

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: 21 November 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. This report brings the latest funding recommendations for formal approval and requests that this Committee agree delegated authority to the Executive Member for Homes and Communities for applications aiming to support the voluntary and community sector in its response to the Cost of Living Crisis.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That authority be delegated to the Executive Member for Homes and Communities, to approve funding for proposals arising as a result of the cost of living crisis. Awards approved under delegated authority will be reported to the next VCS Committee at which Local Initiatives Fund awards are considered. This is detailed at paragraph 3.10.
- 2.2. 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.

- 2.3. 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 4.3.
- 2.4. 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.

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 Community Partnerships Team in the Fairer Together Directorate 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.
- 3.10. Due to the challenges being faced by the cost of living crisis, the decision was made to open up LIF for applications during the winter period (Oct 2022-March 2023) to ensure that voluntary and community sector organisations were able to respond on the ground to the crisis, and that funding is awarded and processed promptly to support the sector during this difficult time. In addition, applications responding to the crisis will be taken under delegated authority to the Executive Member for Homes and Communities for formal approval to ensure that decisions can be made swiftly. These awards will then be reported to the VCS Committee retrospectively for information.

4. LIF Awards 2022/23

- 4.1. 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 March 2022, £3,000 was awarded to St Mary's Parochial Church Council for an interpretation board for the new church gardens to explain the artwork and historical significance of the bronze roundels that have been inlaid in the main pathway. The board cost considerably less than expected so an underspend of £1729 has been returned to the St Mary's and St James' budget for reallocation.

In February 2020, £1400 was awarded to Coney for 'We The People (of Caledonian Road)' - a three phase community development / community cohesion project, comprising a research and development phase, workshops in making play in public spaces and a multiple choice quiz on local stories and issues. This project can no longer be delivered so £1400 has been returned to the Caledonian budget for reallocation.

In November 2019, £928.40 was awarded to PENHA (Pastoral & Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa) for an event for 450 young people and adults of an African background in Islington. The event was originally rescheduled to earlier in 2022. The original budget had been set at 2019 prices but had risen so much that the organisation could no longer set aside an increasing section of its budget to ensure the project was delivered to the standard they would like. The grant of £928.40 has been returned to the Clerkenwell, Highbury and St Peter's and Canalside budgets for reallocation.

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

In total, £4,057 has been returned to the ward budgets in this round. This increases the amount available to allocate in 2022/23 from £256,760 to £260,817.

Three changes to the use of previously awarded funding have been agreed under delegated authority and are listed in Appendix A. 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.

- 4.2. 65 applications for funding have been received since the last VCS Committee in July 2022.

Two applications were related to Ward Partnership activity, were recommended for funding and then formally agreed by the Head of Community Partnerships / Corporate Director of Fairer Together under delegated authority. These two applications are listed at the end of Appendix A for information only.

Of the remaining 63 applications, one application was withdrawn leaving 62 applications to be considered by ward councillors. Of the 62 applications, three applications were not recommended for funding by ward councillors leaving a total of 59 applications (from 46 applicants) recommended by ward councillors.

10 of these applications arose as a result of the cost of living crisis and were agreed under delegated authority on 21 October and 31 October 2022. A total of £16,843 was allocated to these 10 applications. These applications are listed at the start of Appendix A.

If the remaining 49 councillor funding recommendations are formally agreed by this VCS Committee, there will be £72,116 left in the 2022/23 budget. A list of the 49 applications recommended for funding and the recommended amount for each application is set out in Appendix A.

Six of the 46 applicants whose projects have been recommended for funding are first time applicants to LIF. Six organisations are listed more than once in Appendix A (i.e. have submitted more than one application to this round).

4.3. 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:

- There are a number of councillors who are trustees of the 10 community centres involved in the Octopus Community Network Super Stew project which was awarded £6,000 as follows:
 - (a) Cllr Janet Burgess and the husband of Cllr Sheila Chapman are trustees of Whittington Park Community Centre.
 - (b) Cllr Valerie Bossman-Quarshie is a trustee of St Luke's Community Centre.
 - (c) Cllr Michelline Ngongo is a trustee of Caxton House Community Centre that has also been allocated £900 for three winter festivals.
- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association / Brickworks Community Centre that has been allocated £2,000 to hold a Tollington ward partnership community fun day.
- Cllr Jenny Kay is a co-opted governor at Newington Green School that has been allocated £1045 for pantomimes and the provision of financial support to low income families for the Year 5 and Year 6 residentials.
- Cllrs Tricia Clarke, Satnam Gill and Gulcin Ozdemir are co-opted trustees of Hilldrop Area Community Association that has been allocated £1200 for a warm room and £500 for a Christmas event.
- Cllrs David Poyser, Marian Spall and Michelline Ngongo are heavily involved in the organisation of the three winter festivals being hosted by Caxton House that have been allocated £900.

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

- Bunhill / Clerkenwell (Finsbury) – celebration event on 16 Sept - £25.50
- St Mary's and St James – drop in event on 8 Oct - £210
- Tollington – community fun day on 29 Oct (hosted by Hanley Crouch) - £2,000

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 2022/23 has a total of £260,817 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £221,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £39,817 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: 10 November 2022

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