

Stronger Communities Partnership Board

Active Communities Fund

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The Stronger Communities Board Background

- Established in November 2014 to oversee and coordinate policy and practice for stronger communities
- It supports the council in meeting its obligations set out in the Equality Act
- The Board has met five times and has considered a wide range of issues including:-
 - Opportunity and Fairness
 - Stop and Search
 - Preventing Extremism
 - Developing a new Stronger Communities Plan
 - The new Community Fund

Progress

Progress	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed to Opportunity and Fairness Commission which has recently published its final report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report will inform the development of the Stronger Communities Plan due to be presented at Cabinet in June 2016. Stronger Communities Board to receive update report on implementation of the Commission's recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council and its partners have organised and hosted a whole range of events designed to foster community relations and integration (e.g. Faith events; Diwali celebration, Big Lunch, Black History Month Launch, the first Croydon Craft Beer Festival, interfaith Eid celebration and London Rd Carnival). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a comprehensive schedule of events to organise and deliver in 2016. The Board is exploring new ways to work with the community to deliver events that build cohesion and promote equality which include encouraging staff groups to work with the community and examples of this include International Women's Day, Black History Month and LGBT History Month as well as exploring hosting one Interfaith Week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended the current commissioning arrangements to allow for the Opportunity and Fairness Commission to report Reviewed the current commissioning arrangements and engaging with the voluntary sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the new Community Fund prospectus at the end of March 2016. Deliver a programme of commissioning support activity. Outcomes of the community fund commissioning will be reported back to the Stronger Communities Board and regularly thereafter. Member of the Board working with officers to review the Active Communities Fund programme, and launch new arrangements as well as strengthen governance by reporting to the stronger communities board.

Progress (cont.)

Progress	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council and CVA worked on the development of the Big Local initiative in Broad Green. The community-based governance is in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Local – An action plan is currently being drafted for consideration at the end of March. Progress will be reported to the Stronger Communities Board regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented community ward budgets comprising £6k for each ward in the borough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the community ward budgets presenting an update report at cabinet in June and a full report in September 2016 Progress will be reported back to the Stronger Communities Board and regularly thereafter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted a meeting with key members of the Muslim community and other stakeholders focussed on preventing extremism. The meeting was led by one of the Stronger Community Partnership Board's faith representatives and included presentations from Croydon Mosque, the Met Police's Muslim Contact Unit and the Council's Director of Safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a community cohesion group to explore activity and information to promote better community relations working closely with the Safer Croydon Partnership Board that leads on Hate Crime and Preventing Extremism. Host a community event inviting the Muslim Contact Unit to host a Met-P event in Croydon. Consider and implement national cohesive communities programme including any potential related funding.

Next steps

- Review of membership and sub-groups
- Develop Stronger Communities Plan 2016-2019.
- Carry out a number of reviews, such as volunteering in the borough, interfaith activities and dialogue, and the Active Communities Fund
- Explore opportunities presented through national cohesive communities programme and any associated funding
- Establish sub-groups to leverage external funding to the voluntary sector, and;
- A community cohesion group to join-up community activity focussed on hate crime, prevent working with the Safer Croydon Partnership Board.

Active Communities Fund - current arrangements

- The fund was established in 2011 and comprises of 'Micro Grants' of up to £1,000 and 'Small Grants' of up to £5,000.
- So far it has funded 127 projects, with a total value of £468,210.
- The reach is wide and varied, ranging from small to large projects, e.g. £850 granted to Manor Farm Nature Reserve for a community clean up and £4,770 granted to the SAVVY Theatre for a project which explored the topic of hidden disabilities with a group of adults with learning disabilities.

Active Communities Fund - feedback

The Active Community Fund is an important way the council supports creating an environment for a vibrant and thriving community, faith and voluntary sector. However, feedback from the community suggests there are areas that could be improved –

- The lead-in time for applications is too long
- The application process is lengthy/complex
- There are not enough new or innovative ideas coming forward

To help address these concerns and to ensure it best meets the needs of potential applicants, a new approach is being developed.

Active Communities Fund- proposed improvements

Reduce the lead-in time for applications by;

- Adopting just one application process for all grants
- Invite applications on a monthly basis.
- Shift from panel approach to officer/senior officer recommendation with Cabinet member sign-off.

Examples of a simplify the applications process by;

- Split the process into two parts.
- Part 1 is just a one side of A4 setting out the idea and who would be delivering it (alternatively, applicants could opt to submit a short video clip).
- If the idea is a good one, a face to face conversation takes place with a view to moving onto Part 2 of the application where full details would be required.

Improve the quality of bids by;

- Regularly reporting supported projects to Stronger Communities Partnership Board.
- Improve publicity and make it a condition of grant that applicants promote the Active Communities Fund