



Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	4 November 2019		All
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt	

SUBJECT: Community Festivals Fund: proposal for review to a three-year small grants programme

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The Community Festivals Fund (CFF) aims to support organisations based in Islington to deliver high quality, innovative, community focused festivals that are accessible to, and provide benefit for residents across the borough and promote cultural benefit, stronger communities and partnership working.
- 1.2 Each year, local community organisations are invited to apply for a small grant. The scheme is heavily oversubscribed for a total funding of £10,000 annually.
- 1.3 An evaluation of the scheme by the Voluntary Community Sector Team and the Cultural Enrichment Team, has indicated that the scheme is not currently functioning as effectively as it could and that improvements can be made.
- 1.4 This report sets out amendments to the scheme that will enable organisations to maximise the opportunities that a longer grant agreement (three-year small grants) provides, and it will reduce the council's administrative costs considerably.
- 1.5 The revised three-year grant will see increased investment in a smaller number of strategic festivals that provide borough wide benefit and meet the council's priorities. This will also increase transparency and reduce the administrative costs considerably.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the Community Festivals Fund be changed to a small grants programme where applicants are commissioned by open competition on a three-year basis, subject to the budget being available year by year.
- 2.2 To agree to the revised eligibility and funding criteria that applicants seeking Community Festivals Fund support are required to meet the terms and conditions of the grant, including reporting annually on how the grant has been spent; as well as satisfactory confirmation of match funding annually (as set out in Appendix 1).
- 2.3 To approve the new grant agreement offer letter, the terms and conditions and payment schedule as set out in Appendix 2.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Community Festivals Fund annual budget is currently £10,000. Funding is used to support a range of community festivals in the borough.
- 3.2 Under the Community Festivals Fund criteria, Islington based organisations can apply for a minimum grant of £1,500 and up to a maximum of £2,500. The scheme opens once a year for events in the summer and applications are assessed by officers against the published eligibility and selection criteria. Recommendations on awards are presented to the VCS Committee in Spring each year.
- 3.3 Applications are currently assessed against the published criteria which require applicants to demonstrate a commitment to provide events and activities that provide:

Cultural Benefit: In line with the Council's Arts Strategy 2017–20, "Inspiring Islington"; events will need to deliver high quality, innovative, community focused activities that:

- maximise access to and participation in cultural activities
- celebrate Islington's diversity
- improve, animate and interpret the physical environment
- promote community cohesion and a sense of place.

Equality: Festivals will promote community involvement and encourage people from a range of different backgrounds to participate. Festivals will recognise and value Islington's diverse communities, promote good relationships between people of different backgrounds and lifestyles and contribute to the Council's commitment to making Islington a fairer place for people to live, where discrimination and inequality are addressed.

These values will be visible in event programming by:

- ensuring that participating artists or components of the festival reflect and are attractive to the diversity of local people, cultures and lifestyles in Islington
- involving local people to define festival aims and objectives
- promoting understanding, tolerance and cohesion.

Value for Money: Islington Council is committed to providing value for money in all its services. Event costs should be realistic and clearly itemised with income matching expenditure. If you have organised festivals in previous years you should provide evidence of their success (e.g. press cuttings, photographs and any evaluation reports).

Well-managed: The festival organiser(s) will need to demonstrate that the event will be well managed; that appropriate consideration has been given to the impact and safety of their festival; and that organisers have the knowledge, skills and capacity to deliver the event independently and effectively

Inclusive and accessible: Activities should be open to all the community and accessible and inclusive for Islington's most disadvantaged communities. Applications from organisations that are based in

areas of high deprivation will be particularly welcomed. Proposals should demonstrate a commitment to using environmentally friendly policies and practices.

We are particularly keen that festivals will attract people from the following groups (who can often feel excluded from these events) as well as people from across the Islington community, to actively take part in the festivals as audiences, participants and/or organizers:

- Disabled people
- Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups
- Older people
- Young people
- Children

Applicants will need to detail which of these groups will participate in the event and how they will encourage them to be involved. All festivals must be open and accessible to the general public and provide benefit across Islington, not just to the organisation's own members.

Match Funding: Applicants are advised to seek funding from more than one source. This may include contributions from the lead organisation itself as well as charities and trusts, business sponsorship, other local grant schemes, Arts Council England or the Heritage Lottery Fund. Applicants seeking Community Festivals Fund support must secure external funding for their event and not be solely reliant on funding from other council sources.

Partnership Working: Applicants are encouraged to work with other agencies and organisations that may be able to share costs, facilities and expertise, and support the involvement of participants or beneficiaries.

4. Assessment of Current Scheme

- 4.1 The Community Festivals Fund is generally oversubscribed for a very small pot of funding of £10,000 annually.
- 4.2 The administration of the Community Festivals Fund as an open annual competitive process has significant impact in terms of capacity for the Cultural Enrichment Team, taking up considerable staff time. The amount currently distributed to Community Festivals is £10,000. The ratio of administration to amount distributed poses the question of value for money and efficient use of public funds.
- 4.3 Feedback from previous applicants shows that existing lead organisations feel they can no longer under-write festival delivery and take on the burden of cash flow without confirmation of core funding. The current investment in Community Arts Festivals is being agreed 'too late' to make the most of this contribution in leveraging in additional external funding.
- 4.4 The audience reach of community festivals varies significantly but this is not reflected in level of council funding each festival is awarded currently.
- 4.5 The insecurity of funding has led to an increase in support from Council teams in ensuring the delivery of some of the festivals over the last year (Arts Service, Licensing, Highways, Housing, Economic Development and Greenspace) with council officers stepping in to manage emergency situations. It is anticipated that this will continue in 2020 and further support will be required for other festivals, which have uncertain management arrangements.

5. Proposed Amendments to the Scheme

5.1 Based on demand and take-up of the festivals fund in previous years and the increasing pressures on the council to generate revenue to meet income targets, the following changes to the scheme are proposed:

- The total funding available for this grant programme will be £10,000 per year, for the period of three consecutive years; and the maximum grant available per application is up to £2,500 annually (total grant up to £7,500 for three years). The Council can only guarantee the second and third installments of the grant as long as sufficient funds are available. In the event that the Community Festivals Fund is no longer affordable, the Council is able to withdraw funding in years 2 and 3 respectively. It is possible that the indicative amounts allocated to successful organisations may therefore be reduced for future years.
- Applications will be assessed competitively and recommendations made to Islington's Voluntary and Community Sector Committee on 31 March 2020 - and every three years thereafter. Applicants will be informed of the decisions of the Committee in writing from week commencing 6 April 2020.
- The Council will pay the grant to successful applicants annually. The payment conditions are set out in Appendix 2, as follows:

The first payment of the Grant for the period April 2020 to March 2021 will be paid in advance, and subject to receipt of the signed Grant Offer Letter. Applicants will also need to send evidence of the following:

- Venue permission
 - Proof of Public Liability Insurance
 - Relevant entertainment licenses
 - Update on plans to liaise with the Council for stalls and marketing relevant to the Council.
- The second payment (period April 2021 to March 2022) and the third payment (period April 2022 to March 2023) of the Grant are conditional on the Council receiving and approving any additional monitoring information we have asked for and proof of match investment annually. Additionally, and in the event that the Community Festivals Fund is no longer affordable, the Council is able to withdraw funding in years 2 and 3 respectively. It is possible that the indicative amounts allocated to successful organisations may therefore be reduced for future instalments.

5.2 In addition, the following changes to the criteria and application process are proposed:

- Funding will be conditional on applicants liaising with the Council in order to guarantee that the Council have a presence at the festival. This includes Islington Council stalls and any marketing, publicity or information that would benefit Islington residents. Stalls should be provided free of charge to the Council. An update on any plans to liaise with Council departments must be provided to the Cultural Enrichment Team prior the festival each year.

6. Key Benefits

- 6.1 The revised three-year grant would see increased investment in a smaller number of strategic festivals that provide borough wide benefit and meet the council's priorities. This will also increase transparency and reduce the administrative costs considerably.
- 6.2 Restricting the funds to a set number of festivals will ensure that small community sector organisations do not waste their time and efforts applying for a very small pot of funding which is oversubscribed.

6.3 It is also anticipated that key proposed changes to the current funding criteria terms and conditions would:

- Provide a level of equity of council support across Islington’s festivals.
- Rationalise officer support for festivals focusing on advice and guidance rather than heavy administration.
- Enable lead organisations to make strategic use of the core funding to lever addition grant funding from public sources.
- Improve delivery of key council outcomes by providing programmes of arts and community engagement with local residents in the months preceding the festival and opportunities for local residents to perform at the festivals. It will also enable the festivals to plan ahead more effectively.
- Avoid last minute funding allocations.

7. Proposed Timetable

A) New Scheme Developed	
April 2018 – May 2019	Assessment of current scheme
17 June 2019	Proposal of new scheme presented to Leadership
End June – October 2019	Develop new scheme including sound criteria and guidelines, RIA, new grant agreements and T&C.
4 November 2019	VCS Committee meeting decision and launch after call in period

B) New Scheme Implemented – First Three-Year Round	
11 November 2019 – 15 January 2020	Marketing/communication of new scheme to the arts and voluntary and community sectors including timetable for applications. Advice sessions to the sector in place.
17 January 2020	Application window opens for 6 weeks
21 February 2020	Application window closes
w/c 24 February 2020	Assessment and shortlisting of applications by panel
31 March 2020	VCS Committee decisions on three year small grants awards

8. Implications

8.1 Financial implications

8.1.1 Funding available to support festivals outlined in this report is £10,000 annually. In the event that The Community Festivals Fund is no longer affordable, the Council is able to withdraw funding in years 2 and 3 respectively. It is possible that the indicative amounts allocated to successful organisations may therefore be reduced for future years.

8.1.2 The revised eligibility and selection criteria will result in the provision of longer term grants to a smaller number of key strategic festivals in Islington. This will reduce the amount of grant administration time for both applicants and Council officers, reduce multiple applications to Festivals Fund and Local Initiatives Fund for single events, support groups to apply for external funding (through a higher level of Council match funding support) and better ensure that grant funding contributes to the Council’s wider equalities, community cohesion and place-shaping objectives.

8.2 Legal Implications

8.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposal. Under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has the power to give support to organisations in the voluntary and community sector to provide services that are likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of residents within the local authority's area.

8.3 Environmental Implications

8.3.1 The proposed change to how Community Festivals Fund grants are awarded is unlikely to have any significant environmental implications as the total amount of funding being awarded (and overall number of events being supported) will not change.

8.4 Residents Impact Assessment

8.4.1 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.

8.4.2 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.

8.4.3 The Community Festivals 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.

8.4.4 A Resident Impact Assessment was completed on 11 September 2019 and it is included in Appendix 5 of this report.

8.4.5 The RIA will be published and can be accessed on the Islington Community Festivals Fund webpage in the Council's Website <https://www.islington.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/arts/events-funding-and-space/islington-community-festival-fund>

9 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

9.1 The Community Festivals Fund provides an opportunity for the Council to support local organisations to develop and deliver a range of events. The proposed three-year grant will see increased investment in a smaller number of strategic festivals that provide borough wide benefit and meet the council's priorities. This will also increase transparency and reduce the administrative costs considerably.

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Community Festivals Small Grants Programme 2020-23 – Funding Criteria and Guidance notes
Appendix 2 – Grant offer letter and terms and conditions of funding
Appendix 3 – Community Festivals Small Grants 2020-23 - Application Form
Appendix 4 - Community Festivals Small Grants 2020-23 - Evaluation Form
Appendix 5 – Residents Impact Assessment

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by: Executive Member for Community Development

Date: 22 October 2019

Una Mallon

Received by: Head of Democratic Services

Date:

Report Author:

Angeles Gordo
Arts Partnerships Officer

T: 020 7527 5243

E: angeles.gordo@islington.gov.uk

Attach appendices as follows:

Appendix 1 - Community Festivals Small Grants Programme 2020-23 – Funding Criteria and Guidance notes

Appendix 2 – Grant offer letter and terms and conditions of funding

Appendix 3 – Community Festivals Small Grants 2020-23 - Application Form

Appendix 4 - Community Festivals Small Grants 2020-23 - Evaluation Form

Appendix 5 – Residents Impact Assessment