

London Borough of Islington

**VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE
16 July 2013**

Minutes of the meeting of Voluntary and Community Sector Committee held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on 16 July 2013 at 6.00pm.

Present:

Councillors: Barbara Sidnell and Richard Watts

Observers: Councillors: Theresa Debono and Mouna Hamitouche

Councillor Sidnell in the chair

97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Received from Councillor West.

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A2)

None.

99 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MAY 2013 (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

100 LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND (Item B1)

A revised version of Appendix A was laid round, which set out full details of the bids received, which would be interleaved with the formal record of the meeting.

Councillor Sidnell proposed that, as it was expected that applications would be received from community groups for funding for summer festivals or related events prior to the next meeting, an additional recommendation be approved as follows:

“That, subject to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) being satisfied that all necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved, authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) to agree the allocation of up to £1,000 per Ward for funding proposals for summer festivals or related events, received prior to the next meeting”

RESOLVED:

(a) That awards be approved as set out in revised Appendix A to the report of the Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities and attached to these minutes, subject to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) being satisfied that all necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.

(b) That, subject to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) being satisfied that all necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved, authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) to agree the allocation of up to £1,000 per Ward for funding proposals for summer festivals or related events, received prior to the next meeting.

(c) That it be noted that the Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities would be informed of all events approved under resolution (b) above.

(d) That the additional proposals received for summer festivals and related events that were approved under delegated authority, following the meeting of Voluntary and Community Sector

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Committee on 20 May 2013, detailed in Appendix A of the report, be noted.

(e) That the budget amendments for Junction and St Peter's Wards, detailed in paragraph 3.9 of the report, be noted.

Reason for decision

To assist in developing and sustaining a healthy voluntary and community sector in Islington.

Other options considered

None.

Conflicts of interest/note of dispensations granted

None.

101 **ISLINGTON COMMUNITY CHEST GRANT AWARDS – ROUND ONE 2013/14 (Item B2)**

RESOLVED:

That Islington Community Chest grant awards be approved to the organisations detailed in Appendix A of the report of the Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities

Reason for decision

To assist in developing and sustaining a healthy voluntary and community sector in Islington. Islington Community Chest enables funding to be directed towards meeting the needs of low income residents and disadvantaged communities.

Other options considered

None.

Conflicts of interest/note of dispensations granted

None.

102 **SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR THROUGH PROCUREMENT – RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE (Item C1)**

The Committee noted that the report had been considered and approved by the Executive in the preceding week and had been presented to this Committee for information only.

Councillor Sidnell invited voluntary and community organisations to contact Giles Rankin, Islington Council's Third Sector Partnerships Manager, with further feedback on the report and action plan.

RESOLVED:

That the joint report of the Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities and the Executive Member for Finance and Performance be noted.

Reason for decision

To support the voluntary and community sector through the procurement process.

Other options considered

None.

Conflicts of interest/note of dispensations granted

None.

103 (a) **Presentation from Martin Baillie, Islington Council Income Maximisation Manager**

Martin Baillie described the work of the Council to help residents and to mitigate the effects of welfare changes, particularly by way of the Residents' Support Scheme, operating in partnership with the Cripplegate Foundation. He noted that some benefit changes had already commenced

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but further changes were due later this year. Islington was working proactively to support residents and giving them options eg by facilitating moves to smaller, cheaper, properties where possible and trying to identify the persons likely to be affected by the change from DLA to Personal Independence Payments. This latter change was likely to affect 1600 local people.

The following points were noted during discussion:

- Some people in touch with DAI were still unaware of the implications of the bedroom tax. People who did not own or have access to a computer would find it difficult to bid for property online.
- Some people were leaving it too late ie when they were in rent arrears, before seeking advice from agencies. The Council was attempting to assist people to make informed decisions before they reached this stage by providing information and advice.
- Legal aid had been removed for employment and welfare cases simultaneously. The Law Centre reported that enquiries to them in April on housing and immigration had doubled.
- Many people were anxious that they could lose their homes
- Certain groups of people with special needs would not approach the Council for assistance and found it difficult to deal with form filling and face to face interviews. Fortunately, organisations such as the National Autistic Society, were assisting clients with the changes.
- The voluntary sector was often the main and constant support for people with special needs living in the community. It was often when their clients received a letter from the local authority that this group of people would seek help from their contacts in the voluntary sector, rather than the Council
- The Council would liaise with housing associations and tenants associations to reach more people to let them know about the welfare changes and how they could be affected.

(b) Presentation from Alison Lamb, Chief Executive of Islington Citizens Advice Bureau

Alison Lamb described the work of the Islington Advice Alliance, which comprised the CAB, Islington People's Rights and Islington Law Centre. The Alliance worked closely with the Council's Income Maximisation Team. The CAB operated as the gateway to advice for residents and signposted them on to further services as appropriate. For the first quarter of 2013/14. The CAB had seen a rise from 1,400 enquiries last year to 2,220 this year: welfare benefits formed 40% of the new enquiries. It was likely that most people had not yet felt the affect of welfare changes, so the situation was likely to worsen and demand for advice services was likely to grow. A successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund for "Advising Islington Together" would assist the Alliance to deliver a range of activities to the voluntary and community sector to help them advise on welfare benefits changes from August this year. Training would be provided to a range of people, including those in GP surgeries and schools. An advice website would be established and a referral system for appointments. There were many communities in Islington who would not access public services, but would be more likely to contact community groups for assistance or advice.

The following points were noted during discussion:

- Community hub representatives had attended meetings with the Alliance and had been offered space and computers
- Payday loans and debt were likely to impact soon. The Borough wished to challenge payday loan companies in Islington. Credit union funding would offer a better alternative to those seeking loans but access to the loans needed to be expedited.
- "Fit Money" was a new initiative led by Islington Citizen's Advice Bureau aimed at giving young people in social housing confidence to manage their money. Credit unions could be asked to consider offering a preferential package to these young people.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm

Chair