



## Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2016		All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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## SUBJECT: LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND

### 1. Synopsis

1.1 The Local Initiatives Fund is a flexible devolved budget for councillors to use to address issues and priorities in their wards. It is an important element of the council's community provision and helps to meet the needs of local residents. In 2016/17 each ward has an allocation of £15,000 to spend on local schemes. Councillors consider project ideas for their ward and make recommendations to the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee. This report asks the committee to approve the proposals submitted by ward councillors for this financial year.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 To consider the new proposals and changes to previous proposals submitted by ward councillors as set out in Appendix A and to agree these proposals in principle subject to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.

2.2 In the lead up to the Christmas period, it is expected that applications will be received from community groups to fund Christmas parties or related events. It is therefore recommended that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services to agree the allocation of up to £1,000 each for such proposals received prior to the next meeting. Agreement would be subject to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services being satisfied the necessary paperwork has been approved, that the necessary checks have been made and other issues resolved. The Executive Member for Community Development would be informed of all events agreed under delegated authority.

2.3 To note the amendments to ward budgets resulting from project funding being returned. The amendments are detailed at paragraph 3.10 and are included in the budget summary on the last page of Appendix A.

### 3. Background

3.1 In March 2011 the council agreed to strengthen the role of ward councillors by building on existing 'neighbourhood arrangements' for some wards and establishing a mechanism for a more focussed ward

based approach throughout the borough. From 1 April 2011 new ward partnership arrangements were introduced in place of the previous area committees.

- 3.2 Simultaneously a report relating to the Islington Community Fund was agreed by Executive. This included a proposal to create a Local Initiatives Fund with each ward having an allocation of £20,000 per year to spend on local projects.
- 3.3 In February 2015, the Executive agreed that the Local Initiatives Fund budget be reduced to £15,000 per ward (£240,000 total).
- 3.4 The Local Initiatives Fund enables councillors to respond directly to priorities in their ward that lie outside of current mainstream funding programmes and might not otherwise receive funding. It helps them to address the needs of local residents and suggest improvements to local services/facilities or new schemes that will enhance the area.
- 3.5 At Executive in March 2011 it was agreed that a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee of the Executive should be set up to oversee the council's engagement with the voluntary and community sector and to ensure value for money and fairness in the allocation of council resources to the sector.
- 3.6 The VCS Committee's terms of reference include 'To be responsible for the allocation of the Islington Community Fund including...allocating the Local Initiatives Fund having regard to the recommendations of the relevant ward members/relevant ward partnership or neighbourhood group and on the basis that the funding will be allocated equally among the 16 wards making up the council's area'.
- 3.7 The committee agreed that each ward councillor should be given a notional allocation of the Local Initiatives Fund (i.e. divided equally between the councillors elected for each ward). In 2016/17 £15,000 is available to each ward; therefore the notional allocation for each councillor is £5,000. In September 2014 the VCS Committee agreed to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project.
- 3.8 The Voluntary and Community Sector Development Team in the Housing and Adult Social Services department is responsible for managing the Local Initiatives Fund in liaison with ward councillors and members of the VCS Committee. The team ensures that funds are used appropriately and for the purpose for which they are allocated.
- 3.9 The fifth tranche of proposals submitted by ward councillors for this financial year is set out in Appendix A. It is recommended that these proposals are agreed in principle subject to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 3.10 Occasionally projects do not proceed as planned and funding is returned to ward budgets.

In July and September 2014, £1,500 was awarded from the Clerkenwell budget to Charles Rowan House TRA for the cleaning of brickwork at the two entrances to their courtyard. The project was funded by LBI Housing in the end so the grant was not needed. This award has been returned to the 2016-17 Clerkenwell ward budget for reallocation.

In September 2016, £1,500 was awarded from the Barnsbury and St Mary's budgets (£750 each) to Ellington Street Residents Association (ESRA) and Arundel Square TRA (ASTRA) for fireworks in Arundel Square. The group were unable to hold the fireworks mainly due to not being able to agree a date and difficulties recruiting community volunteers. This award has been returned to the 2016-17 Barnsbury and St Mary's ward budgets for reallocation.

In January 2016, £1,375 was awarded from the Bunhill budget to LBI Heritage Services for an event at the end of a programme of creative learning workshops (Sense of Place) and for a digitally printed banner and printed story project book. There was an underspend of £59.75 which has been returned to the 2016-17 Bunhill ward budget for reallocation.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

The proposals referred to in this report will be met from budget allocations for the Local Initiatives Fund.

### **4.2 Legal Implications:**

The general power of competence pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which came into force on 6 April 2012 provides the council with very broad powers 'to do anything that individuals generally may do'. This covers the power to give grants to voluntary and community sector organisations as proposed in this report and includes anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the whole or part of its area or all or any of the persons resident or present in that area. The provision of resources through the Local Initiatives Fund is likely to promote the social and economic well-being of Islington's residents.

The council is under a fiduciary duty to ensure that its resources are used appropriately. Where the money is allocated to outside bodies, the requirements of the procurement rules may apply. In any event it will be important to maintain current practice of ensuring that the money will be used for the purposes for which it is allocated and that individual members are made aware of the responsibility they bear in making recommendations in relation to specific groups.

### **4.3 Environmental Implications:**

When considering proposals the VCS Committee will take relevant environmental implications into account.

### **4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:**

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life.

The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding and when considering proposals the VCS Committee will take relevant equalities implications into account. The Local Initiatives Fund provides resources for local projects which directly meet the needs of local residents, many of whom are from groups with protected characteristics. It enables some of Islington's poorest communities to access community-based services and activities and allows provision to be developed locally which can reach groups of residents that may not otherwise be supported.

## **5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

The Local Initiatives Fund is an effective way of addressing local priorities and provides a mechanism for ward councillors to support small projects which might otherwise not be funded. Proposals submitted for approval represent a wide range of activity and will deliver significant benefit to local communities.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Local Initiatives Fund Proposals

**Background papers:** none

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**

31 October 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaya Comer-Schwartz', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz  
Executive Member for Community Development

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