



City of Westminster

Cabinet Member Report

Meeting or Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector
Date:	23 October 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	New core funding grant agreement for the Abbey Centre
Wards Affected:	St James, Vincent Square, Pimlico North, Pimlico South
Policy Context:	Enabling our VCS anchor organisations to succeed in Westminster to best serve our local communities is an essential tenet of Fairer Communities.
Key Decision:	Yes
Financial Summary:	£170k per annum grant award to the Abbey Centre under a 10-year grant agreement (£1.7 million total per award for the 10 years, plus an annual inflationary increase linked to CPI indexation)
Report of:	Pedro Wrobel, ED for Innovation and Change

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet Member approval for awarding a 10-year grant to the Abbey Community Association Limited to manage the Abbey Community Centre. The current 5-year grant agreement came to an end in April 2023 and is due to be renewed. It has been operating on a rolling basis without formal grant agreement in place since April 2023. The Abbey Centre is a community centre that provides space and services for local residents and voluntary groups. Issuing a longer-term grant award will allow the organisation to continue to provide its services and will align with the 10-

year lease agreement that is being arranged with corporate property. The Abbey Centre pays rent to the council through their lease.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector approves the award of a grant to Abbey Community Association Limited for a term of 10 years and a total value of £1.7m (plus indexation) as set out in paragraph 1.1.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 To continue the well-performing grant arrangement that the council has with the Abbey Centre, supporting communities that benefit from the services of the Abbey Centre.
- 3.2 A Cabinet Member Decision is required due to the value of the decision.

4. Background, including Policy Context

- 4.1 Abbey Centre has historically been on consecutive 5-year grant agreements with the council, previously receiving £154k per annum. With a 7% inflationary increase agreed, the intention is to issue £170k per annum and take the opportunity to move to a 10-year arrangement. It is the key community centre in the south of the borough with no other local community centre offering the same services to the same volume of local residents. The Abbey Centre pays £112k of annual rent to the council through a lease agreement. The Abbey Centre has been under a formal grant agreement with the council and therefore under formal quarterly monitoring with the WCC contract manager. The key outcome areas and deliverables of the Abbey Centre that are monitored under this arrangement are as follows:

4.1.1 Community cohesion

- Office/room space for smaller VCS organisations
- On site offer from advice services, housing, other community services
- Activity /group sessions for community members
- Community Champions
- Community café
- Regular events
- Up Your Street community newsletter

4.1.2 Inclusion and poverty

- Make the centre accessible to diverse communities across Westminster

- Provide space for organisations and community groups which are a priority for residents in South Westminster
- Support service users to access advice, benefit, debt and employment services.
- Carers monthly support meetings
- Hot Meal Service

4.1.3 Health and wellbeing

- Bring people together in activities which promote health
- Signpost to health services
- Provide space for health outreach sessions
- Physical activity classes / activities (dance, table tennis, Nordic Walking etc)
- Signposting on request to various support services such as smoking cessation clinics, diabetes support and Drugs and Alcohol Anonymous groups

4.2 The Abbey Centre performs well against all of these outcome areas. In the last quarter (April – June 2023) The Abbey Centre successfully hosted 678 community activities and recorded a total attendance of 2936 active participants.

4.3 There is a need to continue this arrangement while also continuing work in progress separately to bring the Stowe Centre into a similar arrangement, establishing parallel strategic partnerships between the two community anchor organisations on each geographic ends of the borough.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The 10 year grant agreement of £0.170m per annum (plus an annual inflationary uplift linked to CPI) is an uplift of £0.016m from the prior arrangement. This uplift can be covered within existing service budgets. This agreement is separate to the lease arrangement for the rent of the premises, but the two agreements are being brought in line to run for 10 years.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The report is seeking to award a £1.7m grant over a ten-year period to Abbey Community Association Ltd (the Grant).

6.2 The Council can enter into grant funding arrangements using its general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011.

6.3 The Council has a duty to consider whether the proposed funding could fall within the definition of “subsidy” under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SCA). If this is the case the Council must then consider whether the funding would comply with the subsidy control principles.

6.4 External legal advice has been provided by Bevan Brittan LLP. In summary, there are good grounds to conclude that the Grant will not fall within the SCA's definition of subsidy so will not engage the rules. This is because the Grant will fund non-economic activity, and therefore in this instance Abbey Community Association Ltd is unlikely to fall within the definition of an enterprise. To mitigate any unrelated risk, the grant agreement should explicitly prohibit the Grant from supporting economic activity by the providers so that it is ring fenced to the non-economic activity.

7. Carbon Impact

7.1 There is no carbon impact of this key decision. The council will work with the Abbey Centre to access any carbon-off set funding or advice for the building.

8. Equalities Implications

8.1 There are no equalities implications to note. The Abbey Centre will continue to support vulnerable people and provide an open community space for all, particularly those living in the south of Westminster. Through quarterly monitoring, the council will monitor the equalities data on service users and support the organisation to expand the demographics of its board of trustees. Work will also be done to enhance the accessibility of the Abbey Centre to small community organisations.

9. Consultation

9.1 Consultation has taken place with the cabinet member responsible.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact:

Genevieve Peattie, Communities Manager – Voluntary and Community Sector Investment, Contracts & Grants, gpeattie@westminster.gov.uk

For completion by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector

Declaration of Interest

I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed: N. Butler-Thalassis Date: 23 October 2023

NAME: **Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis**

State nature of interest if any

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(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled **New core funding grant agreement for the Abbey Centre** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed N. Butler-Thalassis

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector

Date ...23 October 2023.....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
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If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, City Treasurer and, if there are resources implications, the Director of People Services (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.