



Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	20 September 2021		All

Delete as appropriate		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 agree that the majority of the temporary revised measures detailed in the Executive report of 30 April 2020 be continued. These are detailed at paragraph 4.1.
- 2.2 To continue with delegated authority to the Executive Member for Community Development for changes to the use of previously awarded funding only. New applications will now return to being approved by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Committee.
- 2.3 To agree that ward budget underspends in 2021/22 exceeding £1,000 per ward can be carried forward to 2022/23.
- 2.4 To agree that the amount that can be approved under delegated authority by the Head of Communities to activity to support Ward Partnership meetings be increased to £1,000.
- 2.5 To note the new LIF awards which have been approved under delegated authority by the Executive Member for Community Development on 21 June and 16 August 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 In December 2020, £55 was awarded for the cost of the printing of flyers for a Caledonian ward partnership meeting on 9 November 2020. This funding ended up not being costed to the grant budget code by another department so was not drawn down and has therefore been returned to the Caledonian ward budget for reallocation. This amendment to the ward budget is reflected in the budget summary on the last page of Appendix A.

This increases the amount available to allocate in 2021/22 from £242,816 to £242,871.

4.3 Ward councillors have considered 33 applications for funding from 31 applicants since the VCS Committee on 6 July. One application was not recommended for funding by ward councillors leaving a total of 32 applications from 30 applicants recommended by ward councillors. The Executive Member for Community Development agreed all of these under delegated authority on 21 June and 16 August 2021. This leaves £182,089 in the 2021/22 budget.

A list of the organisations approved for funding and the grant award for each organisation is set out in Appendix A. Two organisations are listed twice in Appendix A.

4.4 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.

4.5 13 of the 30 applicants are first time applicants.

4.6 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 reported to this Committee:

- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association which has been allocated £1,705.56 for monthly health and well-being workshops.
- Cllr Martin Klute will possibly be performing at one of the events Islington Proms are organising, although he will not be receiving any fees for the performance. Islington Proms has been allocated £500 for 8 weekend concerts at St James Church.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications:

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2021/22 has a total of £284,422 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £225,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £59,422 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 energy, fuel, water, food, materials and printing, while events being funded may create waste or journeys that contribute to transport-related emissions if attendees drive. However, several projects also have positive environmental impacts, including litter picking, tree planting, upcycling of old bikes, production of reusable bags, community food growing, a community tool box that will reduce consumption and the projects that enhance biodiversity and promote 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:

8 September 2021



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