

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	4 th November 2019		All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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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 2019/20 each ward has an allocation of £14,000 to spend on local schemes, with the exception of Bunhill and Clerkenwell who each have an allocation of £14,500. 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 delegate authority to the Head of Communities, to allocate funding, up to the value of £250, to activity to support Ward Partnership meetings, which will be reported to the VCS Committee at a future meeting. This is detailed at paragraph 3.14.
- 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 being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 2.2 To note the declarations of interest made by councillors due to having a connection with organisations that they are recommending funding for. These are detailed at paragraph 3.12.
- 2.3 To note the amendments to ward budgets resulting from project funding being returned. The amendments are detailed at paragraph 3.13 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 was available to each ward; therefore the notional allocation for each councillor was £5,000.
 - 3.8 In September 2014 the VCS Committee agreed to introduce a minimum award of £250 per project. In October 2018 the VCS Committee agreed that a minimum amount of £50 per ward be requested by organisations submitting proposals to more than one ward.
 - 3.9 In January 2017, the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee agreed that in order to address the issue of recruiting and retaining support for ward partnerships, an incentive payment of £1,000 per annum would be paid to each ward partnership co-ordinator and that £1,000 per annum be set aside from each ward partnership Local Initiatives Fund budget to fund this support.
- In 2019/20, the annual Local Initiatives Fund budget is therefore £225,000. This is £14,000 per ward apart from the Bunhill and Clerkenwell ward budgets which are each £14,500.
- 3.10 The Voluntary and Community Sector Development Team in the Housing 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.
 - 3.11 The second 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 being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
 - 3.12 Councillors must always declare their interest if they have a connection with an organisation that they are recommending funding for.

Declarations of interest have been made for the following applications submitted to this Committee:

- Cllr Claudia Webbe, Cllr Troy Gallagher and Cllr Phil Graham are council appointed trustees for St Luke's Parochial Trust which has been allocated £500 for a celebration of International Women's Day 2020.
- Cllr Marian Spall is a trustee of Caxton House Community Centre which will be the host venue and which will hold the funding for the Hillrise Winter Festivals which have been allocated £750.

- Cllr Una O'Halloran is a member of the Islington Veterans Association which has been allocated £890 for Armed Forces Day 2019. This is noted due to her being the member who approves this report.

3.13 Occasionally projects do not proceed as planned and funding is returned to ward budgets or the use of a grant has to be changed.

In October 2017, £500 was awarded for workshops for women on upcycling furniture and upholstery at Andover Estate Community Centre. These workshops were previously run by Groundwork London. Groundwork have advised that in the meantime their project based on Andover Estate came to an end (due to wider project funding) and therefore they no longer have staff based there. The £500 has therefore been returned to the Finsbury Park budget for reallocation.

In July 2019, £3,000 was awarded to Parkrun Ltd for the start-up costs of a Caledonian Junior Parkrun (a free weekly timed 2km run for 4 to 14 years olds around Caledonian Park). The organisation included £500 VAT in their invoice to us for the funding and the council reclaims almost all VAT so this £500 cannot be counted towards their grant. The £500 has therefore been returned to the Holloway budget for reallocation.

In July 2018, £433 was awarded to Mace Housing-Cooperative for a project helping the unemployed, low income earners and others to find careers in Housing Management. No Junction residents were able to be recruited and the award was conditional on this. The £433 has therefore been returned to the Junction budget for reallocation.

In November 2016, a £500 grant was awarded to Islington Pensioners Forum for a recruitment drive in Clerkenwell. Various personal reasons meant that this project was never carried out. The £500 has therefore been returned to the Clerkenwell budget for reallocation.

In October 2017, a £1,100 grant was awarded to LBI Heritage Services for a Red Bull Playhouse plaque. They managed to get some areas such as installation done for free so there was an underspend of £112. This £112 has therefore been returned to the Clerkenwell budget for reallocation.

In March 2019, a £740 grant was awarded to Octopus Community Network in March 2019 for a Living Learning Event on Highbury Quadrant Estate. Less was spent on refreshments as the participant numbers were lower than anticipated so there was an underspend of £173. This £173 has therefore been returned to the Highbury East budget for reallocation.

In March 2017, a £500 grant was awarded for publicity costs for the Caledonian Ward Partnership. The grant terms and conditions specify that funding be spent within 12 months of being awarded and £96 of this grant remains unspent. This £96 has therefore been returned to the Caledonian budget for reallocation.

3.14 Costs for ward partnership meetings often fall under the minimum grant amount of £250 so the minimum threshold for such grants is not ideal and has meant that previous grants awarded for these costs have often been spent slowly over a number of years. It is recommended that proposals received for costs for ward partnership meetings under the normal minimum grant amount of £250 (e.g. for publicity, refreshments, etc) be agreed under delegated authority to enable the funding to be spent within 12 months of being awarded (which is one of the terms and conditions of the funding).

It is recommended that authority be delegated to the Head of Communities to agree the allocation of up to £250 each for such proposals received prior to the next meeting of the VCS Committee at which Local Initiatives Fund awards will be considered. The Executive Member for Community Development would be informed of all events agreed under delegated authority. Awards approved under delegated authority would be reported to the next VCS Committee at which Local Initiatives Fund awards are considered.

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:

Many of the funded projects have environmental implications that include carbon emissions. Some will use energy and involve the use of generators. Some involve providing food and drink. Many will use resources in the form of purchasing equipment, paper, decorations or clothing, and also generate waste in some form. Some involve minor construction projects, which will use materials and energy. Almost all involve travel by the organisers or attendees, which has the potential to increase local emissions and congestion.

However, some of the projects have the potential to benefit the environment in the long-term, particularly those involving education on environmental matters or tree planting, the second of which could help offset carbon emissions and improve biodiversity.

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.

Appendices

Appendix A – Local Initiatives Fund Proposals

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

22 October 2019



Una O'Halloran
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