



## Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	6 July 2021		All

<b>Delete as appropriate</b>		Non-exempt
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### SUBJECT: LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND

#### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The Local Initiatives Fund (LIF) 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 2021/22 each ward has an allocation of £14,000 to spend on local schemes, with the exception of Bunhill and Clerkenwell who each had 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.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To continue with delegated authority to the Executive Member for Community Development for decisions which are related to Covid responses in the community and also for events which will take place in the short term to prevent delays to decisions and funding being allocated and with due regard to the Government road map and any possible changes to this.
- 2.2 To agree to resort back to 3 rounds per year for LIF, with decisions which are outside of the scope detailed in 2.1 going to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee for approval. This will mean that the application deadlines for the next two rounds for this financial year will be in early September (agreed by November 2021 VCS Committee) and late December 2021 or early January 2022 (agreed by March 2022 VCS Committee).
- 2.3 To accept and award funding for events/gatherings with the following conditions:
- Organisations running large open events would need to contact the Safety Advisory Group, have a lead event safety manager, and a comprehensive risk assessment completed.
  - If activities are not permitted due to government guidance, then the event must be cancelled but the organisations can hold the funding allocation until such time as the event can run, including carrying funding over to the next financial year. Organisations will also be given the opportunity to delay events or change the use of the project funding.

- Government guidelines on social distancing must not be breached so event organisers should follow any guidance in place at the time.
- For events awarded funding, the funding would be released no earlier than the month before the event. This would allow for essential checks with the organisation having real time information on the roadmap and restrictions.

2.4 To note the new LIF awards which have been approved under delegated authority by the Executive Member for Community Development on 23 March and 17 May 2021 (as set out in appendix A). This is for information only.

### **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 Fairer Together 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 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 In 2021/22, 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 2021/22**

- 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.
- Applications received for events that will breach Government guidelines on social distancing will not be accepted.

4.2 14 new applications submitted by ward councillors were agreed by the Executive Member for Community Development under delegated authority on 23 March and 17 May 2021. A list of the organisations approved for funding and the grant award for each organisation is set out in Appendix A.

4.3 On 23 March, £800 was awarded under delegated authority to King Square TRA for a gardening project with the residents of Eva Martin Court. At that stage, Bunhill ward had £3,209 left in its 20/21 budget. This £800 reduced the Bunhill 20/21 remainder to £2,409. This award is reported to this Committee for information only.

This means that the overall LIF 20/21 underspend for all 16 wards changed from £60,167 to £59,367. The 20/21 underspend reported to the 30 March VCS Committee was £60,167.

4.4 Four out of the 16 wards carried forward 2020/21 underspend of less than £1,000 to 2021/22 with two wards not carrying any underspend at all forward.

4.5 £59,367 from previous LIF allocations added to the £225,000 annual budget makes a total of £284,367 available to allocate in 2021/22.

A further 13 proposals were allocated a total of £41,551 and were agreed by the Executive Member for Community Development under delegated authority on 17 May 2021. This leaves a total of £242,816 available to allocate in 2021/22.

4.6 This agreement under delegated authority is subject to the Fairer Together Partnership Director being satisfied that the necessary checks have been made and any other issues resolved.

4.7 Three of the 14 applications approved for funding are from first time applicants.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial implications:**

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2021/22 has a total of £284,367 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £225,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £59,367 from FY20/21. An additional £15,000 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).

Any recommendations for carry forwards of LIF underspends will be subject to yearly reviews of the wider financial needs of the Council. The current earmarked reserves as a consequence of previous financial year's carry forwards are sufficient to meet the funding requirements of this report.

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.

The proposals referred to in this report can be met from budget and reserve allocations from the Local Initiatives Fund. Delays or alterations to LIF projects may increase ward underspends in Financial Year 2022/23.

## 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:**

Some of the projects funded by the LIF grants have carbon and environmental impacts, including the use of materials and energy and water, while events being funded may create journeys that contribute to transport-related emissions if attendees drive. However, some projects also have positive environmental impacts, such as improving greenspace and interaction with nature.

## 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 (for information only)

**Background papers:** none

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**

25 June 2021



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