

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	7 th July 2020		All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
------------------------------	--	------------

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 2020/21 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 note the new proposals and changes to previous proposals submitted by ward councillors as set out in Appendix A which have been agreed by the Executive Member for Community Development under delegated authority.
- 2.2 To note the postponements of previously funded projects. These are set out in Appendix B.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 To agree that the temporary revised measures for new and previously funded projects detailed in the Executive report of 30 April 2020 be continued due to social distancing measures still being in place.

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.

In November 2019 authority was delegated to the Head of Communities, to allocate funding, up to the value of £250, to activity to support Ward Partnership meetings. Awards approved under delegated authority should be reported to the next VCS Committee at which Local Initiatives Fund awards are considered.

- 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 2020/21, 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 first 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 Jenny Kay is a governor at Newington Green School and the Secretary of the Newington Green Action Group. Both of these groups are involved in the application submitted by Mer-IT which has been allocated £3,000 for the refurbishment of laptops.

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. The changes in uses of previous grants are listed in Appendix A.

In November 2019, £3,284.49 was awarded to London Borough of Islington Public Lighting for festive lighting in Highbury Park and Blackstock Road. No repairs to infrastructure were required and energy rates were lower than estimated which resulted in an underspend of £320.66. This underspend has been returned to the Highbury East and Highbury West budgets for reallocation.

In November 2019, £4,460.87 was awarded to London Borough of Islington Public Lighting for festive lighting in Campdale Road and Tufnell Park Road. No repairs to infrastructure were required and energy rates were lower than estimated which resulted in an underspend of £833.76. This underspend has been returned to the Junction and St George's budgets for reallocation.

In November 2018, £250 was awarded for the costs of a Barnsbury ward partnership meeting. Most of this grant was spent on a meeting on 12 February 2020. A £72 underspend has been returned to the Barnsbury budget for reallocation.

Small residual amounts of 2019/20 funding totalling £6,550 have also been added back into the ward budgets.

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:

Most of the projects funded by the new and amended grants will have carbon and environmental impacts. These include energy use in buildings, generation of waste (including electronic waste), purchase of food and materials, printing of leaflets and use of vehicles. However, some of the projects also have positive environmental impacts, such as establishing bee hives and educating children about bees, while the refurbishment of second-hand laptops avoids the need for the manufacture of new ones.

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 – Approved Local Initiatives Fund Proposals and Grant Use Changes

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

25 June 2020



Una O'Halloran
Executive Member for Community Development

Report Author: Patricia Keating, Ward Budget and Partnerships Officer
Tel: 020 7527 8325
Email: patricia.keating@islington.gov.uk