



Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	23 rd January 2017		All

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SUBJECT: LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND

1. Synopsis

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

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that in order to address the issue of recruiting and retaining support for 15 ward partnerships, an incentive payment of £1,000 per annum be paid to each ward partnership co-ordinator and to agree that £1,000 per annum be set aside from each ward partnership Local Initiatives Fund budget to fund this support.

To agree therefore that £250 is set aside from each ward partnership LIF budget to fund this support from January to March 2017. The annual 2016-17 Local Initiatives Fund budget would reduce by £3,750 to £236,250.

To agree that the annual Local Initiatives Fund budget for subsequent years become £225,000. This is £14,000 per ward apart from the Bunhill and Clerkenwell ward budgets which will each become £14,500.

- 2.2 To consider the new proposals and changes to previous proposals submitted by ward councillors as set out in Appendix A and to agree these proposals in principle subject to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 2.3 To note the amendments to ward budgets resulting from project funding being returned. The amendments are detailed at paragraph 3.10 and are included in the budget summary on the last page of Appendix A.

3. Background

- 3.1 In March 2011 the council agreed to strengthen the role of ward councillors by building on existing 'neighbourhood arrangements' for some wards and establishing a mechanism for a more focussed ward based approach throughout the borough. From 1 April 2011 new ward partnership arrangements were introduced in place of the previous area committees.
- 3.2 Simultaneously a report relating to the Islington Community Fund was agreed by Executive. This included a proposal to create a Local Initiatives Fund with each ward having an allocation of £20,000 per year to spend on local projects.
- 3.3 In February 2015, the Executive agreed that the Local Initiatives Fund budget be reduced to £15,000 per ward (£240,000 total).
- 3.4 The Local Initiatives Fund enables councillors to respond directly to priorities in their ward that lie outside of current mainstream funding programmes and might not otherwise receive funding. It helps them to address the needs of local residents and suggest improvements to local services/facilities or new schemes that will enhance the area.
- 3.5 At Executive in March 2011 it was agreed that a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee of the Executive should be set up to oversee the council's engagement with the voluntary and community sector and to ensure value for money and fairness in the allocation of council resources to the sector.
- 3.6 The VCS Committee's terms of reference include 'To be responsible for the allocation of the Islington Community Fund including...allocating the Local Initiatives Fund having regard to the recommendations of the relevant ward members/relevant ward partnership or neighbourhood group and on the basis that the funding will be allocated equally among the 16 wards making up the council's area'.
- 3.7 The committee agreed that each ward councillor should be given a notional allocation of the Local Initiatives Fund (i.e. divided equally between the councillors elected for each ward). In 2016/17 £15,000 is available to each ward; therefore the notional allocation for each councillor is £5,000. In September 2014 the VCS Committee agreed to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project.
- 3.8 The Voluntary and Community Sector Development Team in the Housing and Adult Social Services department is responsible for managing the Local Initiatives Fund in liaison with ward councillors and members of the VCS Committee. The team ensures that funds are used appropriately and for the purpose for which they are allocated.
- 3.9 The sixth tranche of proposals submitted by ward councillors for this financial year is set out in Appendix A. It is recommended that these proposals are agreed in principle subject to the Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 3.10 Occasionally projects do not proceed as planned and funding is returned to ward budgets or the use of a grant has to be changed.

There has been a number of overspends and underspends on plaques funded by Highbury East ward so £442.23 has been returned to the 2016-17 Highbury East budget for reallocation. This is made up of:

- £587.35 underspend on Kerridge Court plaque (March 2015 award)
- £71.44 underspend on Sir Francis Ronalds plaque (July 2013 award)
- £216.56 overspend on Alexander McQueen plaque (November 2013 award)

In November 2016, £400 was awarded from the St Mary's budget to the Parent House for the training of two parent volunteers who would then work with vulnerable disadvantaged parents in the St Marys area to improve their take up of services and improve their access to training, education and employment. £824 was the amount requested. The Parent House couldn't afford to offer a quality service with the £400 so this award has been returned to the 2016-17 St Mary's ward budget for reallocation.

In March 2016 and April 2016, £2,042 was awarded to City YMCA London for a City Job Ready Programme (six weekly workshops focussing on skills that young people need to sustain their employment after completing an employability programme). The organisation had difficulty recruiting young residents for the programme. This has resulted in a £1,645.50 underspend. City YMCA has asked if this underspend can be used for four workshops on photography and Adobe Photoshop in February 2017. More details are listed in Appendix A. A £37 underspend for a previous City YMCA project has also been returned to the 2016-17 Bunhill budget for reallocation.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

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

4.2 Legal Implications:

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

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

4.3 Environmental Implications:

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

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

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

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

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

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

Agreeing to use Local Initiatives Funding to support the running of ward partnerships will promote local democracy and enable ward councillors to engage with residents and local organisations within their ward to discuss and influence decisions which affect their local area.


Appendices

Appendix A – Local Initiatives Fund Proposals

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

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

9 January 2017

Kaya Comer-Schwartz
Executive Member for Community Development

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