

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2339

Voluntary and Community Sector housing forum

Executive Summary:

This decision seeks approval of a grant to Trust for London to support the Trust's creation of a London voluntary and community sector (VCS) housing forum. The purpose of the forum is to bring together London civil society organisations to consider housing issues and engage with the Mayor, GLA and other decision-makers on this topic.

Trust for London will be responsible for running the forum. The GLA will provide £30,000, with an additional £20,000 match-funding from Trust for London, to facilitate the functioning of the forum.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Housing approves:

- 1. a grant of £30,000 to Trust for London to deliver its VCS housing forum project.*

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

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: Jamie Ratcliff

Position: Assistant Director – Housing

Signature:



Date:

18/3/19

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The housing crisis affects Londoners of different backgrounds and in different circumstances across the capital. The Mayor therefore wants to make sure his policies are developed with the involvement of London's diverse communities, and he believes it is vital that civil society provides representation for groups whose voices must be heard.
- 1.2. The GLA and Trust for London have worked to develop a proposal for a forum to bring together London VCS organisations to consider housing issues affecting Londoners and engage with the Mayor, GLA and other decision-makers on this topic.
- 1.3. While the primary focus of the forum is to engage with Mayoral policy and issues relating to the Mayor's existing housing powers, it also may seek to engage with the work of other statutory agencies. In addition, given that housing is such a key issue that affects all Londoners, it is likely that discussion at the forum would touch on related issues, such as health and transport.
- 1.4. Building on the Mayor's existing community engagement efforts, the forum will provide the VCS with a structured way of engaging with the GLA, whilst ensuring the GLA has a clear mechanism for its engagement with the sector in relation to housing policy.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The forum will meet the following objectives:

- improve civil society groups' ability to engage with decision-makers on housing issues;
- provide a structured mechanism for providing feedback on the Mayor's housing policies;
- ensure as many voices as possible are heard in London's housing debate by building a forum which is inclusive, diverse and representative; and
- achieve more formal input from the VCS into the Mayor's Homes for Londoners Board.

- 2.2. Membership of the forum should not exceed 15 organisations and should represent a range of perspectives such as:

- social housing tenants and leaseholders;
- private leaseholders;
- private renters;
- students;
- gypsies and travellers;
- low income Londoners;
- rough sleepers;
- community-led homebuilders; and
- groups protected under equality law.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' of the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and
 - advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.2. The housing crisis in London disproportionately affects those with protected characteristics. For example, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups are more likely to experience poverty and are disproportionately affected by overcrowding. This group is also over-represented in the private rented sector and more likely to be a homeless household. Women who are single parents or victims of domestic abuse experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate. Older persons housing needs are often not met due to a lack of sheltered and supported housing. Young people are over represented in the private rented sector.
- 3.3. The VCS forum will have a positive equalities impact by providing an opportunity for communities with protected characteristics to feed into the Mayor's housing policies.
- 3.4. A key objective of the forum is to ensure the membership is representative of London's diversity.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1. There is a risk that the forum is not adequately representative of Londoners with protected characteristics. To mitigate this risk, the GLA will be clear about this priority during recruitment and appointment to the forum and Trust for London will take steps to promote the opportunity beyond established channels.
- 4.2. The forum is intended to discuss a range of strategic issues but there is a risk that it could become focused on specific case work. To mitigate this, an independent Chair will be appointed who can broker agreement on the work plan, aiming to create a balanced agenda. Predominantly, the membership will have a London-wide remit to avoid undue focus on neighbourhood issues.
- 4.3. More established groups with paid staff are more likely to be able to commit to meeting attendance and participation. This would have a negative impact on smaller groups. To mitigate this risk, a stipend will be paid to very small organisations, and the forum will be asked to consider the case for a fund to support capacity building in the VCS.
- 4.4. There is no funding committed beyond the first year of this forum. If all parties wish to proceed in the future, further funding will need to be sought.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.5. The Mayor is committed to giving residents a voice in housing policy-making. This forum will build on the Mayor's existing work involving Londoners in developing his policies. Since the Mayor's election, his Deputy Mayor for Housing and senior City Hall officials have attended a wide range of meetings with VCS groups to this end – ranging from small bilateral meetings, to workshops convened by the GLA, and large conferences the GLA has been involved in organising. They have helped to develop policies and positions, such as the Mayor's approach to estate regeneration, and his response to the Government's social housing green paper. They have been in addition to more formal consultations, such as that on the London Housing Strategy to which over 2,000 individuals and organisations responded.
- 4.6. The core work of organisations applying for membership is expected to focus on service provision, representation or advocacy work in relation to the Mayor's housing priorities as set out in the London Housing Strategy:
 - building homes for Londoners;
 - delivering genuinely affordable homes;
 - high quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods;
 - a fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders; and
 - tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 This decision seeks approval for expenditure of £30,000 in 2018/2019 to award a grant to Trust for London to deliver the Voluntary and Community Sector housing forum project. Trust for London will be responsible for running the forum and will provide match funding of £20,000 to meet the total project cost of £50,000.
- 5.2 The expenditure will be funded from the H&L Management & Consultancy budget and will be spent in 2018/19 financial year.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Legal comments are not required.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. Trust for London will be responsible for running the forum, including the recruitment of the Chair and members, clerking of meetings (including publication of meeting papers and minutes), management of communications and publicity, and development of the forum's work programme (led by the forum members).
- 7.2. The GLA will award £30k to Trust for London via a funding agreement. Trust for London will contribute £20k to meet the total project costs of £50k.
- 7.3. A formal recruitment process for both the Chair and the forum members will be run simultaneously. This is likely to be led by Trust for London and take approximately three to four months. Appointments will be made by an independent panel of up to four people. The members of the recruitment panel will be jointly agreed by Trust for London and the GLA. The recruitment panel will ensure the forum membership reflects the diversity of London and is inclusive of people with protected characteristics.
- 7.4. Participation in this forum may place a strain on resources for very small civil society groups or unwaged individuals. To ensure forum participation is accessible to all, there will be funding available to pay those members a day rate or stipend for each meeting. This is intended to cover both meeting attendance and preparation. The Chair will also be able to claim expenses.
- 7.5. The forum will meet three times during 2019/20, with meetings held in advance of the Homes for Londoners Board when possible.
- 7.6. The Forum will be governed by a Terms of Reference agreed at the first meeting.
- 7.7. The forum will be represented at the quarterly meetings of the Homes for Londoners Board, which is chaired by the Mayor. The Chair of the forum will be a standing member of the board and may be accompanied by other forum members as appropriate and with the agreement of the GLA.
- 7.8. The GLA will be represented at all forum meetings (if invited to attend by the forum). This representation will include attendance by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development. The forum will be able to invite attendees from other external organisations when relevant to the agenda.

Activity	Timeline
Funding agreement in place	March 2019
Funding allocated	March 2019
Recruitment and selection process for forum members and Chair	April/May 2019
Membership and Chair confirmed	May 2019
Terms of reference agreed at first meeting	June/July 2019
Fourth and final meeting	March 2020

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) 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 it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason:

This decision is being deferred until the public announcement of this forum is made. The announcement will be made once the formal recruitment process for the Chair and membership begins.

Until what date: 15 April 2019

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included 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:

Megan Life has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on the 18 March 2019.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature



Date

18.03.19

