



Report To:	COUNCIL
Date:	28 November 2017
Executive Member/Reporting Officer:	Councillor Kieran Quinn – Executive Leader Emma Varnam – Assistant Director (Stronger Communities)
Subject:	OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON CLOSURE OF AGMA SECTION 48 GRANTS PROGRAMME
Report Summary:	To inform Members of the outcome of the consultation exercise into the proposed closure of the AGMA run Section 48 grants fund. To seek Members agreement to the closure of the scheme and to note that it will be replaced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Cultural and Social Impact Programme.
Recommendations:	That Council agree to close the Section 48 Grants scheme on the basis that it will be replaced by the GMCA Culture and Social Impact Programme.
Links to Community Strategy:	The proposals will improve economic and social opportunities and contribute to a prosperous economy
Policy Implications:	There are no policy implications for the Council
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no financial implications for the Council.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	If closure is agreed by all (or in the absence of agreement a majority of) the constituent Councils then, due to the legislative requirements relating to the closure of a scheme established under Section 48 of the 1985 Act, the closure of the scheme would not occur until the end of the financial year after that in which the decision to close the scheme was made.
Risk Management:	There are no risks for the Council.
Access to Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Emma Varnam, Assistant Director (Stronger Communities)
	 Telephone: 0161342 3337
	 e-mail: emma.varnam@tameside.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Grants Scheme, known as Section 48, was established in 1986. Over that period, priorities and criteria for the scheme have changed, but its core purpose - to support organisations to deliver cultural, social or community activity and services across the ten districts of Greater Manchester has remained. Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 AGMA invested £9.9m in the Grants programme.
- 1.2 In early 2016, Greater Manchester Leaders indicated that they wished to review options to move the Section 48 scheme to the GMCA, such a move being consistent with wider reviews and changes arising since the establishment of the GMCA and subsequent devolution deals. At that time the option favoured was closure of the Section 48 scheme in conjunction with the establishment of a new programme for culture under the GMCA in 2018/19 after year 3 of the current funding cycle of the AGMA scheme closes in 2017/18.
- 1.2 In December 2016, Joint GMCA and AGMA Executive Board agreed to undertake a consultation on the formal closure of the Section 48 AGMA Grants programme and the development of a new funding programme for culture under GMCA.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Over summer 2017, Greater Manchester's ten local authorities authorised GMCA to consult on the potential closure of the AGMA Section 48 Grants programme, alongside a consultation on its replacement by a new Culture and Social Impact scheme under GMCA.
- 2.3 In August, 2017, GMCA received approval from the 10 Greater Manchester districts to consult on the possible closure of the AGMA Section 48 grants programme. In September 2017, GMCA agreed potential criteria, subject to consultation, for a new Culture and Social Impact scheme. As the both the potential closure of Section 48 and a new GMCA fund are interlinked, both consultations were aligned and opened on 9 August 2017.
- 2.4 A targeted consultation process was followed where recipients of the fund and members of the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee were contacted as were lead cultural officers in all ten LAs asking them to respond and forward through their networks. This communication was followed up by further targeted communication from GMCA who also promoted the survey through voluntary and third sector networks in Greater Manchester. Consultation took the form of an online questionnaire and four open events.
- 2.5 The online consultation was in two parts: a six week consultation for the closure of the AGMA Section 48 grants programme, ended on 20 September (20 responses received); and a four week consultation for the new Culture and Social Impact Programme, ending on 16 September (29 responses received).
- 2.6 In late August and early September 2017, GMCA officers also arranged and facilitated four consultation events giving attendees the opportunity to feedback in person on the proposals. Almost 50 people attended the events in total, a mixture of current recipients, cultural officers, GM Councillors and cultural and social impact organisations not currently in receipt of Section 48 funding. Additionally five email responses were received.
- 2.2 On 27 October 2017, the Joint GMCA/AGMA Board recommended that the Greater Manchester local authority districts should agree to close the Section 48 Grants programme, noting it will be replaced by a new GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund from April 2018.

3. CONSULTATION RESPONSE – SECTION 48

- 3.1 Of the 20 online responses to the question *“what are your views on the proposed closure of Section 48 and the opening of a new GMCA-run culture and social impact fund”*, 16 are supportive, stating that the move is sensible and welcome; three positive with reservations; and just one stating categorically that Section 48 should not close without wider consultation.

- 3.2 This general support was replicated in the consultation events, with the majority supportive of the closedown of Section 48 and a move to a GMCA Cultural and Social Impact Fund as long as transition was carefully handled and the impact of any change to the funding landscape is properly considered. Respondees asked that GMCA be mindful of the impact, on staff and participants to currently funded organisations if funding levels are reduced or not awarded under any new scheme.
- 3.3 Other responses focussed on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the existing fund and how delivery might be improved if the launch of a new fund was approved.
- 3.4 Respondees were largely happy with the Section 48 application form, noting improvement since the previous iteration. Several responses, both online and at events, noted that the application form could be quite off-putting for smaller, more diverse organisations who might not have capacity to collect and analyse data in the same way as larger organisations and asked that in appraisal of projects coming through a new GMCA funding programme, the level of detail required should be proportionate to the level of funding requested.
- 3.5 When asked about previous funding decisions, responses were again mixed, with some stating that 'the funding supports a strong cultural offer for the region and brings significant additional resource to Greater Manchester.' Other responses referenced the perceived lack of 'churn' in the portfolio, noting that 'the fund seems to go to the same recipients every time'. This tension, between protecting the current cultural infrastructure across GM, and genuinely 'opening up' the new fund to new applicants, was particularly acute at the consultation events.
- 3.6 When asked about perceptions of the impact of Section 48 there was a general split between the views of current recipients and those not in receipt, both online and at the events. Those respondents in receipt of Section 48 grant, with a more in-depth understanding of the scheme were much more positive about the impact of the fund. Those not in receipt or connected in some way knew very little about activity funded by Section 48 indicating the need for much clearer, more regular communication about the excellent work funded across GM.
- 3.7 When asked what successful elements of Section 48 should be carried into the new fund, respondents noted the need for GM-wide impact across the portfolio. There was much discussion about the value in local delivery (across more than one district, but not necessarily across all ten) with general agreement that geography was one of the most important balancing criteria, but that depth of impact should be treated as equally important as breadth.
- 3.8 Consultation respondents were asked specifically about any equality and diversity implications to the proposed closure of Section 48. Both online and at the events, respondents noted the importance of diversity as a balancing criteria. There was also discussion about the need to bring smaller, more diverse organisations into the portfolio and the need to simplify the new GMCA Cultural and Social Impact Fund application process to allow this to happen.

4. CONSULTATION SUMMARY AND RESPONDING ACTIONS

- 4.1 There is general support for closure of the AGMA Section 48 grants, as long as it is replaced by a suitable alternative. Consultees considered the proposed GMCA Culture and Social Impact Programme to be a suitable alternative.
- 4.2 If closure of Section 48 is agreed the impact of this closure will be largely dependent on the funding decisions made in relation to the new GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund. Care has been taken to manage expectations but also to ensure the call window and application process are clear and transparent that they address any concerns raised during the consultation process.

- 4.3 Consultees put forward a number of suggestions on process in order to identify the most successful elements of Section 48 and changes to processes that don't work as well.
- 4.4 Consultation responses were closely considered in the drafting of the new Culture and Social Impact Fund application form and applicant guidance. These were then tested with potential applicants of various size, art-form and a mixture of current Section 48 recipients and potential applicants to the new GMCA fund. Feedback on these sessions was overwhelmingly positive, with many welcoming the opportunity to feed in at the development stage, noting the consultative nature of the process and feeding back positive comments on the new form and guidance.
- 4.5 Now the call for projects to the GMCA Cultural and Social Impact Fund is live, three sessions have been held throughout October to further explain the fund and application process to applicants, one in Tameside, one in Rochdale and one in Salford.
- 4.6 The appraisal process was designed in tandem with the application form. The most important next step is to develop a balancing process that recognises the challenges within this process and empowers GMCA Leaders to deliver a funding portfolio that provides the greatest possible impact for residents across GM.
- 4.7 Project appraisal will be conducted using a simplified and updated scoring matrix similar to previous Section 48 scoring, amended to reflect the level of detail required during application proportionate to the funding amount requested.
- 4.8 There is no separate equality impact of the decision to close this scheme per se as it is being replaced by a similar scheme, and all current recipients/projects funded under the current scheme could potentially be funded under the new scheme (subject to funding decisions). Therefore an equality impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the decision making on funding with the new GMCA scheme.
- 4.9 A communication plan for the fund will be further developed for communication to successful and unsuccessful applicants. As part of this process, GMCA officers will investigate how to best support unsuccessful applicants, drafting a plan to manage implications of funding decisions.
- 4.10 It should be noted that that if closure is agreed by all (or in the absence of agreement, a majority of) the constituent Councils, that due to the legislative requirements relating to the closure of a scheme established under Section 48 of the 1985 Act, the closure of the scheme would not occur until the end of the financial year AFTER that in which the decision to close the scheme was made.
- 4.11 This means there would be a need for a further year beyond the current AGMA S48 2015/18 funding cycle in which the AGMA Section 48 scheme would remain in existence, in line with the legislative requirements concerning closure of the scheme. However, as the replacement GMCA Culture and Social Impact Fund will be in place from April 2018, it is possible to zero fund the final year of the Section 48 scheme so as to avoid any overlap in provision.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The recommendations can be found at the front of this report