboration of the sustainability strategy; and (e) the receipt of quarterly progress reports and an undertaking to provide an evaluation of the success of the project at the end of twelve months.

Target grant outcomes

To galvanise volunteering and civil action in Childs Hill and create sustainable community action networks in support of the development of a more healthy, active and vibrant local population and in response to other identified needs in the community.

Date: February 2017