

Fairer Together
222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

Report of Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Meeting of: Voluntary and Community Sector Committee

Date: 25 July 2022

Ward(s): All 17 wards

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 2022/23 each ward has an allocation of £13,000 to spend on local schemes. 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 4.5.
- 2.3. To continue with delegated authority to the Corporate Director Fairer Together, in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities, to make changes to the use of previously awarded funding, with new applications to be considered by the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee.

- 2.4. To agree that we revert to pre-Covid measures from the first round of 2022/23 onwards. These are detailed at paragraph 4.1.

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 was therefore £225,000. This was £14,000 per ward apart from the Bunhill and Clerkenwell ward budgets which were each £14,500.
- 3.7. In March 2022, it was agreed that two new ward partnership co-ordinator posts needed to be created. An additional ward partnership co-ordinator was recruited to the Finsbury ward partnership due to the additional workload involved in dealing with two wards. In May 2022, the number of wards in Islington increased from 16 to 17 which meant that a further ward partnership co-ordinator was recruited.
- 3.8. Due to the increased amount spent on honorariums/ incentive payments to co-ordinators and the larger number of wards, the amount of funding available in each ward budget in 2022/23 for local schemes is £13,000. This means there is a reduction of the overall LIF budget from £240,000 to £238,000. Of this £238,000, £17,000 is spent on honorariums with £221,000 left to allocate to local schemes.

- 3.9. 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 2022/23

- 4.1. In March 2022, it was agreed that the majority of temporary measures introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic cease. The following will apply from 2022/23 onwards:
- The funding terms and conditions stating that all funding must be spent within 12 months of the date of the award will be re-introduced.
 - The monitoring of all projects will be re-introduced.
 - Supporting documents do not need to be provided by all 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 2022/23 exceeding £1,000 per ward will not be carried forward to 2023/24.
 - Many previously funded projects have stalled and have not yet taken place. Therefore we wish to continue with delegated authority to the Corporate Director Fairer Together, in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities, to make changes to the use of previously awarded funding only, with new applications to be considered by the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee.
 - All organisations who have changed their project due to Covid-19 will need to have delivered their project by April 2023.
 - Applications received for events that will breach Government Covid-19 guidelines will not be accepted (if restrictions are re-introduced).
- 4.2. In March 2022, it was agreed that all wards carry forward their remainder from 2021-22 to the equivalent ward from May 2022 onwards (2022-23) where there was not a substantial change in ward boundary (this applied to 14 of the 17 wards). The most substantial change in ward boundaries was for these 3 new wards (St Peter's and Canalside, St Mary's and St James' and Laycock). To deal with this, it was agreed that:
- St Peter's 21-22 underspend be carried forward and added to the £13k starting budget in 22-23 for St Peter's and Canalside

- St Mary's 21-22 underspend be carried forward and added to the £13k starting budget in 22-23 for St Mary's and St James'
- Laycock starts with no underspend so its starting budget in 22-23 would be £13k.

Each re-elected councillor has had their individual 21-22 remainder added to their new 22-23 budget. New councillors have inherited the old councillors' remainder in all cases apart from where all 3 councillors in a ward are new (when the 21-22 underspend was split between the 3 of them). In addition, St George's ward is now called Tufnell Park, Highbury West is now called Arsenal and Highbury East is now called Highbury.

- 4.3. Occasionally projects do not proceed as planned and funding is returned to ward budgets or the use of a grant has to be changed.

In November 2021, £3,584 was awarded to LBI Lighting & Streetworks (on behalf of Friends of King Square Gardens) so festive lighting could be installed on trees near their Christmas event for children and families in King Square Gardens. There was an underspend of £584 which has been returned to the Bunhill budget for reallocation.

In February and March 2022, awards were made to the following ward partnerships for costs associated with holding ward partnership meetings or events which resulted in the following underspends, which have been returned to the relevant ward budgets for reallocation:

- Bunhill / Clerkenwell – meeting on 12 March – £80 - underspend of £46.06
- Junction – meeting on 17 March - £51.05 – underspend of £21.05

Residual amounts of 2021/22 funding from 11 wards totalling £35,109 have also been added back into the ward budgets. (A ward partnership was allocated £51 from 21-22 funding after submission of the the last report in March 2022 so the £35,160 stated in the March report is reduced to £35,109 carried forward.)

These amendments to the ward budgets are reflected in the budget summary on the last page of Appendix A.

In total, £35,760 has been returned to the ward budgets. This increases the amount available to allocate in 2022/23 from £221,000 to £256,760.

- 4.4. 56 applications for funding have been received since the last VCS Committee in March 2022.

One application was related to Ward Partnership activity, was recommended for funding and then formally agreed by the Corporate Director of Fairer Together

under delegated authority. This funding was taken from the 21-22 budget as it was received before the end of March.

Of the remaining 55 applications, two applications were withdrawn by the applicants leaving 53 applications to be considered by ward councillors. 9 of these applications had been deferred by councillors to this round due to councillors running out of funding in March 2022 (some of these has been part funded in March 2022 and it was just the shortfall to be considered).

Of the 53 applications, four applications were not recommended for funding by ward councillors and one was referred to S106/CIL funding leaving a total of 48 applications recommended by ward councillors.

If these 48 councillor funding recommendations are formally agreed by this VCS Committee, there will be £169,872 left in the 2022/23 budget.

A list of the 48 applications recommended for funding and the recommended amount for each application is set out in Appendix A. All external organisations are listed only once in Appendix A but some internal council departments are listed more than once (in most cases, this is because they have been asked to be the parent organisation / vehicle for the funding for small groups who would otherwise be unable to meet the supporting documents requirements of the Local Initiatives Fund).

Three changes to the uses of grants previously awarded are also listed at the end of Appendix A for information only. The funding for these project changes should be able to be released very shortly as they have been agreed under delegated authority and do not need to be agreed by the VCS Committee. The application related to Ward Partnership activity is listed at the end of Appendix A for information only.

12 of the 56 applicants were first time applicants to LIF. One of these was not recommended for funding and one withdrew their application.

- 4.5. 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 Janet Burgess is the chair of governors of Hargrave Park School who will benefit from the Natural Cycle Development Programme grant of £3,374.50 (£307.45 for Hargrave Park).
 - Cllr Janet Burgess and the husband of Cllr Sheila Chapman are trustees of Whittington Park Community Centre who are involved in the Food Power Community Picnics led by Highbury Vale Blackstock Trust. The grant

awarded is £3,070 for 9 events and Whittington Park Community Centre's portion for their event is £438.50.

- Cllr Phil Graham is a trustee of YMCA London City and North which has been allocated £5,000 for the Whitecross Street Party.
- Cllr Santiago Bell-Bradford is a governor of Highbury Quadrant School who will benefit from the £1000 allocated to Highbury Quadrant School Association for cycle and scooter parking racks in the school's KS1 playground.
- Cllr Martin Klute is playing at the concerts that are being held by St James' Church that has been allocated £250 but he will not be paid for these performances.
- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association who were involved in the Super Soup Week run by Octopus Community Network that has been allocated an additional £500 in this round.
- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association that has been allocated an additional £1,223 for monthly health and well being workshops.

An award of £51.05 was made to the Junction ward partnership for costs associated with holding a ward partnership meeting. The councillors funding these costs (Cllrs Janet Burgess, Sheila Chapman and Kaya Comer-Schwartz) are members of the Junction Ward Partnership and the main organisers of the meeting so have declared an interest in this award.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2022/23 has a total of £256,760 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £221,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £35,760 from previous financial years. An additional £17,000 LIF budget is spent on honorarium/ incentive payments to ward partnership co-ordinators to a total of £1,000 per annum per ward. The core budget available for LIF will be £238,000.

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 2023/24.

Any recommendations to revert to previously held carry forward capping will reduce the carry forward and the money available for the LIF programme, but will improve the financial position of the Council.

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 a 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, and printing, while events being funded may create waste or journeys that contribute to transport-related emissions if attendees drive. However, some projects also have positive environmental impacts, including planting, greening areas and local food growing. Overall, projects will be undertaken with regard with the council's goal of achieving a net zero Islington by 2030.

5.4. Equalities 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.

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:



Cllr Una O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Date: 14 July 2022

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