

Report of: Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	14 November 2013	B2	All

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SUBJECT: Islington Community Chest Grant Awards – Round Two 2013/14

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 For many years Islington Council has provided support to voluntary and community sector organisations in the borough, including core grants, funding for advice services, discretionary rate relief, funding for local initiatives and community chest small grants. Despite having to implement an unprecedented scale of overall spending cuts in the Council’s budget from 2011/12 onwards, the Council agreed growth of £1m per year to the voluntary and community sector to mitigate the impacts of funding cuts to the sector and to reflect the priorities of the administration elected in 2010 and its ambitions for fairness. It established a new single pot, the Islington Community Fund, totalling £3,435,000 per year. The Fund will remain in place for four years and is intended to protect vital frontline services in the most deprived areas of the borough.
- 1.2 An important element of the Islington Community Fund is the Islington Community Chest which has a funding allocation of £200,000 per year. The Community Chest has proved over the last few years to be a very effective way of developing the activities of small grassroots organisations tackling disadvantage in the borough. Grant awards of up to £5,000 per year are available for Islington-based organisations with a turnover of less than £100,000 per year. Cripplegate Foundation has been contracted to manage and develop the Community Chest and has added to the size of the Chest with a contribution from its own funds. This report sets out recommendations for awarding the second tranche of Community Chest funding for 2013/14.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To agree the proposed Islington Community Chest grant awards as set out in Appendix A.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 17 March 2011 the Council's Executive agreed to set up a single Islington Community Fund worth £3,435,000 over four years. At the same time it established a new Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee to manage the fund. £200,000 per year was allocated for Islington Community Chest and it was agreed that there would be two funding rounds each year with a maximum grant award of £5,000 per organisation per year.
- 3.2 Islington Community Chest is available to organisations with a turnover of less than £100,000. The priority is to support applications from the most deprived areas of the borough with a focus on:
- Improving local residents' mental and physical health and independence and choice for older and vulnerable people;
 - Improving the environment and quality of life in neighbourhoods;
 - Raising educational achievement;
 - Improving skills, encouraging volunteering and helping residents find work;
 - Contributing to safer communities: reducing antisocial behaviour and drug and alcohol related crime.
- 3.3 Following consultation with the voluntary and community sector around options for a grants programme for small grassroots organisations, the Council agreed a one year contract with Cripplegate Foundation for the management and development of Islington Community Chest. At the VCS Committee held on 22 March 2012 it was agreed that the contract with Cripplegate Foundation would be extended for a further year until 31 March 2013. These arrangements are working well and at the VCS Committee held on 5 March 2013 it was agreed that the contract would be extended for a further year until 31 March 2014.
- 3.4 In addition to the Council's provision of £200,000 per year for Islington Community Chest, Cripplegate Foundation has agreed to contribute £50,000 per year from its own funds. This increases the amount of funding available and Islington Council is in discussions with Cripplegate Foundation about the potential for adding to the size of the Community Chest with contributions from other partners and it is hoped that some progress on expanding the pot of funding can be reported to the VCS Committee in due course. It has been agreed that £36,000 per year will be allocated to Cripplegate Foundation to cover the costs of managing the Community Chest programme.
- 3.5 To ensure that there is a fair and robust assessment of Community Chest grant applications, a panel of nine people has been set up to consider grant applications and to make recommendations for awards to the VCS Committee and to Cripplegate Foundation Governors. The panel consists of three representatives from Islington Council, three from Cripplegate Foundation and three from the voluntary sector, nominated by Islington Community Network. It is chaired by the Council's Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and Communities and the vice-chair is a Cripplegate Governor. The quorum for panel meetings is five people. The panel also identifies wider issues arising from grant applications.
- 3.6 To increase the opportunities for organisations to apply for grant awards it was agreed at the VCS Committee meeting on 22 March 2012 to introduce an additional round of Islington Community Chest funding, making three rounds per year in total. The extra round benefits the many volunteer-led groups with low capacity. It also provides an additional opportunity for groups to attend 'How to apply' workshops and has led to an increase in the total number of applicants and the quality of applications. An annual celebration event is held to promote awareness of Islington Community Chest.
- 3.7 The first round of Islington Community Chest for 2013/14 opened for applications in February 2013 and awards totalling £74,962 were agreed by the VCS Committee on 16 July 2013. The second round for 2013/14 opened in July 2013. It was widely advertised to local groups through voluntary sector networks and forums and on the Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation websites. A 'How to apply' workshop was held before the deadline for applications and was attended by representatives of 7 organisations.
- 3.8 28 eligible applications were received for the second round of 2013/14 funding with a total requested amount of £119,614. As part of the assessment process grants officers at Cripplegate Foundation held

face-to-face meetings with all applicants, offering additional support to groups where there were barriers such as language and disability. The Community Chest panel met on 25 October 2013 to consider applications submitted for the second round of funding and, after careful deliberation, agreed recommendations totalling £74,156 to 19 organisations. 21% of recommended applicants have not previously received funding from Community Chest. A list of organisations recommended for funding and the proposed grant award for each organisation is set out in Appendix A.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

The £3,435,000 of Council funding referred to in this report, of which £200,000 for Islington Community Chest forms a part, has been created from amalgamating existing budgets within Environment and Regeneration and £1m of growth funding which has been bid for as part of the financial planning process.

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 grants for the voluntary and community sector is likely to promote the social and economic well being of Islington's residents. In exercising the general power of competence regard must be had to the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy which has "improving access for all" as one of its objectives.

4.3 Environmental Implications:

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

4.4 Equality 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.

When considering proposals the VCS Committee will take relevant equalities implications into account. The recommendations in this report directly respond to concerns highlighted in the impact assessments of (a) the loss of Islington Strategic Partnership funding; and (b) the proposals for achieving savings across the Council. A further Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed to assess the impact of the new Islington Community Fund on different groups of residents. The impact was found to be mainly positive. Where actual or potential impacts were identified, further actions were proposed to mitigate these. A copy of the EIA was published as an appendix to the Islington Community Fund report to Executive Committee on 17 March 2011. The proposed Islington Community Chest grant awards will not make any material difference to the findings of these earlier impact assessments.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report will help to develop and sustain a healthy voluntary and community sector in Islington, in particular providing resources for smaller organisations that find it hard to access funding from other sources. The Community Chest supports the Council to take forward its ambitions around fairness and equality and enables funding to be directed towards meeting the needs of low income residents and disadvantaged communities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recommended Grant Awards for Islington Community Chest – Round Two 2013/14

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Executive Member for Tenants, Residents and
Communities

31 October 2013

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date

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