



AGENDA FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE

Members of the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee are summoned to a meeting which will be held in Committee Room 1 at the Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on **30 September 2014 at 6:00pm.**

John Lynch
Head of Democratic Services

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Despatched : 22 September 2014

Membership 2014/15

Councillor Richard Watts (Chair)
Councillor Andy Hull
Councillor Rakhia Ismail

Substitute Members

Councillor Janet Burgess
Councillor Joe Caluori

Observers

Councillor Aysegul Erdogan
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Jean Roger Kaseki
(vacancy)

Quorum: is 2 Councillors



A. Formal Matters **Page**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declaration of substitute members
3. Declarations of interest

Declarations of Interest

If you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you must declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
 - you may choose to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.
- In both the above cases, you must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a personal interest in an item of business and you intend to speak or vote on the item you must declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you may participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

*(a) Employment, etc - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(b) Sponsorship - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

(c) Contracts - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

(d) Land - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

(e) Licences- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

(f) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

(g) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to all members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting **1**

B. Matters for decision

1. Local Initiatives Fund **19**
2. Support to local voluntary organisations: Discretionary rate relief **29**

C. Urgent non-exempt matters

Any non-exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

E. Confidential/exempt items for information (if any)

F. Urgent Exempt Matters

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes

The next meeting of the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee will be on 17 November
2014

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London Borough of Islington

Voluntary and Community Sector Committee - 21 July 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on 21 July 2014 at 6.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Janet Burgess, Rakhia Ismail and Richard Watts

Observers: **Councillors:** Aysegul Erdogan

Councillor Richard Watts in the Chair

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Received from Councillor Hull.

2 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

Councillor Burgess substituted for Councillor Hull.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**

Councillor Hull was present at the beginning of the meeting but, having declared a Discloseable Pecuniary Interest in agenda items B1 (Local Initiatives Fund) and B2 (Islington Community Chest grant awards – round one 2014/15), as a trustee of the organisation “Back 2 Basics”, he left the meeting.

Councillor Ismail also declared a Discloseable Pecuniary Interest in agenda items B1 (Local Initiatives Fund) and B2 (Islington Community Chest grant awards – round one 2014/15), as a trustee of the organisation “Back 2 Basics”, and left the room during consideration of those items.

4 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

5 **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.

RESOLVED:

(a) That Local Initiatives Fund awards be approved as set out in revised Appendix A to the report of the Executive Member for Community Development 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 those Local Initiatives Fund applications received after 1 April 2014, approved under delegated authority to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) and also detailed in Appendix A of the report, be noted.

(c) 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 each

Voluntary and Community Sector Committee - 21 July 2014

for funding proposals for summer events and activities, received prior to the next Committee meeting.

(e) That the amendments to the Ward budgets resulting from project funding being returned, detailed in Appendix A of the report, be also noted.

Reasons 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.

6 ISLINGTON COMMUNITY CHEST GRANT AWARDS - ROUND ONE 2014/15 (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 Community Development.

Reason for decision

To enable 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.

7 SCRUTINY REVIEW - SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR THROUGH PROCUREMENT - 12 MONTH REPORT BACK (Item C1)

RESOLVED:

That the action plan appended to the report of the Executive Member for Community Development and the Executive Member for Finance and Performance, detailing progress to date on the recommendations in the scrutiny report entitled "Supporting the local Voluntary and Community Sector in Islington through procurement", be noted.

Reasons for decision

To keep members informed of progress.

Other options considered

None.

Conflicts of interest/note of any dispensations granted

None.

The meeting closed at 6.05pm.

CHAIR

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN JULY 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Barnsbury	Jilani Choudhury / Mouna Hamitouche / James Murray	Music for People	Four sing-a-long and mobility sessions at supported housing projects: Muriel Street and St Mungo's in Barnsbury Street. Funding for musician fees, volunteer costs, travel and subsistence.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Older people, people with special needs and mental health service users	Up to 80	400	400	Not applicable	
Barnsbury	Jilani Choudhury / Mouna Hamitouche / James Murray	Barnsbury Housing Tenants Association (BHA Tenants Association)	Summer football club for children aged 8 to 15 years with potential to continue after this depending on demand. Funding for six weeks of FA coach costs, equipment and refreshments.	12 July to 31 August 2014	Children aged 8 to 15 years	15	200	300	£100 themselves	
Barnsbury / Clerkenwell / Highbury East / Highbury West / Holloway / St Peters	Clerkenwell ward: James Court / Alice Donovan. All councillors in the remaining wards listed	Hoppers	A week's holiday in Kent for low income families. Funding to contribute towards catering and sundries, outings / activities and transport.	16 to 22 August 2014	Single parents with children living on low incomes	22	1,900	6,750	£4,050 in kind, £500 Smithfield, £300 from families tbc	
Bunhill	Troy Gallagher / Robert Khan / Claudia Webbe	St Luke's Parochial Trust	Annual Whitecross Street Party including outdoor urban arts exhibition, festival in July and a ten week community arts outreach programme. Funding to contribute towards publicity, artistic costs, logistics, equipment and staff.	19 and 20 July 2014	Local residents, businesses, artists and visitors to the area	30,000	5,000	74,700	£65,700 from a range of sources: LIF, Arts Council, S106 and St Luke's themselves	

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Bunhill	Troy Gallagher / Robert Khan / Claudia Webbe	Moreland Children's Centre (Little Kickers)	Two six week Little Kickers Football programmes in partnership with Golden Lane Children's Centre. Funding to contribute towards football coaches, venue hire and health and activity packs for 40 families.	Mid Sept 2014 to March 2015	Under fives and their families / carers	80	1,000	3,440	£1,000 Golden Lane Children's Centre, Healthy Schools tbc	
Bunhill / Clerkenwell	All councillors in Bunhill and Clerkenwell wards	Moreland Children's Centre (Family Arts Project)	Summer arts programme for families to work together with Cloth of Gold Artist to make a 'Welcome Community Banner' for the new children's centre space relocating to Moreland School. Funding to contribute towards five workshops, digital design, materials and equipment.	Family workshops in early August, unveiling of banner in Jan 2015	Families and carers of under fives	80+	1,500	4,000	£1,525 themselves, further match funding tbc	
Bunhill / Clerkenwell	Raphael Andrews / Troy Gallagher / Robert Khan / Claudia Webbe	LBI Heritage Services (Islington Museum)	Funding for an early years professional practitioner to run 20 workshops for young families at the museum, the children's centre and other nurseries in the ward.	Sept 2014 to July 2015	Young families	450	2,000	3,000	Details to follow	
Caledonian	Paul Convery / Una O'Halloran / Rupert Perry	Music for People	Funding for musician fees and expenses for concerts to be held at West Library, Minerva Lodge and the Cally Festival.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Mainly older people	45 older people	500	700	Not applicable	

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Clerkenwell	Raphael Andrews / James Court / Alice Donovan	Spa Fields Festival	Small scale community festival to be held in Spa Fields which has an arts theme. Funding to pay for equipment, park hire, bouncy castle and security.	24-Aug-14	Local residents	500	1,500	3,150	£1,000 from a local business
Clerkenwell	James Court / Alice Donovan	Charles Rowan House Tenants & Residents Association	Funding to get brickwork cleaned at the two entrances to the Charles Rowan House courtyard prior to other improvements (signage, lighting and CCTV).	Sep-14	Residents of Charles Rowan House	96 two or three bedroom flats	1,000	4,759.20	Heritage Lottery Funding tbc
Bunhill / Clerkenwell / Highbury East / Hillrise / Holloway / Junction / Mildmay / St Georges / St Marys / Tollington	All councillors in Highbury East, Holloway, Mildmay, St George's and St Mary's wards. Robert Khan / Claudia Webbe / James Court / Alice Donovan / Micheline Safi Ngongo / David Poyser / Janet Burgess / Tim Nicholls / Jean Kaseki / Richard Watts	LBI Play and Youth Services / Islington Play Association	Playday event in Paradise Park involving twelve adventure playgrounds. Funding to pay for resources for four play zones, transport, refreshments and equipment.	06-Aug-14	Children and families from across Islington	1,000+	4,316.68	8,000	Details to follow
Clerkenwell / Hillrise / Junction / St Marys	Raphael Andrews / Micheline Ngongo / Janet Burgess / Kaya Makarau-Schwartz / All St Mary's councillors	Chabad-Lubavitch of Islington	Islington Menorah Lighting on Islington Green which celebrates Jewish cultural festival of Chanukah. Funding to contribute towards food, equipment hire and entertainment.	December 2014	People of all ages	300 to 500	2,011.83	5,690.51	Hirsch Foundation, private donor and Community Chest tbc

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Finsbury Park	Asima Shaikh	Community Language Support Services	Rent for five months for this organisation which provides face to face advice and support to refugees.	Sept 2014 to Jan 2015	BME refugee communities	600+	1,000	2,400	LBI Community Chest tbc	
Finsbury Park	Gary Heather / Michael O' Sullivan	Finsbury Park Community Hub	Annual outing to Southend for deprived and vulnerable families living in the ward. Funding to contribute towards coach hire, publicity, volunteers expenses and admission fees.	25 July 2014	Local residents	147	3,000	5,000	£2,000 funding already secured	
Finsbury Park	Gary Heather / Asima Shaikh / Michael O'Sullivan	Holloway Neighbourhood Group	Funding to pay for a sewing tutor to run classes over the course of a year.	August 2014 to July 2015	Finsbury Park ward residents	50	2,400	4,368	£1,440 HNG in kind, donations from participants tbc	
Page 6 Finsbury Park	Asima Shaikh	One True Voice	Project providing employment support for BME women. Funding to contribute towards cost of a co-ordinator, volunteer expenses, rent and stationery.	August 2014 to June 2015	BME women in Islington	500	1,000	10,000	City Bridge and LBI Community Chest tbc	
Finsbury Park	Michael O'Sullivan	Isledon Village Community Project (IVCP)	10th anniversary celebration of organising community events in Isledon Village. Funding to pay for wall display, bunting project, barbeques and a children's entertainer.	June to Sept 2014	All estate residents	1,000+	2,000	5,500	£1,500 from Family Mosaic and IVCP themselves.	

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Finsbury Park	Gary Heather / Asima Shaikh	Rowan Arts (Mayton Street Festival)	Contribution towards the Mayton Street Festival (part of Holloway Arts Festival). The Mayton Street Festival will have a 'Meet the Neighbours' theme. Funding will contribute towards performers' fees, marketing, production and volunteer expenses.	June 2014	Local residents	1,200	2,000	33,880	Funding from a range of sources including LIF, LBI Festivals Fund. Arts Council tbc
Highbury West	Theresa Debono / Richard Greening / Andy Hull	Home-Start Islington	Trips to Broadstairs and Little Angel Theatre for 29 Islington children accompanied by their families or carers.	July to Oct 2014	Islington families and carers	28 adults and 29 children	1,000	1,037.04	Not applicable
Hillrise	Marian Spall	Caxton House Community Centre	Hillrise Community Fun Day in partnership with Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association. Funding to pay for activities, refreshments, publicity and volunteer costs.	16 August 2014	Residents and groups in Hillrise ward and surrounding areas	300 to 400	500	1,590	£590 in kind for room/ equipment hire. £500 LIF awarded in April 2014
Hillrise	Micheline Safi Ngongo / David Poyser / Marian Spall	Caxton House Community Centre	Funding to pay for tutor costs for 50 weekly sessions of Gentle Exercise and Family Zumba.	September 2014 to August 2015	Gentle Exercise aimed at over 55s	1600	3,000	8,800	£5,800 from Caxton House
Hillrise	Micheline Ngongo / David Poyser	Home-Start Islington	Trips to Frinton-on-Sea and Kew Gardens for 29 Islington children accompanied by their families or carers. Funding to pay for public transport and a sessional co-ordinator.	July to Oct 2014	Islington families and carers	28 adults and 29 children	666.67	1,037.04	Not applicable

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Hillrise / Junction / St George's / Tollington	All councillors of Hillrise, Junction and St George's wards / Jean Kaseki / Flora Williamson	North Islington Community Group	Festival For All' event in Whittington Park arranged by local TRAs. The focus of this year's festival will be mental and physical health. Funding to contribute towards equipment, entertainment, publicity, insurance, first aid and security.	13-Sep-14	Local residents, local groups and businesses	3,500 to 4,000	2,333.33	25,637	£6,000 LBI Housing/Green space. LBI Community Chest/Arsenal Gunners Fund tbc	
Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Hungerford School and Children's Centre	Annual community fireworks display for Hungerford School, Children's Centre and Bridge School. Funding to contribute towards fireworks, food, equipment hire and caretaker time.	07-Nov-14	Children and families from Hungerford School, Children's Centre and the Bridge School	350 to 500	700	1,500	£200 school donation, £700 entry fees and sales of food at event tbc	
Page 8	Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Friends of Sacred Heart / Parent Association	Funding to pay for fruit for school pupils for monthly Tutti Fruity Tuesdays as well as for sports days, after school clubs and celebration days.	Oct 2014 to July 2015	All pupils at Sacred Heart School	410	850	850	Not applicable
	Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Music for People	Funding for musician fees and expenses for four concerts and 44 Movement and Mobility sessions at Age UK's Drover's Centre.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Older people	Up to 92	1,940	1,940	Not applicable

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Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Clocktower Residents Group / Market Estate Tenants and Residents Association	Fun Day in Cally Park in Market Road. Funding to pay for DJ, equipment, entertainment and refreshments.	30-Aug-14	Local residents	200+	1,200	4,000	£2,450 Southern Housing Group, Higgins, Park User Group, £350 themselves	
Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Angel Shed Theatre Company	As part of their 10th year celebrations, Angel Shed are putting on their largest-scale production, 'CARROTS' in association with Barnardos. Funding will contribute towards cost of the Artistic Director and Lead Artistic Practitioner.	Performance s in Dec 2014, development from Sept onwards	5 to 25 years old, many of whom have disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds	130	1,000	20,000	£16,300 from Cripplegate and Leather Sellers. Help a London Child and other funders tbc	
Page 9 Holloway	Rakhia Ismail / Paul Smith / Diarmaid Ward	Back 2 Basics Create	Funding will contribute towards core costs (finance officer/admin, overheads and volunteer expenses) as well as materials for their sewing project.	July 2014 to Mar 2015, sewing group starts Sept 2014	Somali residents and wider BME communities in Islington	50 - 100, sewing group - 8 women per wk	2,000	3,600 - 4,000		Funding awarded on condition that further information is provided about Holloway ward residents expected to benefit.

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Junction	Janet Burgess / Kaya Makarau-Schwartz	Whittington Park Community Association (Big Day Out 2014)	Big Day Out' in Whittington Park. Funding will contribute towards costs of staging a summer festival to mark the culmination of the Holloway Arts Festival. Event will include a range of activities and entertainment, workshops and stalls.	8 June 2014	All members of the local community as well as local groups	1,000	250	3,915	£750 LIF, £1,750 WPCA in kind, income from stall hire and sponsors	Project awarded £750 through delegated authority.
Junction	Kaya Makarau-Schwartz	Islington Pensioners Forum	Contribution towards staff costs of group which campaigns on behalf of older people and runs projects to reduce isolation and loneliness.	July 2014 to June 2015	Older people	600+	1,000	12,792	£3,000 VCS Grants Fund	
Junction	Janet Burgess / Tim Nicholls	Music for People	Two sing-along concerts at Duval House sheltered housing in Elthorne Road and one concert at Islington Mind in Despard Road.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Older people and mental health service users	Up to 93	150	180	£30 themselves	
Junction	Janet Burgess	Kogan Academy of Dramatic Arts (previously The Academy of the Science of Acting and Directing)	Twelve performances by drama students of children's fairy tales held over a week. Funding to pay for costumes and sets.	23 to 30 August 2014	Children from local families and playgroups	500+	500	2,000	£1,500 from ticket sales (£3 per child)	

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Junction	Janet Burgess / Kaya Makarau-Schwartz / Tim Nicholls	Scarabeus Theatre	Twelve week Forest Adventure Project in Queens Wood for children at Archway Children's Centre to encourage interaction with nature and wildlife. Funding to contribute towards tutor costs.	8 Sept to 5 Dec 2014	Nursery children aged 3 to 4	30	1,000	21,760	Awards for All tbc, £11,850 in kind	
Junction / St Georges	All councillors of Junction and St George's wards	Friends of Foxham Gardens	Contribution towards the cost of installing seven information boards for a nature trail in the park.	August 2014 - August 2015	Park visitors	Unable to quantify	2,500	2,500	Not applicable	
Mildmay	Joe Caluori	Asian Elderly Luncheon and Social Club	Food and drink for celebrations of Eid, Diwali, Christmas and New Year.	22 Nov 2014 and 17 Jan 2015	Older people	35	500	500	Not applicable	
Mildmay	Joe Caluori / Jenny Kay / Olly Parker	Yaram Arts	SeneGambian Masquerade festival at Newington Green Park. Funding to pay for West African cultural costumes, hire of marquees, transport and toilets.	24 August 2014	All, but of special interest to UK West African descendants	Up to 1,000 attending event	1,000	10,250	£500 LBI Festivals grant, £5,000 Western Union sponsorship, £1,000 LIF	
Mildmay	Joe Caluori / Jenny Kay / Olly Parker	Hawthorne Close TRA	Funding to pay for an annual christmas dinner for older people of Hawthorne Close TRA.	December 2014	Older people living in Hawthorne Close	20	250	250	Not applicable	

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Mildmay	Joe Caluori / Jenny Kay / Olly Parker	The Mildmay Collective (Working Title)	Five month artist in residency project working with residents of Notting Hill Housing's extra care scheme in Mildmay. The project will create a product that will be exhibited and include a mixture of media. Funding will contribute towards artist fees.	July to Nov 2014	Disabled care home residents	40 residents	1,400	18,000	£15,000 Arts Council England, £1,600 sessions in kind	
Mildmay	Joe Caluori / Jenny Kay / Olly Parker	Highbury Estate Youth Scheme	Funding to hire a coach for a trip to Southend on Sea.	6 August 2014	Local families	53	470	470	Not applicable	
St George's	Kat Fletcher / Satnam Gill / Nick Ward	One Housing Group	Funding to purchase six laptops to create a new shared resource for vulnerable young people to enable them to access employment, education and training.	As soon as funding is received	Disadvantaged young people with complex needs	capacity of 23	1,200	1,200	Not applicable	
St George's	Kat Fletcher / Satnam Gill / Nick Ward	Rowan Arts (Tufnell Park's Hidden History)	Tufnell Park's Hidden History project. Local residents will capture the history of Tufnell Park for a website and exhibit at Hilldrop Community Centre. Volunteers will be trained in history research and lead heritage walks. Funding to pay for equipment, website, volunteer expenses, publicity and refreshments.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Local residents	32 volunteers, 120 participants	1,000	11,600	Heritage Lottery Sharing Stories fund tbc	

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St Marys	Angela Picknell / Gary Poole / Nurullah Turan	St Mary Islington Community Partnership (SMICP)	Summer activities programme for young people including off site trips, driving theory tests, weekly movies and discussion. Funding to contribute towards cost of activities and travel expenses.	22 July to 22 Aug 2014	Mainly young people aged 11 to 19	75+	2,000	4,336	In kind and member subs
St Marys	Angela Picknell	The Margins Project	Contribution towards the annual salary of an advice worker providing resettlement advice and support to users of the group's year round Sunday drop in and cold weather night shelter.	May 2014 to May 2015	Homeless and disadvantaged users of their services	300+	1,672	6,672	£5,000 Streetsmart
St Marys	Angela Picknell / Gary Poole / Nurullah Turan	Little Angel Theatre	Multi strand project to engage families living near the group's new studios consisting of a launch/open day, after school club and a crafts club. Funding to pay for staff, materials, publicity and refreshments.	Sept to Dec 2014	Local children from 2 to 11 years old	333	2,000	11,029	£1,200 in kind for room hire, £1,575 income from 15 paid Crafty Kids places tbc
St Marys	Angela Picknell / Gary Poole / Nurullah Turan	Music for People	Funding for musician fees and expenses for 14 sing-along concerts and 12 exercise sessions for older people at Washington Court Circle Sheltered Housing Project, Islington Pensioners Forum and St Mary's Stroke Club.	Sept 2014 to Sept 2015	Older people	Up to 60	1,820	1,820	Not applicable

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St Marys	Angela Picknell / Gary Poole / Nurullah Turan	Mind Yourself	Two 10 week terms of a weekly 'CRAFTernoons' group where members of the group can learn new crafts and hobbies from experts. Funding to contribute towards room hire, facilitator, equipment, volunteers and refreshments.	Ongoing	Targetted at isolated Irish men	50 to 75 participants	1,500	3,500	£1,262 themselves	
St Marys	Angela Picknell / Nurullah Turan	Tintype Gallery	Festival of eight artists' films related to Essex Road to be projected on to the gallery window for a month. Funding to pay for projecting equipment.	1 Sept 2014 to 31 January 2015	Passers by, educational establishments and community groups	Unable to quantify	900	16,000	£14,900 Arts Council England tbc, £2,500 themselves	Funding is awarded on the condition that Arts Council match funding is secured.
Page 14 St Peters	Alice Perry / Gary Doolan / Martin Klute	Music for People	Funding for musician fees, volunteer expenses, travel and subsistence for the delivery of six sing-a-long and movement sessions for residents of Bridgeside Lodge Care Centre.	Sept 2014 to March 2015	Older people with special needs	47	600	600	Not applicable	
Tollington	Richard Watts	See Saw Arts	An outdoor classroom in Evershot Road Park running daily creative arts and education workshops for five weeks. Funding to pay for travel and lunch expenses, art materials and publicity.	July and August 2014	Targetted mainly at schoolchildren aged 5 to 9	Up to 30	1,000	1,000	Not applicable	

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN JULY 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
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Tollington	Richard Watts	The Islington Turkish Kurdish and Cypriot Women's Welfare Group	Annual rent of the group's premises in Durham Road to enable them to continue running their regular Thursday sessions for women.	April 2014 to April 2015	Women from Turkish, Kurdish and Cypriot communities	25 per session, 380 members	1,000	1,000	Not applicable	
Tollington	Richard Watts	Community Language Support Services	Funding for the organisation to obtain a quality mark and to pay the salary of a sessional worker for 12 weeks.	Sept 2014 to Feb 2015	BME refugee communities	600+	1,953	2,037		

ADDITIONAL SUMMER ACTIVITIES APPROVED BY ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS)

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	Number of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Bunbury	Troy Gallagher / Robert Khan / Claudia Webbe	Friends of Fortune Street Park	Annual Fun Day in Fortune Street Park. Funding to pay for bouncy castles, entertainment, face painting, insurance and printing.	05-Jul-14	Local community	800	2,600	3,800	£850 themselves, £100 Waitrose, £250 tbc	
Junction	Janet Burgess / Kaya Makarau-Schwartz	Whittington Park Community Association (Big Day Out 2014)	'Big Day Out' in Whittington Park. Summer festival to mark the culmination of the Holloway Arts Festival. Event will include a range of activities and entertainment, workshops and stalls. Funding will contribute towards staging costs, volunteer expenses, performers, publicity and associated event costs.	8 June 2014	All members of the local community as well as local groups	1,000	750	3,915	£750 LIF, £1,750 WPCA in kind support, income from stall hire, café and sponsors	

ADDITIONAL SUMMER ACTIVITIES APPROVED BY ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS)

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	Number of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
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Junction	Janet Burgess	Pemberton Gardens Big Lunch 2014	Big Lunch 2014 for residents of Pemberton Gardens and the surrounding area. Funding to pay for entertainment, bouncy castle, decorations and refreshments.	31 May 2014	Local residents	100+	500	1,000	£500 from Peabody tbc	
Mildmay	Rhodri Jamieson-Ball	Asian Elderly Luncheon and Social Club	Hire of a coach for a day trip to Margate.	5 July 2014	Asian older people who are often isolated, lonely and unable to travel	32	500	500	Not applicable	
St George's	Tracy Ismail	St Georges Avenue Street Party	Street party on St George's Avenue. Funding to pay for printing and the hire of road closure signs.	22 June 2014	Local residents	200 households	200	1,500	£190 reserves, £1,000 sponsorship tbc	
St George's	Kat Fletcher / Tracy Ismail / David Wilson	Crayford Road Gardeners	Annual Street Party. Funding to contribute towards costs of food, activities and entertainment	28 June 2014	Residents in Crayford Road and surrounding area	150+	1,000	1,000	None at present	

PROJECT CHANGE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN JULY 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	Number of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
St Peters	Alice Perry / Gary Doolan / Martin Klute	Islington Boat Club	Funding for building work and a small amount of equipment to ensure kitchen is fit for purpose before opening a community café.	Aug to Sept 2014	Local families, community groups and young people	100+ young members and café visitors	2,041	2,059		Original award of £2,041 awarded in 2013 for community café.

Total LIF funding requested and balance remaining

Total Local Initiatives Fund budget allocation 2014-15:	£320,000
Total allocations to be made from previous years' budgets:	£13,819
Amount allocated by VCS / Exec Committee to date:	£10,300
Amount allocated through delegated approval to date:	£5,550
Balance remaining:	£317,969
New proposals for July VCS Committee:	£73,584
Total amount remaining to allocate in 2014-15:	£244,385

2014-15 Balance remaining by ward:	
Ward	Balance:
Barnsbury	£23,048
Bunhill	£9,162
Caledonian	£19,500
Canonbury	£20,673
Clerkenwell	£14,567
Finsbury Park	£5,600
Highbury East	£20,633
Highbury West	£19,706
Hillrise	£13,667
Holloway	£9,580
Junction	£15,578
Mildmay	£14,380
St George's	£13,970
St Mary's	£9,146
St Peter's	£20,070
Tollington	£15,106
	£244,385

Notes:

Includes £4,078 unallocated LIF from 2012-13 and 2013-14

Includes £12 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £673 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £1,303 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £1,966 unallocated LIF from 2012-13 and 2013-14

Includes £2,428 unallocated LIF from 2012-13

Includes £870 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £930 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £1,559 unallocated LIF from 2013-14





Chief Executive
Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	30 September 2014		All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND

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 until 2015 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 Local Initiatives Fund which has a funding allocation of £320,000 per year. Ward Partnerships have been established to strengthen the role of ward councillors and to create a mechanism for a more focused ward based approach across the borough. Each ward has £20,000 per year to spend on local schemes. As Ward Partnerships are not formally constituted committees of the Council, it is not legally possible for ward councillors to allocate funding. Instead it was agreed at Executive in March 2011 that they should make recommendations to the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee about the allocation of the Local Initiatives Fund. This report outlines the process for administering the Local Initiatives Fund and sets out the latest proposals submitted by ward councillors. It also includes a recommendation to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project from 1 October 2014.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the new proposals submitted by ward councillors as set out in Appendix A and to agree these proposals in principle subject to the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy and Community Partnerships) being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 2.2 To agree to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project from 1 October 2014, as set out at paragraph 3.9.
- 2.3 To note the amendments to the ward budgets resulting from project funding being returned. The amendments are included in the budget summary in Appendix A.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 17 March 2011 the Executive 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 2011-12 onwards, the new Ward Partnership arrangements replaced the previous Area Committees which were abolished at Council on 31 March 2011.
- 3.2 A report relating to the Islington Community Fund was agreed by Executive on 17 March 2011. This proposed the creation of the Local Initiatives Fund to replace the existing £320,000 of Area Committee Budgets from 2011-12 onwards, with each ward having an allocation of £20,000 per year. Council subsequently agreed at its meeting on 31 March 2011 to reallocate the £320,000 comprising the Area Committee budget to the Local Initiatives Fund.
- 3.3 As Ward Partnerships are not formally constituted committees of the Council, it is not legally possible for ward councillors to allocate funding so an alternative mechanism was required to allocate the budgets previously managed by Area Committees.
- 3.4 At Executive in March 2011 it was agreed that a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee of the Executive be set up to oversee matters relating to Council engagement with the voluntary and community sector, including decisions around allocation of the Islington Community Fund. This committee enables Executive Members to steer funding towards those organisations and types of services they feel are of most value in tackling priorities around employment, crime, housing and in enhancing the role of ward members in their local areas.
- 3.5 The Terms of Reference for the VCS Committee 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'.
- 3.6 The Local Initiatives Fund enables councillors to respond directly to priorities in their ward that lie outside of the current mainstream funding programmes and might not otherwise receive funding. They enable councillors to suggest improvements to local services or facilities, which would benefit from financial assistance.
- 3.7 In April 2011, the VCS Committee agreed that each ward councillor be given a notional allocation of the Local Initiatives Fund budget (i.e. divided equally between the councillors elected for each ward). Councillors can then make recommendations as to how that money should be spent although the final decision (which used to sit with the Area Committees) is now taken by the VCS Committee. From 2011-12 onwards, £20,000 is available to each ward therefore the notional allocation for each councillor is £6,666.
- 3.8 The Third Sector Partnerships team in Strategy and Community Partnerships manages the Local Initiatives Fund budget in liaison with ward councillors and the VCS Committee. The team has a lead role in managing the Community Fund and incorporates this into other similar work. Increasingly the team is making links with other small grant programmes in Islington to ensure that funding is fairly spread across the borough and provides good value for money.
- 3.9 The VCS Committee approves around 200 project proposals per year from the Local Initiatives Fund. A very small proportion of these, approximately 5% of the total, are for awards of £200 or less. It is not cost effective for the council to administer grants of this size and it is therefore proposed to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project from 1 October 2014. Officers will update guidance for Local Initiatives Fund proposals and will include suggestions for developing more substantive projects at the lower end of awards, for example by working in partnership with other local groups or by expanding the reach of activities and events.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

The £3,435,000 of Council funding referred to in this report, of which £320,000 for Local Initiatives Fund 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.

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 Executive 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.

When considering proposals the Executive 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 Local Initiatives Fund allocations 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. The Local Initiatives Fund provides an opportunity for the Council to fund small projects for which funding through other channels is unavailable. It is important that processes are clear and that they enable efficient and effective allocation of the available budget.

Appendices

Appendix A: Local Initiatives Fund Proposals

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Executive Member for Community Development

22 September 2014

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date

Report Author: Giles Rankin, Third Sector Partnerships Manager
Tel: 020 7527 3143
Email: giles.rankin@islington.gov.uk

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Barnsbury	Jilani Choudhury / Mouna Hamitouche / James Murray	Chabad-Lubavitch of Islington	Islington Menorah Lighting on Islington Green which celebrates the eight day long Jewish cultural festival of Chanukah. Funding to contribute towards food, equipment hire, entertainment and payment to contractors.	21-Dec-14	People of all ages	300 to 500	500	5,690.51	£2,012 LIF, £1,000 LIF Hirsch Foundation tbc, £800 private donor tbc	£2,011.83 LIF awarded at the July VCS Committee.
Caledonian	Paul Convery / Una O'Halloran / Rupert Perry	Islington Bangladesh Association	Project aims to help older people mainly in Barnsbury and Caledonian wards develop healthy eating habits and improve their physical fitness. Funding to contribute towards food for luncheon club, sessional staff, a cook, exercise tutor, hall hire, refreshments and publicity.	6 Oct 2014 to 30 Sept 2015	Older people aged 50+ especially those from a BAME background	70 to 75 per week	3,000	13,200	£6,000 LIF from other wards tbc, £3,000 Nationwide Foundation tbc, £1,200 participants' contributions tbc	£6,000 LIF will be sought from other wards.
Caledonian	Paul Convery / Una O'Halloran / Rupert Perry	Bemerton Villages Management Organisation	Contribution towards the Cally Festival 2014 which aims to engage residents, community groups and local traders in the regeneration of Caledonian Road. Funding to contribute towards publicity, staging, equipment and other associated running costs.	07-Sep-14	Mainly local residents	9,000	10,000	40,000	£16,000 LBI funding (S106, Festivals Fund and LIF), £9,500 private sponsorship, £2,000 festival income	£5,452.50 LIF awarded to this event in Mar 2014.
Clerkenwell	Raphael Andrews	Finsbury and Clerkenwell Volunteers	Contribution to annual line rental and call costs to enable volunteers to make phone calls to about 100 clients and their families in the evenings and weekends as well as in the daytimes.	April 2014 to March 2015	Mainly older and disabled people who live alone	100	1,500	4,500	£3,000 themselves	

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Clerkenwell	Raphael Andrews	Charles Rowan House Tenants & Residents Association	Funding to get brickwork cleaned at the two entrances to the Charles Rowan House courtyard prior to other improvements (signage, lighting and CCTV).	Oct to Nov 2014	Residents of Charles Rowan House	192 to 288	500	2,460	£1,000 LIF, £960 tbc from BIFFA, English Heritage and Cripplegate Foundation	£1,000 LIF awarded at the July VCS Committee.
Page 24 Clerkenwell	Raphael Andrews	Rowan Arts	Funding will contribute towards the building of a website, publicity, the costs of a coordinator and volunteers who will promote the Clerkenwell Life website to local residents. There will be a programme of volunteering and training opportunities. The website aims to encourage local people to feel part of a community using a digital platform to promote networking and information sharing.	Oct 2014 to June 2015	Local residents especially those who are unemployed or who need upskilling	200-300 through LIF and rising in the future	1,000	6,000	£1,000 LIF tbc, £4,000 sponsorship from local businesses tbc	
Finsbury Park / Highbury West / Hillrise / Junction / St George's / Peter's / Tollington	All councillors of Highbury West, St Peter's and Tollington wards / Gary Heather / David Poyser / Marian Spall / Tim Nicholls / Satnam Gill	Nag's Head Town Centre Management Group	Annual Christmas event in the Nag's Head Town Centre. Funding to contribute towards cost of entertainment, traffic/crowd management measures, publicity and other associated running costs of the event.	30 Nov or 7 Dec 2014	Islington residents, local businesses, schools and community organisations	20,000	3,250	22,000 to 23,000	£6,000 from sponsorship, £7,200 in kind support, £1,600 tbc from fairground operator and market stall holders	

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Finsbury Park	Asima Shaikh	Holloway Neighbourhood Group	Funding to support small women's community groups in Finsbury Park which will involve arranging networking meetings, offering practical support and providing one to one capacity building support.	October 2014 to April 2015	Community groups providing services to women in Finsbury Park	11 community groups	500	500	Not applicable	
Highbury West	Theresa Debono / Richard Greening / Andy Hull	Music for People	Musician fees, volunteer expenses and travel and subsistence costs for twelve sing and play-a-long sessions and four special occasion concerts at the Stress Project (e.g. at Christmas, Easter, etc)	Nov 2014 to Oct 2015	Older people and mental health service users	200	1,120	1,120	Not applicable	
Hillrise / Junction	David Poyser / Marian Spall / Janet Burgess / Tim Nicholls	Talking News Islington	Running costs of a monthly talking newspaper for blind and partially sighted residents which is distributed in CD and tape format. Funding to contribute towards stationery, printing, postage, materials and other associated running costs.	On-going	Blind, visually impaired and print disabled	135	800	4,716.65 per year	£1,000 Greater London Fund for Blind, £1,000 Blind Aid, £1,200 Community Chest	

NEW PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2014

Ward	Councillor	Organisation	Project Summary	Timescale	Areas / Residents to Benefit	No. of Residents to Benefit	Budget Proposal Amount (£)	Project Total (£)	Match Funding Details	Strategy & Community Partnerships Comments
Junction	Kaya Makarau-Schwartz	Archway Town Centre Group	Cleaner Safer Archway Week, an initiative which will focus on cleaning up the Archway town centre and residential areas and improving community safety. Local school children are to design a poster advertising the initiative. Funding to pay for a photographer, prize money for the winning design and the cost of producing posters.	22 to 26 Sept 2014	Residents , visitors, employers and employees based in Archway town centre and surrounds	10,000+	250	950 (not incl staff time)	£500 LBI Chief Executive's Department, £100 themselves	
St Marys	Angela Picknell / Nurullah Turan	The Margins Project	Weekly Cold Weather Night Shelter run in conjunction with CARIS Islington for 13 weeks providing accommodation, shelter and advice on resettlement and health issues. Funding to pay for volunteers' travel expenses, food for the 13 weeks and a contribution to the salary of the project manager.	1 Jan 2015 to 26 Mar 2015	People who are homeless	17 per week (221 beds over the whole period)	2,000	2,767	£767 LIF tbc	

Total LIF funding requested and balance remaining

Total Local Initiatives Fund budget allocation 2014-15:	£320,000
Total allocations to be made from previous years' budgets:	£17,806
Amount allocated by VCS / Exec Committee to date:	£89,434
Balance remaining:	£248,373
New proposals for September VCS Committee:	£24,420
Total amount remaining to allocate in 2014-15:	£223,953

2014-15 Balance remaining by ward:	
Ward	Balance:
Barnsbury	£22,548
Bunhill	£9,162
Caledonian	£6,500
Canonbury	£20,673
Clerkenwell	£11,899
Finsbury Park	£4,850
Highbury East	£20,633
Highbury West	£18,086
Hillrise	£12,567
Holloway	£9,580
Junction	£17,882
Mildmay	£14,380
St George's	£13,720
St Mary's	£7,146
St Peter's	£19,970
Tollington	£14,356
	£223,953

Notes:

Includes £4,078 unallocated LIF from 2012-13 and 2013-14

Includes £12 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £673 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £333 unallocated LIF from 2011-12

Includes £1,303 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £1,966 unallocated LIF from 2012-13 and 2013-14

Includes £5,432 unallocated LIF from 2012-13

Includes £870 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

Includes £1,580 unallocated LIF from 2009-10 and 2013-14

Includes £1,559 unallocated LIF from 2013-14

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Report of: **Executive Member for Community Development**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	30 September 2014		All

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SUBJECT: Support to Local Voluntary Organisations: Discretionary Rate Relief

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to a review of the council's support to local voluntary organisations, focusing on the resources provided through the Islington Community Fund. It explains the financial challenge facing the council and highlights the importance of building a resilient voluntary sector in the borough. The report notes the feedback from a recent formal consultation with the voluntary sector and outlines arrangements for a review of discretionary rate relief.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the response from the voluntary sector to a recent consultation on the council's support to local voluntary organisations, as summarised in Appendix B. The council will consider the feedback carefully and will respond in due course.
- 2.2 To proceed with a review of discretionary rate relief and to bring recommendations for future funding to VCS Committee in January 2015.
- 2.3 To agree that new awards will be for three years from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018 with an option to extend for up to a further two years.
- 2.4 To note that applications from organisations that become eligible for discretionary rate relief after these awards have been made will be considered by the VCS Committee twice a year.

3. Background

- 3.1 The voluntary sector lies at the heart of the council's ambition for a fairer Islington. Each day, hundreds of staff and volunteers in community organisations across the borough provide valuable services to our most vulnerable residents. In 2013/14 the council spent almost £40m on services delivered by the voluntary sector.

- 3.2 Unprecedented cuts in public spending present enormous challenges to maintaining essential services and responding to new demands. Since 2010/11 the council has had to cut its spending by £112 million and we expect to have to find another £95 million savings over the next four years. By 2018 we expect our overall budget to have more than halved since 2010.
- 3.3 Reduced resources mean that we will have to find new ways of meeting our priorities, which residents say are jobs, housing and coping with the rising cost of living, and we are open to voluntary sector solutions to improving local services. We want to work with innovative organisations that are well run, provide value for money and deliver positive outcomes for residents.
- 3.4 The council acknowledges the importance of its financial support to local voluntary groups and to the infrastructure that sustains and enables the wider sector to flourish. We will continue to provide funding, and although we won't be in a position to do so to the same extent in future years, we believe we can build a resilient voluntary sector in Islington if we work together creatively and imaginatively.

Islington Community Fund Consultation

- 3.5 To help the council develop its thinking around future support for local voluntary organisations we held an eight week consultation from mid June to mid August 2014. The focus of the consultation was Islington Community Fund – a £3.4 million pot of money which has six grants programmes. A copy of the consultation paper is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.6 More than 40 organisations sent in individual responses to the consultation. We also received written feedback from workshops facilitated by Voluntary Action Islington which were attended by 30 representatives of local organisations. A summary of the responses from the consultation is attached as Appendix B. We intend to consider the feedback carefully and will respond in due course.
- 3.7 For the reasons outlined below we propose to proceed with a review of discretionary rate relief. This was signalled in letters sent in February 2014 to all organisations currently receiving discretionary rate relief. An example of one of these letters is attached as Appendix C.

Discretionary Rate Relief

- 3.8 There are two types of rate relief:
- (a) Mandatory Rate Relief which by law is given automatically to any registered charity in the borough and covers 80% of their rates. The cost of mandatory rate relief is met by central government.
 - (b) Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) can be given by the council to cover the remaining 20% of a charity's rates. It can also pay all or part of the rates of not for profit voluntary organisations that aren't registered charities and so not getting mandatory rate relief.

DRR is an effective way for the council to support the voluntary sector as we only have to pay 30% of the cost of giving it. The rest is funded by central government and the Greater London Authority.

- 3.9 230 local organisations currently receive DRR. They range from very small community halls on estates through to larger local voluntary organisations. Most DRR awards are relatively small (under £2,000 pa and in some cases a few hundred pounds) and not all groups that get it receive other funding from the council.
- 3.10 DRR is only given to local community groups benefitting residents rather than to all voluntary organisations based in the borough. DRR isn't awarded to national charities that don't deliver local services.
- 3.11 In 2011 we reviewed all organisations getting DRR and each was assessed against new criteria to make sure that our support was focussed on the right local groups. This was the first time that the council had reviewed all of its DRR awards and we stopped funding less deserving organisations.

- 3.12 The current criteria (attached at Appendix D) remains fit for purpose and would allow the council to award DRR to the full range of local not for profit organisations that respondents to the VCS consultation asked to be included. It should be noted that Government guidance asks local authorities to use their discretion when granting DRR and to treat each case on its merit.
- 3.13 In 2011 we invited local groups to apply for three year DRR awards. They end on 31 March 2015 and all organisations have been sent the legally required 12 month notices of withdrawal of DRR.
- 3.14 The practicalities of administering DRR to a relatively large number of organisations – particularly the legal requirement to issue a full financial year's notice of an intention to reduce or withdraw DRR – make it difficult to tie the application process and timetable in with other Islington Community Fund programmes.
- 3.15 We will therefore invite all organisations to re-apply for new DRR awards in October this year and will assess applications against the criteria. Recommendations will be presented to VCS Committee in January 2015. New awards will be for three years from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018 with an option to extend for up to a further two years.
- 3.16 There will also be some organisations that apply for DRR after VCS Committee has agreed awards in January 2015. This may be because they've just started up, have recently moved into the borough or may have only just found out that they are liable for business rates.
- 3.17 We therefore propose to recommend new applications to VCS Committee twice a year. This will ensure that organisations do not have to wait an unreasonably long time before knowing whether or not they will be given DRR. In practice this should involve no more than half a dozen or so new awards per year which will be for no longer than to 31 March 2018.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

Under the business rates retention system, the council bears 30% of the cost of discretionary rate relief (with 50% and 20% borne by central government and the Greater London Authority respectively). Any increase in the overall cost of discretionary rate relief would represent a budget pressure for the council and would need to be offset by additional compensatory savings elsewhere.

4.2 Legal Implications:

Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 confers discretion on local billing authorities to grant discretionary rate relief from all or part of the amount of non-domestic rates payable to registered charities and certain non profit making organisations. Authorities have discretion to award up to 100% relief to non-profit making bodies and can grant up to 20% relief by way of top-up to charitable bodies in receipt of the 80% mandatory relief.

The council may grant rate relief for a fixed period of time. The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 require the council to give notice to the ratepayer stating the start date and end date of the period in respect of which relief is given. This provision enables the council to adopt a triennial re-application and assessment process for granting discretionary rate relief.

Applications for rate relief should be considered on their merits but taking into account the council's criteria for awarding discretionary rate relief as set out in Appendix D.

European Union competition rules generally prohibit Government subsidies to businesses. Relief from taxes, including non-domestic rates, can constitute state aid. The council must bear this in mind when granting discretionary rate relief. However, rate relief for charities and non-profit making bodies is not generally considered to be state aid, because the recipients are not in market competition with other businesses.

4.3 Environmental Implications

None

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.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed in 2011 to assess the impact of Islington Community Fund (including the DRR element) on different groups of residents. The impact was found to be mainly positive. 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 review of DRR uses the same criteria introduced at the last review in 2011 and would allow the council to award DRR to the full range of local not for profit organisations. In addition, bringing in more frequent consideration of new DRR applications – twice a year instead of annually – would be positive for local groups and the residents they serve.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The council has had a strong partnership with the voluntary sector stretching back over many years and values highly the role that local organisations play in meeting the needs of some of Islington's most disadvantaged communities. Awarding discretionary rate relief to charitable and non-profit making bodies providing community benefit is a cost effective way of supporting local organisations and helps to sustain a healthy voluntary sector capable of achieving the best outcomes for residents.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Consultation paper
- Appendix B – Summary of responses to the consultation
- Appendix C – Example DRR notice letter
- Appendix D – Criteria for awarding discretionary rate relief

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Executive Member for Community Development

22 September 2014

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date

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London Borough of Islington

Consultation on the Council's Support to Local Voluntary Organisations (Islington Community Fund)

Tell us what you think

www.islington.gov.uk/vcsconsultation

Email partnerships@islington.gov.uk

Room G12, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, NI 2UD

19 June 2014

Introduction

The voluntary sector lies at the heart of the council's ambition for a fairer Islington. Each day, hundreds of staff and volunteers in community organisations across the borough provide valuable important services to our most vulnerable residents.

Voluntary organisations hold major contracts to deliver many of the services that we have a statutory duty to provide – particularly adult social care - and we also commission a range of discretionary services through the sector. In 2013/14 the council spent almost £40m on services delivered by the voluntary sector

As well as contracts we award grants to local community groups supporting Islington's diverse communities and improving the quality of life for all in our neighbourhoods.

Unprecedented cuts in public spending (and more on their way) will mean that the council won't be able to maintain all of its current services in the future. At the same time we face new and growing demands, such as in meeting the needs of an aging population.

The voluntary sector will be relied upon more than ever. We will all have to collaborate with less money to find innovative ways to help our residents through the difficult years ahead.

The Financial Challenge

The scale of reductions in public spending presents enormous challenges to maintaining essential services and responding to new demands.

Since 2010/11 the council has had to cut its spending by £112 million - around 37% of our budget. But the cuts continue. We expect to have to find around another £95 million savings over the next four years.

Cuts of this magnitude mean that we will need to radically review what the council can continue to deliver. The impact will be greater for discretionary services which the council does not have a statutory duty to provide.

We will have to work in different ways with our voluntary sector partners and obtain better value from our funding, both in financial terms and for the benefit of communities across the borough.

Like the council, voluntary organisations will also need to adapt to a harsher financial climate. In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable residents, local organisations will need to review the way that they work and the services that they deliver. This may involve:

- closer co-operation and/ or restructuring;
- sharing resources such as premises and administrative functions;
- developing new services and operating models to generate income.

The council wants to support the sector during the difficult years ahead and to work with innovative organisations that can help us to meet the major financial challenges that we face.

Better Outcomes for Islington and its Communities

We're determined to create a fairer Islington, reducing the gap between rich and poor and making a difference to the lives of those who most need our help. We define this as cutting the number of residents living in poverty and the gap in the most important outcomes (housing, crime, educational achievement, employment, health and well-being) between the most and least affluent.

The voluntary sector has an essential role to play and we want to support and work with local organisations actively engaged in helping us to meet our priorities.

Jobs, housing and coping with the rising **cost of living** are the three things that residents say are of most concern to them at the moment and the council is committed to addressing these issues.

The Council's Partnership with the Voluntary Sector

We value a resilient local voluntary sector that is:

- Independent, varied, responsive and reflects Islington's diverse communities.
- Innovative and entrepreneurial and able to shape and deliver high quality services.
- An advocate for residents and supports the council to address local needs.
- Collaborative and works in partnership to achieve community outcomes.

We want to continue to develop constructive relationships and to engage in dialogue and mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations - whether we fund them or not - and we recognise the importance of ensuring that there are opportunities for us to work together.

Reduced resources mean that we will need to find new and innovative ways to achieve better outcomes for our residents. We are open to voluntary sector solutions to improving local services. We will also work with and support the sector to attract investment into the borough to maintain and develop new services.

The council acknowledges the importance of its financial support to local voluntary groups and to the infrastructure that sustains and enables the wider sector to flourish. We will continue to provide funding, and although we won't be in a position to do so to the same extent in future years, we believe that we can retain a thriving voluntary sector if there is more creative thinking about grants as well as about commissioned services.

We will allocate our resources in fair, transparent and consistent ways to individual and groups of organisations that are well run, provide value for money and deliver positive outcomes for residents.

Consultation

This consultation relates to grants awarded to local organisations from the **Islington Community Fund** – a £3.4 million pot of annual financial support. Current fund arrangements end on 31 March 2015 and we would like your views on the principles and priorities that should underpin future support for local voluntary and community organisations and how we can work together to make Islington a fairer borough for all our residents.

We are not asking you to tell us which organisations should receive funding or how much each should get. The council has yet to agree a budget for the Community Fund and grants will be awarded through an open and transparent process.

The consultation closes on Friday 15 August 2014.

Please use the form at the end of this document to send us your views.

If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please telephone 020 7527 2000.

Supporting the Local Voluntary Sector

This year (2014/15) we will spend about £40 million on contracts and grants to not for profit voluntary organisations. [View details on the council's website.](#)

Over 90% of this expenditure is for commissioned services, mostly openly tendered and allocated on the basis of bids assessed against objective criteria. Council departments (particularly Housing and Adult Social Services and Children's Services) will continue to purchase services from the voluntary sector in this way – adhering to national and EU legal procurement rules which all local authorities have to follow.

We want to see more local organisations successfully bidding for contracts, either by themselves or joining together in consortia. We have worked closely with sector representatives to review our procurement procedures so that they take account of community benefit. This will help local groups to compete effectively for contracts.

We have a variety of relationships with the voluntary sector. As the pressure on council resources increases we need to be more creative and find ways of offsetting reductions in funding with other support.

The voluntary sector has a long history of innovation and many of the services that are now part of the local fabric, such as free community legal advice, facilities for young people and even some aspects of primary health care, were first pioneered by voluntary community action to address local concerns and gaps in statutory provision.

Less public sector funding, combined with major challenges will require more voluntary sector solutions. We would like to support imaginative and creative organisations to test out new ideas and approaches to improving local services and securing better outcomes. We are also interested in suggestions on ways in which the council can stimulate more creativity by changing the way that that it operates.

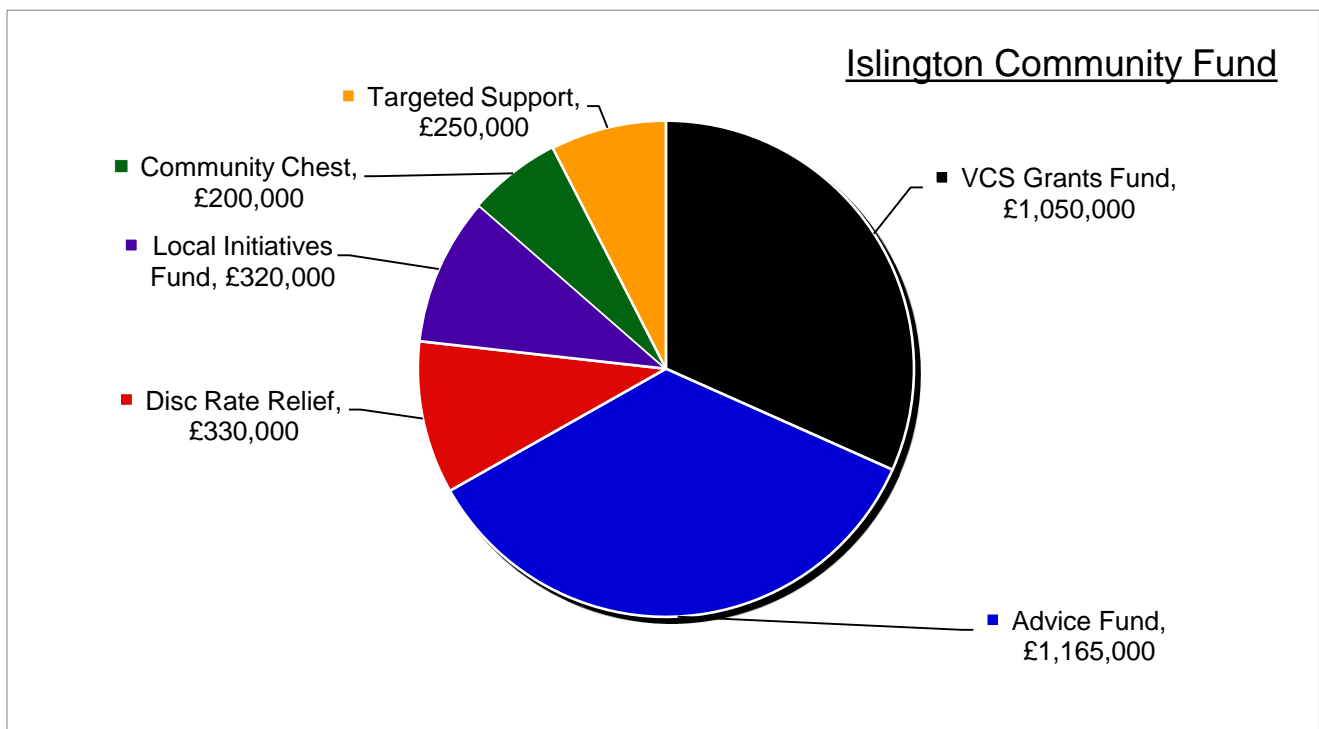
Question

1. At a time of reduced public funding, how can the council and the voluntary sector work creatively together to meet our priorities for the borough and address the issues that are of most concern to residents?

Islington Community Fund

In 2011 non-commissioned council grants to local voluntary and community organisations were amalgamated into the £3.4 million Islington Community Fund which has six grants programmes:

- **Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Fund:** £1.05 million per year.
Core funding to strategically important local organisations.
- **Advice Fund:** £1.165 million per year.
For specialist community legal advice and doorstep advocacy.
- **Discretionary Rate Relief:** £330,000 per year.
Rate relief to local charities and community groups.
- **Local Initiatives Fund:** £320,000 per year.
Neighbourhood projects supported by local ward councillors.
- **Community Chest:** £200,000 per year.
Small one-off grants to local organisations.
- *** Targeted Support:** £250,000 per year.
Funding for specific services – young people, community safety and lunch clubs.



***Note:** The Targeted Support element was introduced to mitigate the impact of the loss of central government funding which had supported a number of local voluntary organisations. We don't propose to continue with this arrangement and we will integrate our support within other commissioned programmes.

Local community groups serving Islington residents (as opposed to national or regional charities with offices in the borough) were invited to apply for funding and the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Committee agreed awards to 31 March 2015.

Current funding awards come to an end next year and we have an opportunity to review our future priorities and approach, including how much we allocate to each type of activity.

Question

2. Given the huge challenges that we face over the coming years, what should be the main priorities of an Islington Community Fund?

Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Fund

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants Fund is the largest of the Islington Community Fund's programmes and core funds 43 local organisations across six different themes. [Download a list of grant awards.](#)

Current Themes

1. Community Hubs: Large community centres providing a range of services for residents and supporting smaller groups in a specific part of the borough.

Theme allocation £500,000 per year. Maximum grant £60,000 per year.

2. Cohesion: Organisations promoting cohesion within and between Islington's BME, refugee/migrant and faith communities.

Theme allocation £285,000 per year. Maximum grant £25,000 per year.

3. Networks and Support: Borough-wide networks and organisations providing support to other local organisations.

Theme allocation £110,000 per year. Maximum grant £40,000 per year.

4. Disability: Organisations supporting disabled residents.

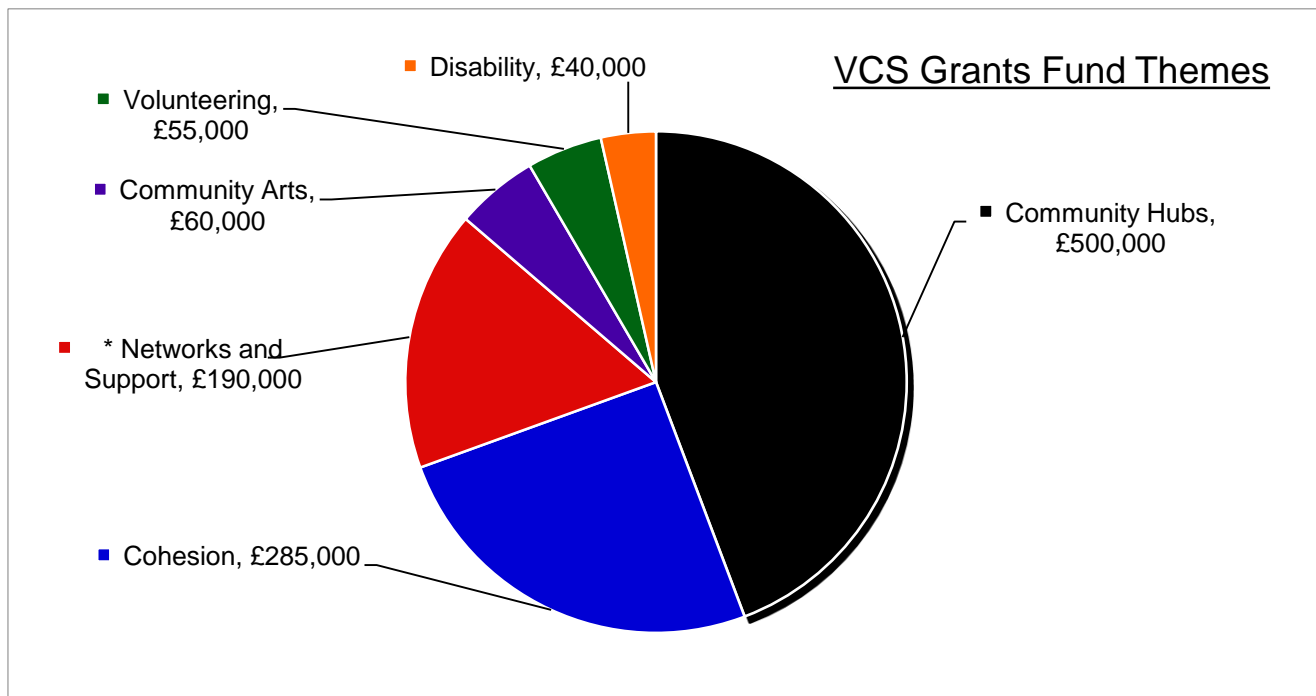
Theme allocation £40,000 per year. Maximum grant: £40,000 per year.

5. Community Arts: Organisations engaging residents in the arts.

Theme allocation £60,000 per year. Maximum grant: £20,000 per year.

6. Volunteering: Organisations promoting local volunteering.

Theme allocation £55,000 per year. Maximum grant: £55,000 per year.



* **Note:** Networks and Support element includes an additional £80,000 agreed in 2012 for voluntary sector capacity building and information services; an independent voice to represent the sector; and support for a borough wide network of community hubs.

Community Hubs

The VCS Grants Fund core funds 12 community hubs (large community centres) delivering services in specific parts of the borough. Our ambition for hubs is that as well as offering a range of good quality local services they provide the focus for community activity in their areas and are well used by a diverse range of local residents.

We asked them to work closely with councillors within ward partnerships to help improve local services and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods. Hubs have also played a role in supporting smaller community groups and connecting with other community facilities in their areas.

We have tended in the past to fund hubs serving the most disadvantaged residents in the poorest parts of the borough. This means that some wards don't have a hub and others have more than one hub or deliver services from a variety of smaller community venues. It could be argued that a successful hub brings all sections of the community together, including more affluent residents and volunteers.

The hubs that we fund don't cover the whole borough and not all provide the same services. There are also other important local community centres that we don't fund.

Question

3. What do you think are the most important services that we should support the voluntary sector to provide in a neighbourhood? Do you think that community hubs are the best way of delivering these?

Community Cohesion, Engagement and Advocacy

We fund a number of organisations and networks providing services for and representing and supporting BME and equality groups. In turn they bring together and work with a wider range of smaller organisations to help them to grow and also to voice and articulate the needs of the communities that they serve. They provide an important platform for communities to engage with statutory agencies to plan and shape services in Islington and also support cohesion between different communities.

We want them to work collaboratively to serve and advocate on behalf of their whole communities and involve and engage with residents and groups that make up its wider constituent parts. We also want to make sure that they have the right expertise to deliver effectively.

Islington's population is very diverse and not all our communities are represented by the organisations that we fund. In some cases we awarded grants to more than one group serving the same community (although not necessarily supporting the same residents).

We previously funded disability representation and advocacy separately but propose to include it within a broader theme. However, not all 'protected characteristics'¹ as defined by equalities legislation are currently served by the networks and organisations that we fund.

It would not be possible to stretch our funding to support organisations from each and every one of our many communities. Even within communities there is wide diversity of opinion, outlook and lifestyles and some don't have a voluntary organisation specifically for them operating in the borough.

We want to see organisations working collaboratively and within networks to address the full range of equalities issues, taking account of the needs of residents from all protected characteristics.

Questions

4. What activity should we fund to give Islington's diverse communities a voice and enable them to shape and influence services?

5. How can we encourage groups to collaborate and address wider equalities issues affecting residents from all protected characteristics?

¹ Protected characteristics = age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Voluntary Sector Support

Currently we fund a number of organisations delivering borough-wide services and activity to sustain and develop Islington's voluntary and community sector – especially work with new and small groups. This includes information services, linking organisations with opportunities and providing expertise in key areas such as fundraising, training and capacity building. Groups can also access support from other services that are available, including help from local businesses through the [BIG Alliance](#) project (Businesses for Islington Giving).

Some of this support is specifically targeted at particular sectors and we need to achieve more joined-up working between providers – including the national and London-wide organisations working in this field. Feedback from the annual local voluntary sector conference tells us that small groups find the patchwork of support difficult to understand. We have also been told that community groups would like more one to one expert help and consultancy.

To help Islington's voluntary sector adjust to the large loss of public funding over the next few years we also need to ensure that organisations are able to access support to restructure, join together to save costs, establish consortia to secure contracts and to develop new income generating operating models, such as social enterprises.

Question

6. What specific support should we fund to sustain a robust local voluntary sector and how should this be delivered?

Volunteering

Volunteers underpin much of the work of the voluntary sector and we want to make sure that local organisations are able to harness this valuable human resource. Residents also need ways to get involved, as do local businesses that offer free expertise and professional help to organisations in the borough.

We currently fund the promotion of volunteering and the development of opportunities to get involved. When we reviewed our financial support in 2012, we were keen to try out new ways to get more local people volunteering – particularly residents who weren't already doing it.

People volunteer in all sorts of ways and many will approach community groups directly to offer help. This doesn't normally need any additional support and we would like to ask your views on what, if any, volunteering interventions the council should support.

Question

7. Should we fund activity to support volunteering and, if so, what should this be?

Community Engagement and Resident Participation

A number of local voluntary organisations deliver activities or run amenities that enrich the lives of residents of all ages and backgrounds. They reflect the rich diversity that makes up Islington and include arts and cultural activities funded by the Islington Community Fund. There are also a number of well-established community run recreation facilities and regular public events which residents cherish and are essential ingredients to the fabric and life of the borough.

While there may be opportunities for some of these organisations to secure funding by diversifying their activities and engaging with other programmes, we want to ensure that valued local community institutions are not lost to the borough and propose to include them within the scope of the council's support to the local voluntary and community sector.

Question

8. What outcomes should we expect from organisations funded to deliver community engagement and participation?

Discretionary Rate Relief

180 charities and voluntary organisations currently receive discretionary rate relief. This includes quite a few community groups that don't get any other council funding.

Our support is directed to organisations providing services to Islington residents, rather than to large national charities with offices in the borough. We also exclude charity shops as they don't directly deliver a service. However, all registered charities (locally focussed or not) can get mandatory rate relief which covers 80% of their rates. [View details and criteria.](#)

We give discretionary rate relief to both charities and other types of not for profit organisations and they usually don't have to pay any rates if they receive an award from us. However, in the case of large awards (currently £6,000 or over) we can decide to only fund a proportion of the rates bill to reflect the amount of local benefit. In practice we have only applied this to one large organisation.

In 2011 we reviewed all organisations receiving discretionary rate relief to ensure that they still met the criteria (which we also reviewed). Each was asked to re-apply and new four year awards were given to 31 March 2015.

We have also accepted applications each year from groups that either started or moved into the borough after 2011. Although we funded very few new applicants we set aside a small part of the budget to pay for new awards - otherwise they would have been forced to wait for up to three years before getting an opportunity to apply.

Our criteria are broad enough to include a very wide range of organisations and includes voluntary aided and grant maintained (but not private) schools. We could tighten the criteria to reduce eligibility and re-direct some of the money saved to our other voluntary sector grants programmes. However this could limit the scope to give discretionary rate relief to new and emerging organisations that are adopting different not for profit models that don't involve charity registration.

We would like your views on discretionary rate relief and what it should support.

Question

9. What type of organisations should we support with discretionary rate relief?

Premises

Finding suitable and affordable premises in the right location can be a struggle for many voluntary and community organisations. Accommodation costs are high in Islington, particularly in the south of the borough, but the sector needs fit for purpose buildings to operate effectively and serve residents well.

A range of accommodation is needed - from spaces for small groups with little funding that are just starting up through to larger local organisations providing services to relatively high numbers of residents each day.

Sharing accommodation can bring down costs for voluntary organisations facing the pressure of reduced public sector funding. Bringing complementary community sector activities together under one roof also has the potential to provide a better service to residents which they will find easier to access.

The council is looking at how to make the best use of its property portfolio to benefit the sector and we will continue to use our planning powers to secure agreements from developers for new community spaces in the borough and maximise community benefit from the new Community Infrastructure Levy.

We want to ensure that the sector has the support that it needs to secure and maintain suitable and affordable accommodation and would like your views on how we should do this.

Question

10. What support do local organisations need to meet their accommodation requirements?

Advice

Over a third of the Islington Community Fund is allocated to community advice services and doorstep advocacy. This theme also includes our largest single grants to organisations.

Major reform of the welfare benefits system continues to drive the demand for advice in Islington. Important changes have already taken place and further reforms are being introduced. Large numbers of our residents are affected and we need to ensure that they are able to access good quality advice to help them through the process.

Universal Credit presents particular challenges and we have joined with local partners, including the DWP, to provide support to residents within a “local support services framework”. As well as help to access benefits, this includes tackling wider needs such as debt and budgeting, IT skills and barriers to securing and keeping a job.

Advice agencies and other voluntary and community sector partners have an important role to play in supporting vulnerable residents affected by welfare reform. We would like your views on how we should work together within a local support services framework.

Question

11. What role should the voluntary sector play within a “local support services framework” to assist residents affected by welfare reform?

As well as organisations funded by the Islington Community Fund, we commission advice through other programmes - advice and advocacy for older residents; specialist mental health support and a dedicated service for council tenants and leaseholders. The council also has its own in-house advice services covering welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment and other areas.

Multiple and fragmented routes into advice are confusing for residents who often find that they have to contact or are passed between a number of different organisations and services in order to resolve their issues. There is also an amount of duplication where providers deliver identical services. In some cases, the council and voluntary sector offer the same support.

Against a background of large cuts in public funding we need to maximise the effectiveness of reduced resources for advice and achieve better outcomes for residents. This includes clearer distinctions between what we fund the voluntary sector to do and the services that the council delivers itself.

Question

12. What advice services should the council deliver in-house and what are voluntary sector agencies best placed to provide?

Small Grants

The Islington Community Fund includes two small grants programmes – a flexible devolved budget for local councillors to use to address issues and priorities in their wards (Local Initiatives Fund) and the Islington Community Chest.

Islington Community Chest provides small grants to local voluntary organisations with a turnover of no more than £100,000 a year – in most cases less than £50,000 a year. Grants are awarded through a rolling programme, but groups can only apply for one grant per year.

This is a very popular scheme which supports small community organisations. Many are volunteer-led and wouldn't meet the criteria for funding under our other programmes.

We have devolved the administration of community chest grants to a local grant giving trust, although the council still has an overall say on who gets what. The trust tops-up the community chest with its own resources and offers a capacity building service to all groups that receive a grant. This is a key element of the programme which helps to develop organisations and get them ready to apply for other funding.

Question

13. What type of activities should our small grants programmes fund?

Funding Mechanism

Our current awards end in March 2015, which falls just before the May general election. We don't know what financial settlement a new government will decide for local authorities, but year on year we have been asked to make massive savings and we expect this to continue.

Unpredictable reductions in public spending of this scale make it difficult for us to commit long term funding. At the same time we are aware that voluntary organisations need a level of financial security to enable them to plan ahead.

In order to provide a degree of security we are **planning to introduce 2 + 2 agreements**, whereby we guarantee funding for two years with an option to extend for a further two – when we have a clearer indication of the council's finances.

Most elements of the Islington Community Fund are grants awarded through competitive application and we want to continue with an open and transparent process. But, some of our themes have been criticised for being too closely framed around the needs of particular organisations, rather than on services and the needs of residents. We're also aware that not all of the groups that we fund are performing as well as they could and we need to consider introducing tighter agreements which more clearly set out the outcomes that we expect for residents.

We have already introduced minimum standards which cover safeguarding; whistle blowing; finance and governance, but would like your views on what we ask organisations to provide to demonstrate that they are well run and meet residents' needs.

Question

14. What evidence should we ask for to ensure that grants are awarded to the most effective organisations?

In 2011, as well as introducing fixed allocations for different areas of activity (themes) in the VCS Grants Fund, we also set a ceiling on the size of individual grants. Our aim three years ago was to ensure that funding was spread across a wider range of organisations, rather than fewer getting a larger share. We now offer core funding to 43 organisations compared with 27 under the previous arrangements.

However, we didn't specify a minimum grant and there are concerns that some of our awards are too small to allow organisations to operate effectively. We could review this, but it would mean funding fewer groups. Our smallest awards currently are for £5,000.

Question

15. Should we specify minimum core grant awards and, if so, at what level?

Further Comments

16. Have you any other comments to make about the council's support to local voluntary organisations?

Timetable

Your views will inform how we support local voluntary and community organisations after our current programmes end on 31 March 2015. We have set out below an indicative timetable for a review.

The consultation closes on Friday 15 August 2014.

In September 2014 the Council's VCS Committee will consider the consultation feedback and will agree arrangements for Islington Community Fund beyond March 2015.

During the autumn we will publish a funding prospectus and invite organisations to apply for Community Fund programmes.

The VCS Committee will meet to make decisions on funding awards in January 2015.

Organisations will be given three months' written notice if their funding is reduced or withdrawn. We expect new funding arrangements to be in place by June 2015 at the latest.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We encourage you to tell us what you think using the comments form on the next page.

If you have any questions please email partnerships@islington.gov.uk or phone us on 020 7527 6768.

YOUR COMMENTS

Please type your comments onto this form. You don't have to answer every question and **all boxes expand** to give you enough space for your views.

Once you have completed the form please email it by no later than Friday 15 August 2014 to partnerships@islington.gov.uk.

Name:

Organisation:

Email:

Questions

Supporting the Local Voluntary Sector

1. At a time of reduced public funding, how can the council and the voluntary sector work creatively together to meet our priorities for the borough and address the issues that are of most concern to residents?

Islington Community Fund

2. Given the huge challenges that we face over the coming years, what should be the main priorities of an Islington Community Fund?

Community Hubs

3. What do you think are the most important services that we should support the voluntary sector to provide in a neighbourhood? Do you think that community hubs are the best way of delivering these?

Community Cohesion, Engagement and Advocacy

4. What activity should we fund to give Islington's diverse communities a voice and enable them to shape and influence services?

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Discretionary Rate Relief

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Premises

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Advice

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Further Comments

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Thank you for your comments.

Please email to partnerships@islington.gov.uk by no later than Friday 15 August 2014.

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Consultation on the Council's Support to Local Voluntary Organisations (Islington Community Fund)

Summary of Responses

A consultation on the council's support to local voluntary organisations, focused on grant programmes in Islington Community Fund, was held from 19 June 2014 to 15 August 2014. During this eight week period we received 41 responses including notes from a workshop facilitated by Voluntary Action Islington which was attended by 30 representatives of local organisations. Around 70% of responses were from organisations currently receiving financial support from the VCS Grants Fund or the Advice Fund programmes. This paper summarises the feedback to the consultation.

Consultation Feedback

Supporting the Local Voluntary Sector

1. At a time of reduced public funding, how can the council and the voluntary sector work creatively together to meet our priorities for the borough and address the issues that are of most concern to residents?

Partnership Working

A strong partnership between the council and the voluntary sector is seen as key to meeting the needs of local residents in the difficult times that lie ahead. There should be regular dialogue with key representative bodies such as Islington Community Network and greater VCS involvement in setting priorities, designing procurements and agreeing outcomes. The voluntary sector election manifesto is an important reference point. Some respondents felt that, over time, the VCS should aim for increased independence with a less dependent relationship and more of a partnership of equals with the council.

Many respondents highlighted the traditional strengths of the voluntary sector in adapting to changing environments, identifying new needs within communities, and developing innovative solutions. It is able to draw on a wider range of external resources than the council, for example by securing grants and donations, and by involving volunteers (individual and corporate). The council could be more supportive by encouraging local procurement, recognising social value and commissioning services in smaller packages. It could also reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and introduce more proportionate monitoring.

Collaboration and Consortia

There should be more emphasis on collaboration, for example in sharing information and attracting additional resources to the borough. The council has a leadership role in coordinating funding opportunities and bringing organisations together, a 'catalyst for creativity'. The Advising Islington Together model is helpful: adopting a systems thinking approach to local services; increasing engagement across the voluntary sector so larger organisations support local groups; and addressing historical duplication of services. ESF is well suited to a consortia approach.

Providing support for networking is a cost effective way of enabling a quick response to new initiatives. A few organisations felt that the council should establish a forum of all core funded organisations to share good practice, identify un-met needs, and stimulate new ideas. Better partnerships could be developed with the CCG, schools and businesses.

Innovation

There were a number of specific suggestions and ideas for innovative practice. These included:

- Delivering more activities in the 'real world' community – pubs, cafes, parks, offices, restaurants, schools, leisure centres, etc. Community centres are expensive to run.
- Developing hyper local websites for Islington's neighbourhoods – use social media and online tools to support and join them up.
- Bringing services to communities e.g. 'pop ups' in community hubs, and using buses.

Mixed views were expressed about social enterprises and trading models. Some felt these had a lot of potential to support innovation and generate new income streams. Others were more cautious, perceiving the opportunities for income generation as modest, and in most cases not as a viable replacement for grants and contracts.

Islington Community Fund

2. Given the huge challenges that we face over the coming years, what should be the main priorities of an Islington Community Fund?

Support for a Fund

There was unanimous support for retaining an Islington Community Fund. It is seen as a successful approach which provides longer term funding for organisations delivering strategic priorities as well as smaller grants for groups responding to very local or specific community needs. The focus should continue to be on providing help for Islington's most vulnerable residents to mitigate the impacts of poverty and create a fairer Islington. Grants are viewed as a very effective and flexible way of funding this provision.

Fund Priorities

The council's commitment to addressing the key areas of concern to local residents – jobs, housing and rising cost of living – is strongly endorsed by the voluntary sector. Many other priorities were mentioned including health and wellbeing, community safety and cohesion, and provision for children and young people and for older people. Funding should be flexible enough to allow for emerging local needs (e.g. mental health) and to recognise international events affecting the borough. Discretionary services, such as lunch clubs, were seen as important and save money elsewhere.

Grants Programmes

Feedback indicated very high levels of support for continuing with current grant programmes: core funding to strategically important local organisations (VCS Grants Fund); independent advice provision (Advice Fund); discretionary rate relief; and small grants (Community Chest and Local Initiatives Fund).

Views varied on the focus of a core grants programme – some favouring organisations which bring different communities together under one roof (e.g. hubs), others keen to fund groups representing particular communities (e.g. BME and recent arrivals). Many felt that funding should be directed to front line organisations delivering services and providing community leadership. Infrastructure support and networks were also considered to be important components of an effective local voluntary sector.

Other Considerations

The council should use core grants more strategically as a lever to bring in external funding. It should support organisations that can fundraise successfully.

Work with other boroughs or sub-regionally might be more appropriate for supporting some communities with protected characteristics (e.g. LGBT).

To ensure inclusivity the council should carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment of all Islington Community Fund decisions.

Community Hubs

3. What do you think are the most important services that we should support the voluntary sector to provide in a neighbourhood? Do you think that community hubs are the best way of delivering these?

Neighbourhood Services

The concept of community based provision was widely supported and preferred to services centralised in council buildings. Residents with the greatest needs are considered more likely to access support close to where they live. Voluntary sector providers rooted in neighbourhoods have an important role to play in putting people in touch with a broad range of services as well as enabling them to be engaged in what is going on in their local community.

A wide range of services were suggested for neighbourhood delivery. Those thought to be most valued by residents are:

- Advice and information, especially around the impacts of welfare reform, including family support. Effective signposting and referral to other sources of help.
- Youth and play activities – before and after school, at weekends and in school holidays
- Activities for older people to prevent isolation and tackle health problems
- Employment support services
- Support for vulnerable adults including mental health
- Volunteering opportunities

Community Hubs

Most feedback was positive about community hubs with respondents keen that the council should continue to fund them. Supporting local

community centres providing a range of different activities is seen as an effective way of delivering neighbourhood based services.

The main components of a successful community hub were considered to be:

- A diverse mix of users interacting with each other, somewhere warm and welcoming for people to meet.
- Busy for its size, offering a range of well attended and relevant services, and comfortable just to drop in.
- A one stop shop for information and effective at signposting to other agencies
- Supportive to small groups in the area: providing a home for some, capacity building, fundraising and networking.
- Generates income from external sources and not disproportionately reliant on statutory funding.

Other views were expressed about hubs. Three people didn't know what they did or where they were and felt they should be better promoted. Four respondents wanted them to be more accessible to BME communities and new arrivals and to have better links with organisations acting as 'hubs' for particular communities. A few suggested they should be open for longer hours, ideally 8am - 10 pm every day. Two people argued that hubs try to do too much and that they should specialise more to improve the quality of their offer. Also, there are other organisations providing the same or similar ranges of services that are not funded by the council as community hubs.

Geographical Location

Currently 11 wards have community hubs and these have a role in supporting their local ward partnership. Some respondents felt this was working well and should continue. Others felt that hubs were struggling to provide ward-wide coverage. A couple of people suggested that the location of hubs should be determined by deprivation indices and quality of buildings/services, and that it's more important to know where they are than to have one in every ward. One person proposed a more flexible 'neighbourhood hub' – multiple spaces linked together to share service delivery with a focus on piloting small scale innovation that could be scaled up later if successful.

Community Cohesion, Engagement and Advocacy

4. What activity should we fund to give Islington's diverse communities a voice and enable them to shape and influence services?

Open Dialogue and Feedback

Communities must have opportunities to feedback their views and the council has a role in creating and supporting this - but it should remain flexible on what it funds. What is important is that activities increase inclusion and reduce marginalisation, including for a wider community beyond the protected characteristics such as Irish, white working class residents and people living within the same neighbourhood.

However, Islington's diverse communities face different issues, so a variety of ways to obtain views are necessary. Online platforms, surveys, public meetings, door to door contact and consultations were tools and approaches favoured. The council needs to be aware of the importance of listening to what people are actually saying and not just to the views of a small minority.

Involvement and Collaboration

There should be more opportunities for the voluntary sector and council to collaborate (one respondent preferred the term team work). Workshops and activities delivered in partnership with statutory bodies (including DWP and Police); working together on priorities and on

designing services; jointly developing new policies and commissioning would enable communities to have greater influence. Council timetables and processes often don't allow this and the voluntary sector needs to be supported to help it to engage with statutory bodies effectively.

The council should also play a role in matchmaking and bringing communities together to collaborate. Within neighbourhoods this could be a job for community hubs.

Events

Cultural cohesion events and awareness days were overwhelmingly cited as important and activities that the council should fund. As well as offering platforms to share experiences, they are seen as ways to tackle misunderstandings and overcome parochialism.

Forums and Organisations

The importance of forums and networks (and that the council should core fund them) was stressed, although this shouldn't necessarily extend to funding a separate forum for each of the nine protected characteristics. They should all be community led however. There were also calls for forums to have stronger links with local policy makers. One suggestion included a local strategic board of some type. Only one respondent called for a wider equalities forum - as long as it didn't compromise the other forums. Another highlighted the need for specialist equality organisations since protected characteristics have specific as well as general equalities issues eg disabilities.

A large number of people also highlighted the importance of grass roots organisations in articulating the voice of communities. Community organisations are often the first point of contact for disadvantaged residents. Many 'mainstream' and grass roots VCS organisations have large numbers of members and users from BME communities for example. The council should recognise their role in bringing people together and help them to solicit and articulate the voice of the communities that they serve – an access fund to allow the VCS to pay for support costs such as interpreters for example.

5. How can we encourage groups to collaborate and address wider equalities issues affecting residents from all protected characteristics?

Forums, Networks and Partnerships

These are seen as key to collaboration and, while it may not be necessary to have a forum for each of the protected characteristics, there was a view that the existing forums shouldn't be forced to merge. Instead they should work in partnership to deliver services (training, capacity building etc.). There is also a case for creating and supporting network opportunities for different areas of service such as environment, education, health, jobs, volunteering, training etc. Networks must be welcoming and not single interest talking shops however.

Equally, the importance of creating partnerships between small and larger organisations was highlighted. Some felt that small groups didn't always benefit from the support of forums or council funding.

A Stronger Council Role

The council should hold the ring and play a bigger role in bringing organisations together and creating partnerships. It should also organise

events, seminars and provide information to promote understanding and help groups to focus on the most pressing equalities issues. Brokering relationships and putting organisations in touch with each other for mutual benefit is also important.

Joint Working and Funding

Forcing groups to collaborate is not possible (the VCS is independent), but they could strongly be encouraged. Similarly, good organisations could widen their remit (if in line with their mission) to work with others.

The council needs to involve the VCS at a strategic level, rather than simply inviting it to apply for funding. This would encourage organisations to develop consortia and partnership bids. Joint funding of organisation from larger pots would also help smaller groups to work together (or with larger organisations).

Tackling Wider Equalities Issues

Funding groups representing and working with the most marginalised residents who don't access services is important as they find it easier to approach organisations that they trust. But equalities should also be mainstreamed and all organisations should tackle wider issues across all protected characteristics. Funded organisations should report back on how they collaborate and do this.

At a neighbourhood level, hubs could play a more important role and help to change the mind-sets of local people (particularly those that hold 'soft power' in the area) to challenge negative view of young and BME residents for example.

Voluntary Sector Support

6. What specific support should we fund to sustain a robust local voluntary sector and how should this be delivered?

Support Needs of the Sector

All responses highlighted the importance of continuing to fund support for the sector. The most requested services were fundraising, training, information, premises, marketing and communications, networking, and HR. Many people commented on the difficulties their organisations are facing and the challenges of becoming more resilient. They would like more help with managing finance, 'business' planning, building partnerships and consortia, and developing new income streams. Training in social enterprise, trading and mutual support were also mentioned.

A common theme was that organisations find it difficult to know what support is available and to access it at the right time. Smaller groups in particular are looking for more 1:1 advice and help with filling in fundraising applications, and more opportunities to network and share information with each other. They would like affordable space to be available for groups to share – desk space with meeting space and event space attached – close to where their communities are based.

Examples of gaps in support that need to be filled are support for voluntary sector CEOs, opportunities to develop collaborative work, help to develop new sources of income, and support with collective purchasing initiatives. Several people would like more assistance around employment issues e.g. the introduction of pension schemes in the voluntary sector.

Delivery of Support

Most respondents saw Voluntary Action Islington as a key player in delivering and promoting support at a local level. VAI's training programme and capacity building and information services are valued highly by the sector. Popular resources include the daily news group (VAI News), monthly funding updates and the annual VCS conference. A lot of groups commented favourably on the support they'd received from VAI and the knowledge and commitment of their staff.

Various other providers of support were mentioned including Islington Community Network, Octopus and community hubs, equalities forums/networks (BME, faiths and refugee), Disability Action in Islington and Creative Islington. There were some calls for the council to deliver more help directly but most felt that services supporting the sector should be independent of funders. Council resources should complement support from businesses, local charities and other grant giving schemes such as London Councils. One person argued that there should be a rationalisation of second tier organisations nationally and regionally to cut down on duplication.

A number of other suggestions were put forward for supporting the VCS. More help could be drawn in from the corporate sector, as demonstrated by Businesses for Islington Giving and CoRe Programme initiatives. Recruiting and supporting volunteers should be a priority e.g. more speed dating events at VAI. The resources of housing providers could be marshalled across a ward or a neighbourhood to support TMOs and TRAs with community development. A local arts organisation is working with London Metropolitan University to develop a toolkit to strengthen social capital and (digital) connectivity in communities.

Volunteering

7. Should we fund activity to support volunteering and, if so, what should this be?

The Importance of Volunteering

Everyone stressed the importance of volunteers to their organisations and that the council should support volunteering in the borough. Some argued that volunteering is the core ethos of the local voluntary sector and that the council should only support groups with a good track record of using volunteers.

Supporting Organisations

By far the biggest call for support is for good co-ordinators working directly on site with organisations to help them to take on, train and manage volunteers. Working with volunteers is resource intensive and organisations lack the capacity. This is particularly a problem for small groups without staff able to take on the task. Organisations also want help to pay for DBS checks, volunteer expenses and other associated costs.

Council grants should include an element to pay for volunteering costs (training could be shared between organisations). One suggestion was to link funding for expenses according to the volunteering hours that an organisation is able to generate. Another was to sponsor them to take-on volunteers.

Community organisations could also benefit from accredited volunteering and training programmes delivered by specialist organisations. VAI

and community hubs were mentioned as well placed to do this.

Supporting Volunteers

Volunteers – especially the most vulnerable – also need support to take part in volunteering and additional help for people who are volunteering as a route into paid work was highlighted. Specialist mentoring schemes were seen as particularly useful as were programmes that included bespoke training. One respondent called on the council to work with the Jobcentre to provide good volunteering opportunities with local community organisations.

Brokerage

Opinion on the need for a local cross-borough brokerage service to promote and match people with opportunities was more mixed. Some argued that that this was necessary (particularly for small groups) while others thought that organisations were better placed and able to do it themselves. A database of people that want to volunteer would be useful however.

Events

Rewarding and publicly recognising people who had volunteered through regular high profile events and awards was seen as a good way to support volunteering in the borough. These should involve a wider group of people and organisations than at present.

Community Engagement and Resident Participation

8. What outcomes should we expect from organisations funded to deliver community engagement and participation?

Outcomes

We shouldn't demand and expect the same outcomes across the sector, but Islington's voluntary organisations are mostly already working towards achieving the same outcomes as the council – increasing community cohesion, community safety, work and training, resilience etc. However the council shouldn't be the only funder and match funding organisations was one suggestion.

Quality

Evidence of high quality services, valued by residents, supporting accesses for the marginalised and delivered by organisations with good knowledge of the communities that they serve should be the primary consideration for the council. Impact should be properly evaluated and organisations should demonstrate that people are engaged and connections made as a result - numbers of clients supported, people taking part in training, consultations, workshops, level of participation etc. should be considered.

Activities

Various suggested but the emphasis should be on funding delivery Activities should be fun, creative and inclusive. Suggestions included small festivals around themes – arts, older people, Christmas events that bring residents together, showcasing local talents etc.

Discretionary Rate Relief

9. What type of organisations should we support with discretionary rate relief?

Continuing Discretionary Rate Relief

There was overwhelming agreement that the council should continue to give rate relief. Property costs are very high in Islington and organisations value any help. Restricting rate relief would impact on services as groups are forced to shift resources to pay their rates

Beneficiaries

Responses recommended supporting a wide range of local voluntary groups and to keep the scheme broad but that small and medium sized organisations should be prioritised. Other considerations should include the extent to which premises are needed to deliver effective services, that they are well used or shared and how much of the activities delivered from them serve and have an impact on borough priorities.

There were also calls to include other types of organisations such as social enterprises that serve low income residents. One suggestion was to fund micro businesses and another that we include all businesses that paid the London Living Wage.

One respondent argued for including all London-wide organisations based in the borough, but most supported only funding local groups. There was a suggestion that the council should liaise with neighbouring councils to ensure that organisations based outside of Islington but benefitting residents also got rate relief.

Premises

10. What support do local organisations need to meet their accommodation requirements?

Affordability and Availability

Islington is a very expensive borough for the voluntary sector to operate in and the most popular answer by far was support from the council to provide affordable premises and discounted or peppercorn rents. Smaller organisations, particularly those in buildings owned by private landlords, are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their premises costs.

There was strong support for making better use of premises, both the council's own space and that owned by the voluntary sector. Schools and faith properties were cited as examples of buildings with spare capacity outside their normal hours of operation. Many agencies are looking for more flexible space and new community locations to deliver their outreach services.

It was felt that the council could provide better information about the availability of (low cost) buildings and could offer a more imaginative brokerage service. Bringing community groups with complementary activities together in one building would help to bring down costs and provide a better service for residents. Two people mentioned the Camden Collective as an example of a successful cluster of (arts) organisations.

Respondents would like the council to maximise the benefit of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy for the voluntary sector. The

focus should be on improving existing buildings (with accessibility for disabled people as standard) rather than building more community halls and centres. Where there is a strategic need for new community assets, these should be designed to the highest quality standards with ring fenced budgets for room finishes. Developers should offer jobs and training for local people.

Other Support

Smaller organisations in particular commented on the difficulties securing free independent legal advice for premises related issues. This is a specialist area and the impact on an organisation can be catastrophic if it signs up to an occupancy agreement without fully understanding the implications. Could the council establish a premises fund which organisations can apply to for support? One person thought the council should explore the potential for including the voluntary sector in bulk purchasing and maintenance arrangements.

Several responses highlighted the success of the lottery funded Community Buildings Project which was managed by Voluntary Action Islington with a local partnership. Funding came to an end in June 2014 and a new social enterprise is being developed. The council should support this and consider how its services can be made more affordable for smaller organisations. A couple of people suggested that a cross-sector Premises Forum should be set up to steer premises related initiatives.

Advice

11. What role should the voluntary sector play within a 'local support services framework' to assist residents affected by welfare reform?

The Islington Advice Alliance

We received detailed responses from the borough's three main specialist advice agencies (CAB, Law Centre and Islington People's Rights). The council will consider these as part of discussions to agree how we support independent advice services beyond 2015. This will include talking with the advice agencies concerned.

The comments in this section summarise the views of the wider voluntary sector that we received but also include some of the points raised by the Alliance.

Local Support Services Framework

Very few had heard of the framework and the council was criticised for not having engaged the sector in discussions about it. The VCS feels that it has an important role to play in assisting residents through welfare reform and wants to be involved in developing and reviewing the framework. The council should invite voluntary organisations to training/workshops and explore ways to collaborate in supporting vulnerable residents.

VCS Role

The strongly held view was that frontline community organisations were best suited to provide basic advice and information, signpost people to specialist advice and to handhold and help them with basics, such as phone calls, form filling etc. One suggestion was that welfare reform support of this type should be core activity for all groups.

Community groups are in touch with their communities and trusted by their users who may need extra help to access mainstream services, such as language support. Residents need different and multiple ways to access advice as pushing everyone through the same route could alienate the most vulnerable.

There were calls for the council to support the sector to deliver advice. Training, directories and handouts along with strengthening links between frontline organisations and relevant statutory services were suggested.

The VCS could also provide volunteering and training opportunities to encourage people to improve their skills and confidence to re-enter the workplace.

12. What advice services should the council deliver in-house and what are voluntary sector agencies best placed to provide?

Independence and Impartiality

This question featured prominently with a concern that residents need to be sure that they are getting advice independently from the council and from a trusted organisation. There would be conflict of interests in certain cases (including where action is against the council; where the council is decision maker or where the council has a duty to implement government policy).

Trust

Residents may be reluctant to share all information with the council (plus are more likely to trust the voluntary organisation's answer) and there was a strong feeling that the council couldn't replicate what the voluntary sector offers.

Access

The VCS is best placed to provide advice to specific communities who aren't or find it difficult to access mainstream services. It can deliver culturally appropriate services and tackle language and trust barriers. It can also provide multiple access points which are valued by residents and which the vulnerable and hard to reach need.

Range of Advice

The voluntary sector can offer advice in broader areas than the council (set out in detail by the advice agencies) and has more expertise e.g. the Law Centre can represent at Upper Tribunals.

Council Advice Services

Some areas of advice are best delivered by the council, such as to residents already receiving a service from social services, but few examples were cited. One suggestion was that council services (IMAX, BEST and MAGPIs) should be moved into the voluntary sector while another argued that the council should only provide advice itself where there was evidence that VCS providers didn't have the capacity to deliver.

Some saw value in having both council and VCS services, suggesting that what appears to be duplication reflects high demand.

Further Responses

As was the case with the previous question on the Local Support Services Framework, we received detailed responses from local specialist advice agencies which we will discuss directly with them.

Small Grants

13. What type of activities should our small grants programmes fund?

Small Grant Programmes

There was overwhelming agreement that current small grant programmes should continue. Islington Community Chest generated more comment and support than Local Initiatives Fund (LIF). Some respondents argued that LIF should be more transparent, with one suggesting a Dragons Den type approach involving ward partnerships. Opportunities for Islington Giving fundraising to complement small grants programmes should be explored. The two programmes could be better aligned to avoid the risk of duplicating funding awards when resources are scarce.

Community Chest was felt to be running well. A few people made suggestions for reviewing grants criteria: four in favour of allowing awards to 'parent' organisations (e.g. hubs or churches) that house small unconstituted groups; and one for allowing trips and outings. There were also requests for the capacity building service for grant recipients to be reinstated and for more signposting of small groups to hubs for support. One person proposed that community chest be devolved and equally divided between ward partnerships to encourage more joined up working at a local level.

Activities

Responses recommended supporting worthwhile activity that it would be difficult to attract funding for from other sources. Small groups bringing in a lot of volunteer resource should continue to be prioritised. More emphasis could be placed on using awards to test out small projects and initiatives and to foster collaboration between organisations. Suggestions for the type of activities that should be funded covered a very wide range of community projects including education and employability, volunteering, benefits advice, health and wellbeing, cohesion and integration, gender based work, arts and culture, gardening, and community festivals and events.

Funding Mechanism

14. What evidence should we ask for to ensure that grants are awarded to the most effective organisations?

Funding Landscape

Respondents understood the financial uncertainty facing the council beyond 2015/16 and felt that introducing 2 + 2 agreements is a fair approach in the circumstances. There should be a clear and transparent process, compliant with the Compact, for the current review of funding and any subsequent reviews from 2017.

Several people highlighted the value in continuing to support organisations that have built up relationships and trust with residents, arguing that

this can't just be transferred from one agency to another. However this shouldn't mean sticking with historical patterns that no longer meet the needs of our communities. One person suggested that new organisations could be introduced to the core grants programme by offering grants in stages subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Evidence of Effectiveness

There was very strong support for gathering evidence of effectiveness and taking an organisation's track record into account when awarding funding. It is important that money is well spent and makes a difference. Minimum standards should be retained as a means of evidencing that groups are reaching a quality threshold in key areas of their operation (currently finance, governance, safeguarding and whistleblowing). Checks should also be made with the Charity Commission website e.g. that accounts have been filed on time.

A large number of responses stressed the importance of assessing levels of community engagement and resident impact. Is activity Islington focused and is it helping to make the borough fairer? Are a range of services on offer and are they meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents, including those with protected characteristics? Organisations should provide feedback from beneficiaries and evidence of customer satisfaction, both quantitative and qualitative. Visits could be made to groups to view activities on the ground.

Opinions on external accreditation were mixed. The majority thought these were a good way of demonstrating effectiveness and should be taken seriously by funders. Some smaller organisations felt that cost and capacity issues put them beyond their reach.

Other popular suggestions for evidencing effectiveness included: collaboration and joint working; securing external funding; innovation and open to new ideas; and volunteer engagement and satisfaction.

Monitoring of Performance

Various comments were made about how the council monitors performance. Outcomes were preferred to rigid targets – using a key performance framework and allowing flexibility for changing priorities. Monitoring should be proportionate and should celebrate strong performance as well as pointing out weaknesses. Some organisations would like more dialogue about priorities and more face-to-face-meetings with grants officers. The council should keep a central register of forms to avoid different services asking for the same pieces of information.

15 Should we specify minimum core grant awards and, if so, at what level?

Minimum Awards

Of all the responses received, only three were in favour of specifying minimum core grant awards. Most were firmly against with a few 'don't knows'. It was felt that setting minimum levels could exclude small groups or be used as a mechanism to fund fewer organisations overall. Some argued that groups can be very effective with small amounts of money.

Other Comments on the Level of Grant Awards

Although not in favour of setting minimum (or maximum) amounts, some guidance on likely award levels would be useful. One respondent

called for all themes to be treated equally.

Grant awards should be based on individual circumstances and take financial need into account. Awards should be sufficient to cover rent and some core costs. There should be no unrealistically low awards.

Further Comments

16. Have you any other comments to make about the council's support to local voluntary organisations?

Council Support

Islington Council's commitment and support to the voluntary sector was commended and contrasted favourably to other boroughs. However the voluntary sector seeks reassurances that, despite the massive savings that the council has to make, it won't suffer disproportionately.

The sector can play a role in maintaining valued services. But, funding is not optional and reductions will impact on residents. It is important that long-standing organisations that have built up expertise are not lost.

Organisations will need time and help to readjust and may find it difficult to attract funding without support – particularly BME, migrant and faith groups. If reducing or changing council funding arrangements, there should be proper equality impact analyses and agreements may need to be extended to allow for these. Difficult times lie ahead but there are opportunities in a networked age and we should work together to take advantage of these.

Grants and Core Funding

There was a strong feeling that the council should continue to give grants and a view that commissioning often focuses on the wrong areas. . Users should be the most important consideration and the council should support effective local grass roots organisations with a good track record in serving residents. Many felt that larger organisations tended to get council funding at the expense of smaller groups. The council should consider top-slicing its large contracts to allow small groups to benefit.

The council should have fair and open funding programmes and should check what organisations actually do when awarding grants.

Administration

Council systems and monitoring were viewed as unnecessarily bureaucratic involving too much paperwork and onerous reporting requirements, particularly for small grants where administration cost exceed the value of the grant. Monitoring should be proportionate and the council should have clearer, simpler systems - and use plain English.



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1 February 2014

POSTED BY RECORDED DELIVERY – Signature acknowledging receipt of letter is required.

Dear XXXXXXXXXX

Discretionary Rate Relief: Formal Notice of Withdrawal

Islington Council has awarded your organisation discretionary rate relief for your premises in the London Borough of Islington to 31 March 2015. We intend to review our awards and later this year will be inviting all current recipients to re-apply for relief from 1 April 2015 onwards.

We are required to give advanced formal notice of any intention to end or reduce discretionary rate relief and I am therefore giving your organisation the legally required notice in this letter.

I must stress that this does not necessarily mean that your organisation won't continue to receive discretionary rate relief in the future. However, this can't be guaranteed beyond 31 March 2015 and you may wish to plan for this possibility.

If you are a registered charity you will continue to benefit from mandatory rate relief (80% of your rates bill). Our review will only affect the remaining 20% covered by discretionary rate relief.

We will write to you again later this year to invite you to re-apply but in the meantime I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this letter and your correct contact details on the back of this letter and return these to me as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. d'Amico", with a horizontal line underneath.

Cedric D'Amico
Chief Executive's Department

If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please telephone 020 7527 2000.

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF NOTICE

To be completed and returned by no later than 21 February 2014

- Please confirm receipt of Islington Council's formal notice of an intention to withdraw or change discretionary rate relief to your organisation from 1 April 2015 by signing and returning the declaration at the bottom of this form.
- Please also complete your correct contact details so that we can invite you to re-apply later this year.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Organisation Name	
Contact Person	
Position	
Address	
Email	
Phone	

DETAILS OF PROPERTY RECEIVING DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF (If different from above):

--

DECLARATION

I confirm receipt of this formal notice:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Please return this form by email (partnerships@islington.gov.uk) or post to:
Patricia Keating, Room G10-G12, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD
by 21 February 2014.

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF CRITERIA

Each case will be considered on its own merits with priority given to efficient and well managed organisations that:

- primarily benefit Islington residents
- demonstrate a link with council priorities and promote a fairer Islington
- relieve the council of providing certain facilities or services
- serve the needs of poorer and excluded sections of the local community
- provide services for and in the borough's most deprived neighbourhoods
- maximise the use of their premises for community benefit
- serve equalities groups protected under the Equality Act 2010

Priority will also be given to:

- local organisations that are funded by the Council through grant-aid or service contract
- local organisations that have a governing body whose membership mainly consists of people who live and/or work in Islington or have a strong connection with the borough
- organisations reliant on volunteers to carry out their activities
- self-help groups with few sources of funding to carry out their activities

Other Considerations

- the financial cost to the council incurred in awarding relief
- the organisation's ability to pay its rates
- the amount of central government funding levered-in by a discretionary rate relief award to deliver statutory or other council services

Not Eligible for Discretionary Rate Relief

Islington Council will not normally award discretionary rate relief to:

- Profit making organisations
- Empty properties
- Charity shops
- Private schools, colleges, nurseries or schools that are not within the Islington family of schools
- National charity headquarters
- Housing Associations (other than for community centres)
- Car parking spaces
- Buildings exclusively used for worship

Award Limits

The following limits to awards will apply (cost to the council of discretionary rate relief):

Up to £6,000 Organisations will normally be awarded 100% discretionary rate relief

Over £6,000 Awards will be proportionate to the level of local benefit which may be less than 100% discretionary rate relief

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