

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2052

The Connection Gardening and Horticulture Project

Executive Summary:

The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields is a major homelessness charity in central London, located next to Trafalgar Square. It supports people away from the streets through specialist services including a day and night centre; street outreach; help finding employment; and specialist mental health and addiction support.

This decision seeks approval of GLA funding to support the establishment of The Connection's new gardening and horticulture programme.

Decision:

That the Executive Director for Development, Enterprise and Environment approves GLA expenditure of up to £15,000 to contribute to the setup and initial running costs of The Connection's gardening and horticulture project.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.
It has my approval.

Name: Fiona Fletcher-Smith

Position: Executive Director for Development, Enterprise and Environment

Signature:



Date:

2.2.2017

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Homeless people are some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. They have few employable skills, many have low literacy and numeracy skills, a significant proportion struggle with poor physical and mental health, and many have suffered abuse. As a result disadvantaged homeless people are often socially excluded and living in poverty, leaving them with little access to meaningful occupation, which is central to living a healthy, happy and fulfilling life.
- 1.2 Figures for the period April 2015 – March 2016 show 8,096 people recorded as sleeping rough across London. Westminster has the highest number of rough sleepers with 1,048 recorded in the latest quarter alone – an increase of 11% on the same period last year.
- 1.3 The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields is a charity with over 60 years' experience of helping homeless people avoid, move away from and stay off the streets. The charity supports 200 people every day through a comprehensive package of immediate and long-term support services - all housed under one roof in central London. They encourage people to address the issues causing their homelessness and help them gain the necessary skills to make life changes.
- 1.4 Surveys carried out with people who have successfully moved off the streets reveal the importance of friendship and being occupied and through this gaining confidence, motivation and skills. The Connection supports this through an ever-changing programme of activities, groups, and workshops that match clients' interests and needs.
- 1.5 This project will give homeless people the opportunity to participate in a gardening and horticulture programme that will foster an inclusive social environment, allowing them to develop new skills, build confidence, increase their employability, and improve their physical and mental health.
- 1.6 The programme will include The Connection's clients attending gardening workshops, planting and maintaining an urban 'pocket park', which will then be made publicly accessible. To begin with, this will be focussed around a single site which is likely to be a small green space on the north bank of the Thames near to Temple station.
- 1.7 The Connection will seek to broaden the horticultural programme to include other local businesses and organisations as it becomes more established. The Connection is already working with Westminster City Council (who own the land) and, while this project is stand-alone, there may be future opportunities for partnership with CitiBank Foundation, North Bank BID and the Garden Bridge Trust.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The project will allow people who are rough sleeping in Westminster to take an involved role in caring for the local area. This will break down exclusion and allow the charity's clients to occupy a more prominent role in society and to be included in decision-making processes.
- 2.2 The six-month project on the current site can be delivered with the funding from the GLA and The Connection. The Connection will provide £8,500 of their own funding towards the delivery costs of this project. The GLA's funding will be used to set up the site, purchase tools and materials and contribute to the running costs of the project.
- 2.3 This part-funding for the initial six-month project will also act as pump-priming, enabling The Connection to access further funding from partners to extend and expand the project to other sites in Westminster after the initial period. Discussions with potential partners to date indicate that there is a good likelihood of continuation funding after the initial six month project.
- 2.4 During the six month start-up period The Connection will look to engage at least ten clients in the project. The expectation is that these ten people will go to the site 32 times, with eight attending at

least twice and two attending on eight or more occasions. Given the high-support needs of participants and the chaotic lifestyles that many of them face, repeat attendance is a significant positive outcome.

- 2.5 Participants will be able to access additional support via The Connection's day centre, including support to develop employability skills and tools, IT, literacy and numeracy training, art therapy sessions, counselling, housing and debt advice, and health services, including mental health and addiction support and treatment services.
- 2.6 The housing, employment and health outcomes of individual participants will be monitored through the multi-agency database of the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), which is funded by the Mayor and used to monitor the effectiveness of the various services to support London's rough sleepers, and through The Connection's own case worker reports.
- 2.7 Some initial site clearance activities will be undertaken professionally but the client group will then be responsible for developing the site into a functioning garden area. The Connection would expect the new garden to be opened to members of the public from summer 2017. There will also be volunteering opportunities to support project participants.
- 2.8 The GLA will receive regular progress reports and The Connection will report on outcomes achieved by participants up to March 2018. GLA officers will monitor expenditure and sample check evidence.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The work of The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields is specifically targeted at homeless people in London, who are typically disadvantaged and often have few employability skills. Participation in the gardening and horticulture project will allow the charity's clients to develop their skills and to become more integrated in society, and ultimately to benefit from the same opportunities available to the wider society.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1 There is a risk that the homeless people who participate in the project will lose interest and cease to attend, with the result that the gardens will not be maintained effectively. This risk will be mitigated by bringing in a professional horticulturalist, with experience of working with the target group, to help steer the project and ensure activities are appropriate and engaging. Additionally, The Connection's team has many years of experience working with homeless people and a proven track record in helping people to turn their lives around.
- 4.2 There is also a risk that the charity will struggle to recruit the target number of clients, as this can be challenging given the transient nature of the client group and the uncertainties of homeless people's lives. To mitigate this, the charity will aim to engage with 15 clients on the expectation of a 33% drop-out rate.
- 4.3 The Connection's most recent Annual Client Survey included a question on whether clients would be interested in attending gardening workshops. Out of 118 clients who answered the question, a third responded positively. This represents a large client group that is interested in such a programme, lowering the risk of undersubscription or loss of interest. In the case of oversubscription The Connection would operate a waiting list.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.4 Each year the Mayor spends around £9 million on a range of commissioned pan-London rough sleeping services and projects, exercising the responsibility that was devolved from central government to the Mayor in 2011. The Mayor's Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework 2016 is in place to assist with commissioning these services and ensure that they contribute fully to achieving

and sustaining the goal of ending rough sleeping. The goals of this project are aligned with the overarching priorities of that framework.

- 4.5 The project's goals and the priorities of The Connection will also help to deliver the Mayor's manifesto by helping homeless people to develop skills and confidence that will help them into work.
- 4.6 The project aims to create a new green space which will improve the local environment and ultimately become open to the public. This is aligned with the aims of the All London Green Grid policy framework.

Impact assessments and consultations

- 4.7 Without this GLA funding The Connection will be unable to deliver this gardening and horticultural project for homeless people. The potential for additional funding from Citibank Foundation to enable the expansion and extension of the project with partners, including Westminster City Council will also be lost.
- 4.8 The Connection has carried out informal gardening workshops with the Grounded Ecotherapy group (based on the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall), and surveyed clients, which have resulted in positive feedback from clients who have said they would like to take part in more gardening activities.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is being sought to award grant funding of up to £15,000 to contribute to the setup and initial running costs of The Connection's gardening and horticulture programme. The expenditure will be funded from the Director, Development and Environment (DE&E) 2016-17 Minor Programme Budget.
- 5.2 All spend will take in place 2016-17; officers should ensure that they enter into a funding agreement with Connection confirming the GLA's contribution to the project

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:
 - 6.1.1 the decisions requested of the director concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the statutory powers of the GLA to do such things as may be considered to further, and or be facilitative of or conducive or incidental to the furthering of, the promotion of social development and the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and
 - 6.1.2 in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
 - (a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
 - (b) consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
 - (c) consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

- 6.3 Officers have indicated that that the contribution of funding to the Connection's costs will amount the provision of grant funding and not a payment for services to be provided and must ensure that:
- 6.3.1 the proposed funding is disbursed in a fair and transparent manner in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code;
- 6.3.2 funding agreement and corresponding security documentation is put in place between and executed by the GLA and the Connection before any commitment to the funding is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Site identification and Westminster Council approval of garden plan (note this process is already underway).	December 2016-February 2017
Approval of GLA Grant and signing of grant agreement	January-February 2017
Appointment of professional gardening tutor	January-February 2017
Payment of GLA grant	Early February 2017
Site clearance and preparation works	February 2017
Client recruitment/selection and induction	February-March 2017
Purchase of tools and materials	February 2017
Programme of client participation begins	March 2017
Target for opening to the public	Summer 2017

Appendices and supporting papers: None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form -NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Robert Dominic has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Debbie Jackson has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Corporate Investment Board:

The Corporate Investment Board reviewed this proposal on 30 January 2017.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

M. D. Allen

Date

31.1.17