

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	3 November 2020		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 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 for formal approval.

This report asks the committee to approve the continuation of temporary revised measures for the LIF application process due to the impacts of Covid-19 on the voluntary and community sector.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To agree that the temporary revised measures for new and previously funded projects detailed in the Executive report of 30 April 2020 and that the open programme for applications, be continued due to social distancing measures and Covid-19 restrictions still being in place. These are detailed at paragraph 4.1. The revised measures will be brought to the March 2021 VCS Committee for review.

3. Background

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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 Voluntary and

Community Sector (VCS) Committee. The team ensures that funds are used appropriately and for the purpose for which they are allocated.

- 3.3 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'.
- 3.4 The VCS Committee in April 2011 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.

4. LIF Awards 2020/21

- 4.1 On 30 April 2020, the Executive agreed that temporary revised measures for new and previously funded projects could be implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The measures included the following:
 - Authority was delegated to the Executive Member for Community Development and the Corporate Director of Housing to approve final awards and changes to previously funded projects to prevent delays to funding being received. Approved awards will then be brought to the VCS Committee for information only.
 - Previously funded organisations should be given the opportunity to change the use of the grant funding awarded including an extension to the timeline for the event. The normal funding terms and conditions state that all funding must be spent within 12 months of the date of the award. Organisations should be given the opportunity to spend their funding beyond the 12 months' timescale if needed.
 - The monitoring of new and existing projects where the organisation is known to the council and has previously received funding should be ceased. Where an organisation is unknown, further information may be requested.
 - Supporting documents do not need to be provided by new projects though each organisation will need to confirm that they have the appropriate governance documents in place. The VCS Development Team will carry out spot checks during this period and may request further information if needed.
 - Ward budget underspends in 2020/21 exceeding £1,000 per ward can be carried forward to 2021/22. In previous financial years, no more than £1,000 per ward could be carried forward to the following financial year.
 - Applications received for events that will breach Government guidelines on social distancing will not be accepted.

- 4.2 £7,794 from previous LIF allocations added to the £225,000 annual budget makes a total of £232,794 available to allocate in 2020/21. One proposal awarded £3,000 was reported for information to the VCS Committee on 7 July. This left a total of £229,794 available to allocate in 2020/21.
- 4.3 Ward councillors have considered 41 applications for funding and 5 changes to the use of previous funding since the VCS Committee on 7 July. One application was not recommended for funding by ward councillors and one project change was not recommended by ward councillors.
- 4.4 40 new applications and 4 changes to the use of previous funding awarded submitted by ward councillors were agreed by the Executive Member for Community Development under delegated authority on 14 July, 29 July, 18 August, 24 August and 6 October. A list of the organisations approved for funding and the grant award for each organisation is set out in Appendix A. This leaves £149,320 in the 2020/21 budget.
- 4.5 This agreement under delegated authority is subject to the Corporate Director of Housing being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.
- 4.6 Six of the 40 applications approved for funding are from first time applicants.
- 4.7 Four changes to the use of previous grants awarded have been approved since the VCS Committee on 7 July and these are set out in Appendix A for information only. A total of 15 changes to the use of previous grant funding have now been approved since late March 2020.
- 4.8 14 postponements of projects have been reported since the VCS Committee on 7 July and these are set out in Appendix B for information only. Since late March 2020, we have now been notified that 39 previously funded projects have been postponed. Some projects have been postponed more than once and some have been postponed by more than a year. Projects involving gatherings make up 32 of the 39 postponements reported to date.
- 4.9 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 Troy Gallagher, Cllr Phil Graham and Cllr Claudia Webbe are trustees of St Luke's Parochial Trust which has been allocated £2,000 for 'EC1 Pensioner Lockdown Lowdown'.
 - Cllr Una O'Halloran's husband is the chair of St Luke's Parochial Trust which has been allocated £2,000 for 'EC1 Pensioner Lockdown Lowdown'.
 - Cllr Michael O'Sullivan is a volunteer delivering food parcels to vulnerable people for the Finsbury Park Mutual Aid Group which has been allocated £1,500 for costs for deepening its grassroots response to the Covid-19 crisis.
 - Cllr Janet Burgess is on the Manor Gardens Friendship Network Advisory Board which has been allocated £2,166 for food hampers and additional food support for isolated vulnerable people at Christmas time.
 - Cllr Marian Spall is a board member and the vice chair of Elthorne Pride which has been allocated £2,895 for 'The World on our Table'.
 - Since the beginning of lockdown, Cllr David Poyser has been a volunteer delivering food to people in need for Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association which has been allocated £600 for a cream tea for older people.
 - Cllr Marian Spall is a trustee of Caxton House Community Centre which has been allocated £1,452.50 for cooking kits.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications:

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2020/21 has a total of £247,794 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £240,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £7,794 from FY19/20. £225,000 will be allocated across 16 wards, with 14 receiving a budget of £14,000 each and the Bunhill and Clerkenwell wards receiving £14,500 each. The £7,794 of carried forward underspend/unallocated funding from FY19/20 will be distributed to the ward from which the money originated. The remaining £15,000 of the LIF budget is spent on honorarium/ incentive payments to ward partnership co-ordinators to a total of £1000 per annum per ward (with Bunhill and Clerkenwell sharing a ward partnership co-ordinator).

The proposals referred to in this report can be met from budget allocations from the Local Initiatives Fund. Delays or alterations to LIF projects may increase ward underspends in Financial Year 2020/21.

Any recommendations for carry forwards of LIF underspends will be subject to yearly reviews of the wider financial needs of the Council.

Any loosening of monitoring procedures will need to ensure that suitable controls remain to ensure financial best practice in the Council's dealings with voluntary and community organisations.

5.2 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.

5.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

Most of the projects funded by the new and amended grants will have carbon and environmental impacts. These include energy use in buildings, purchase of food, materials and goods, printing, building works, the generation of waste, use of cleaning chemicals and use of vehicles. However, some of the projects also have positive environmental impacts, such as planting, the reuse of clothing and cycle refurbishment. Some are also being delivered online, eliminating any travel-related impacts.

5.4 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.

6. 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 (for information only)

Appendix B – Postponements of previously funded projects (for information only)

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

22 October 2020



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