



Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	22 November 2021		All

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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 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 Fairer Together 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 4.6.
- 2.3 To agree that applications for funding for political activities and costs for individuals are not eligible for the Local Initiatives Fund.
- 2.4 To agree that the majority of the temporary revised measures for new and previously funded Local Initiative Fund projects implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as detailed in the report to the Executive on 30 April 2020, be continued. These are detailed at paragraph 4.1.
- 2.5 To continue with delegated authority to the Corporate Director Fairer Together, in consultation with the Executive Member for Community Development, to make changes to the use of previously awarded funding, with new applications to be considered by the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee.

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 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.
- 3.7 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. In September 2021, it was agreed that funding up to the value of £1,000 can be approved by the Head of Community Partnerships and Community Wellbeing North / Corporate Director Fairer Together for activity to support Ward Partnership meetings.

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 August 2021, £4,611 was awarded to the Clerkenwell Festival (The Peel Institute) which was due to be held on 29 August. The organiser decided to postpone the festival until next year due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. They had spoken to members of the local community who were anxious about attending large scale events and about socially distancing and sharing toilet facilities, etc. This £4,611 has therefore been returned to the Clerkenwell 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 £182,089 to £186,700.

4.3 Ward councillors have considered 52 applications for funding from 40 applicants since the last VCS Committee in September. 53 applications were received but one was considered to be unsuitable for the Local Initiatives Fund so was not considered by ward councillors.

5 of these applications were related to Ward Partnership activity, were recommended for funding and then formally agreed by the Head of Community Partnerships and Community Wellbeing North under delegated authority.

Of the remaining 47 applications from 35 applicants, one application was withdrawn by the applicant and one application was deferred. A further 6 applications were not recommended for funding by ward councillors leaving a total of 39 applications from 30 applicants recommended by ward councillors. If these councillor funding recommendations are formally agreed by this VCS Committee, there will be £102,447 left in the 2021/22 budget and would mean that 89 grants have been awarded to date in 2021/22.

A list of the 39 applications recommended for funding and the recommended amount for each application is set out in Appendix A. 5 organisations are listed more than once in Appendix A. The applications related to Ward Partnership activity are listed at the end of Appendix A for information only.

4.4 Two of the 16 wards (Bunhill and Hillrise wards) will not be open for new applications in the final round due to having no funding or nearly no funding left to allocate. Other wards who do not have much funding left in their 2021-22 budgets are Holloway, Tollington and Barnsbury which could mean that these wards will be oversubscribed in the final round.

4.5 6 of the applicants were first time applicants to LIF. 2 of these were not recommended for funding.

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:

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

- Cllr Phil Graham is a trustee of YMCA London City and North that has been allocated £4,000 for community engagement leading up to the 2022 Whitecross Street Party (community consultation in November 2021 and bunting workshops in Spring 2022).
- Cllr Marian Spall is the Deputy Chair of Elthorne Pride that has been allocated £725 for Hampers of Hope.

- Cllr Jenny Kay is a co-chair of Newington Green Action Group who is working with the Garden Classroom that has been allocated £3,000 for Garden on the Green.
- Cllrs Tricia Clarke and Satnam Gill are co-opted trustees of Hilldrop Area Community Association that has been allocated £1,000 for a craft café and £270 for the stay and play.
- Cllr Gary Poole is a member of Islington Veterans Association that has been allocated £1,352.58 for various outside and online events since February 2020.
- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association that has been allocated £1,231.29 for the Tollington ward partnership, £274.50 for Knitworks and £900 for two Black History Month events.

Awards were made to the following ward partnerships for costs associated with holding ward partnership meetings or events:

- Barnsbury – event on 30 October - £1,000
- Bunhill / Clerkenwell – meeting on 13 October - £50
- Canonbury – meeting on 29 September - £78.08
- Holloway – event on 17 October - £235
- Tollington – event on 11 September - £1,711.07 (£479.78 under delegated authority)

The councillors funding these costs are members of these ward partnerships and the main organisers of the meetings / events so have declared an interest in the above. The names of the councillors funding these costs thereby declaring an interest are listed in Appendix A.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications:

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2021/22 has a total of £289,033 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £225,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £64,033 from previous financial years. 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 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 & drink, materials, printing and the use of generators, 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 planting trees and other plants, greening areas, creating a composting system, local food growing, encouraging cycling and raising awareness of climate change.

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 – Local Initiatives Fund Proposals

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

10 November 2021



Una O'Halloran
Executive Member for Community Development

Report Author: Patricia Keating
Tel: 020 7527 8325
Email: Patricia.Keating@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Thomas Cooksey
Tel: 020 7527 1867
Email: Thomas.Cooksey@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Sonal Mistry
Tel: 020 7527 3833
Email: Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk

Environmental Implications Author: James Wilson
Tel: 020 7527 2349
Email: James.Wilson@islington.gov.uk