

GRANT APPLICATION 2018/19 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To empower residents and the community at large to play a more active role in improving their communities and public services To build more resilient communities where people do more to help themselves and reduce their reliance on statutory services To improve people’s life opportunities and family and community wellbeing	
Organisation	BARNET COMMUNITY PROJECTS	ref 72/C/CTY
Address	Rainbow Centre, Dollis Valley Way, Barnet	

Corporate policy, aims and objectives

The Corporate Plan, 2015-20, signifies the council’s commitment to maintaining Barnet as a place in which an active community can thrive and to developing new and effective partnerships to deliver high quality public services, having regard particularly to the significant reduction in government funding. The Community Participation Strategy seeks to build a strong civic society by increasing the level of community activity and volunteering across the borough, in so doing helping build social capital and promoting pride in the borough.

The council is committed to helping people to be independent and live active lives, focusing on preventative services; the delivery of targeted information and advice; and ensuring people have the right support at the right time. Strategic priorities include supporting the resilience of families in the greatest need and on the cusp of becoming vulnerable, recognizing that some people, such as those handicapped by low income or other forms of social exclusion, may need additional help in a crisis; promoting the health and well-being of disadvantaged residents and encouraging them to adopt healthier lifestyles; and creating the conditions for children and young people to make the best possible start in life.

Activities / proposal

Barnet Community Projects (BCP) is a registered charity formed in 2009 by a group of residents in Underhill Ward, originally to develop youth activities in the area. Its volunteer-led work has broadened significantly in partnership with statutory and other voluntary groups since taking up occupancy in 2012 of the Rainbow Centre on the Dollis Valley Estate, which it manages on the council’s behalf as lead member of the centre’s user group. Services and activities delivered from the centre, aimed at overcoming poverty and disadvantage and helping residents take more control of their lives and building resilience, include:

- * a money and debt advice service (affiliated to Community Money Advice);
- * counselling sessions;
- * volunteering and work experience opportunities as a pathway to employment;
- * the distribution of fresh food and ingredients donated by supermarkets to estate residents to facilitate nutritious home cooking;
- * a holiday lunch club and creative activities for children in receipt of free school meals;
- * basketball, gym/weightlifting and martial arts sessions for young people;
- * a parent and toddler group;
- * youth work, including outreach and engagement and accredited training and volunteering;
- * delivery of the National Citizens Service’s summer ‘Challenge’ scheme for young people.

BCP also runs a community café from the premises and hires out space to other agencies and community groups, such as for IT classes (Barnet College) and a nail bar (Arts Against Knives).

The Rainbow Centre is regularly used by over 500 people a year, mainly residents of the Dollis Valley and Chesterfield Road Estates or from other parts of Underhill Ward, a client base that will grow further with the proposed introduction of activities for older people in partnership with Age UK Barnet and Friend-in-Need Community Centre.

An original five-year lease of the building to the user group is being extended to 2020, when it is earmarked for closure pursuant to the regeneration of the Dollis Valley Estate. The provision of an equivalent facility within the regeneration zone is under discussion. This application seeks help to carry out essential repairs in the interests of security and to maintain compliance with health and safety standards for the remainder of the user's group's tenure, work for which it is liable under the terms of the lease, delegated under a management agreement to BCP. The measures include repairs to a section of the roof; replacement of the front door roller shutter; restorative work to the boundary fencing, a gate and posts; and repairs to the tarmac basketball area and external lighting.

Volunteer-led groups like BCP are a prime example of the impact of a strong civic society, identifying and addressing the needs of a local community; building social capital; and realising the strategic vision of making Barnet a place where responsibility is shared fairly. The request is recommended for support having regard to the value of BCP's work and the use made of the Rainbow Centre by the local community.

Cost and financial need

In 2016/17, BCP incurred expenditure of £161,777, embracing not only delivery of its own services and activities but also work in managing the premises. In that year, it had several funded posts delivering specific projects, which have since come to an end, leaving a full-time director/centre manager as the only paid employee, reducing turnover by 50%. Professional youth workers continue to be engaged on a sessional basis. The group is an accomplished fundraiser and over 80% of its annual income derives from grants, mainly in the form of fixed-term awards in support of specific activities, currently including £35,000 pa from the John Lyon's Charity in support of its youth work. Admission fees for selected activities; hire charges; and café and catering income contribute to delivering balanced annual budgets. Net current assets at 31/3/2013 amounted to £1,613.

BCP received a corporate grant of £7,500 in 2010 to help expand upon its work with young people and promote the model of community-led projects in Barnet and another of £9,580 in 2014 to launch the children's holiday lunch club and a project whereby estate residents were taught how to prepare healthy but inexpensive home-cooked meals.

The new two-year lease of the centre includes 100% subsidy of the rental liability in line with the community asset benefit strategy.

The request is for a grant of £3,050 to carry out the repairs, some of which have been outstanding for two years pending a decision on the lease.

The award recommended, which excludes the repairs to external lighting, implemented since submission of the application, is based on the cheapest quotations presented for the remaining work, in one case adding VAT excluded in error from the sum sought.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£2,715 (from Edward Harvist Charity)

Start-up grant

One-off grant

Special conditions:

None.

Target grant outcomes

To maintain the provision of community-led work in supporting the independence, health and well-being of disadvantaged residents; their resilience in challenging times; and the welfare and development of children and young people.

Date: July 2018