

Community Engagement and Wellbeing  
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: 11 July 2023

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 2023/24 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 Community Engagement and Wellbeing 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 4.3.
- 2.3. To continue with delegated authority to the Corporate Director Community Engagement and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities, to make changes to the use of previously awarded funding.

- 2.4. To note that further applications received for projects addressing the cost of living crisis up to the value of £1000 will continue to be considered by officers on an ongoing basis in between VCS Committees but will not be funded from the Local Initiatives Fund budget subject to sufficient extra funding being available. This is detailed at paragraph 3.11.
- 2.5. To note that authority was delegated to the Corporate Director Community Engagement and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities, to award funding to projects related to the Coronation of King Charles III.

### 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 Community Engagement and Wellbeing 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 2023/24 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 Community Partnerships, 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 Corporate Director Community Engagement and Wellbeing 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 was awarded and processed promptly to support the sector during this difficult time.
- 3.11. In early March 2023, it was decided that any further applications received for projects addressing the cost of living crisis would continue to be prioritised beyond the end of March but would not be funded from the Local Initiatives Fund budget. £20,000 of extra funding from the North London Waste Authority was set aside to fund any further cost of living crisis related proposals received. From 23 March to 2 June, £11,355 of this extra funding was allocated to 11 applications leaving £8,645 still to be allocated. These applications were not considered by ward councillors but by officers in the Community Partnerships team. The maximum that can be applied for under this process is now £1000. The relevant ward councillors have been informed of any decisions made for projects related to their ward. These awards are listed in Appendix A for information only.

## 4. LIF Awards 2023/24

- 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, we learned of the cancellation of the Angel Canal Festival which was due to be held on 3 September and which had been recommended for funding of £2,500 by the St Peter's and Canalside councillors. The reason cited by the Canal and River Trust was 'the economic climate, together with a continuing real-terms cut in the Trust's Government funding, has forced our charity to review all of its costs'. This £2,500 has been returned to the St Peter's and Canalside budget for

reallocation. A smaller scale version of the festival will now be run on 3 September and the accountable body will be the Islington Boat Club.

In April 2020, £1,500 was awarded to Andover Community Centre to kit out a Men in Sheds project at the rear of the centre to engage isolated men in the Finsbury Park area. This project was first delayed due to Covid and then there was scaffolding in the garden area for the block which ruled out access to the shed and gardens. This £1500 has been returned to the Finsbury Park budget for reallocation.

In August 2021, £750 was awarded to Community Toolbank (now called Things in Common) to set up a free tool lending service on Priory Green Estate. There was an underspend of £400 due to the delay in the time that the funding was approved and when the insurance policy was renewed with their broker. In the interceding time they managed to get further funding, against which they posted the insurance costs. The other funds for website and engagement were spent. This £400 has been returned to the Barnsbury budget for reallocation.

In April 2023, £500 was awarded under delegated authority to a Coronation street party on St John's Grove in early May which was subsequently cancelled. This funding was paid out to the Toy Project (the accountable body) but has been returned in time for this Committee so the details of this party are not listed in Appendix A.

Residual amounts of 2022/23 funding from 13 wards totalling £7,886 have also been added back into the ward budgets.

Two changes in the use of previously awarded funding have been agreed by councillors and are listed in Appendix A:

- £1374 was awarded by Canonbury and St Peter's in February 2020 to the Friends of Rotherfield School for a 'Gaspard the Fox' show, a 'Fun Run' and a 'Food and Culture evening' which were to be held between March and July 2020. These events were cancelled due to Covid restrictions in place at the time. The funding will now mainly be spent on a summer fete on 7 July 2023.
- £1000 was awarded in March 2022 to Highbury Quadrant TRA for a fun day which did not take place. This unused £1000 will now be spent on the creation of three meadows, a bee bank and small shrub habitat area on Birchmore Walk instead (a project being run in partnership with the LBI Housing Community Gardening Team). An additional £1000 has been allocated to this project by the Highbury councillors in this round meaning that a total of £2,000 LIF has been allocated to this project.

These amendments to the ward budgets are reflected in the budget summary on the last page of Appendix A. In total, £12,286 has been returned to the ward budgets in this round. This increases the amount available to allocate in 2023/24 from £221,000 to £233,286.

- 4.2. Since the last VCS Committee in March 2023, 64 applications for the Local Initiatives Fund have been received. Another 9 cost of living crisis related applications have been received which were fully covered by the additional NLWA funding. 2 further applications were funded by both LIF and NLWA. This means a total of 75 applications have been received since the last VCS Committee in March 2023.

Four of the 66 LIF applications were related to Ward Partnership activity, were recommended for funding and then formally agreed by the Head of Community Partnerships / Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing under delegated authority. These four applications totalling £698 are listed in Appendix A for information only.

Two of the 66 LIF applications were related to the King's Coronation and were approved under delegated authority by the Corporate Director Community Engagement and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities. One of these projects didn't take place so is not listed in Appendix A. The other project is listed in Appendix A for information only.

Of the remaining 60 LIF applications, one application was withdrawn, one was deferred until the second round of 2023/24, one application was not recommended for funding by ward councillors and three applications will be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy instead leaving a total of 54 applications recommended by ward councillors.

As some wards were heavily oversubscribed for their remainder in the last round, councillors could not afford to fully fund all of the LIF applications received so some applications were part funded or fully deferred to this round. 5 of the LIF applications submitted initially in March 2023 were part or fully deferred to this round.

If the remaining 54 councillor funding recommendations are formally agreed by this VCS Committee, there will be £139,930 left in the 2023/24 budget and would mean that 59 LIF grants have been awarded in 2023/24 to date.

A list of the 54 LIF applications recommended for funding and the recommended amount for each application is set out in Appendix A.

9 of the 66 LIF applications received are from first time applicants to LIF and 6 of these have been recommended for funding (one was deferred and one was withdrawn) . Four organisations are listed more than once in Appendix A (i.e. have submitted more than one application to this round).

The total amount of LIF allocated to cost of living crisis related applications between October 2022 and the March VCS Committee was £21,601. £11,355 of NLWA funding has been allocated by officers to cost of living projects since the March VCS Committee. As there is a cap of £1000 on NLWA funding applications, two cost of living applications in the round were part funded by LIF and NLWA (the NLWA amount of £2,000 for these two is included in the £11,355 above). This means the total amount allocated to cost of living crisis related applications since October 2022 is £32,956.

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:

- Cllr Valerie Bossman-Quarshie is a trustee of YMCA London City and North that has been allocated £3,000 for the Whitecross Street Party.
- Cllr Marian Spall is the chair of Caxton House Settlement that has been allocated £3,500 for the Hillrise summer festival.
- Cllr Michelline Ngongo is a holding trustee of Caxton House Settlement that has been allocated £3,500 for the Hillrise summer festival.
- Cllrs David Poyser, Michelline Ngongo and Marian Spall are the main organisers of the Hillrise summer festival that has been allocated £3,500.
- Cllr Anjna Khurana is a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association that has been allocated £500 for a 50th anniversary event and £2,725 for health and well being workshops.
- Cllr Jenny Kay is the vice-chair of the federated governing board of Newington Green Primary School that has been allocated £1,100 for geographical globes for classrooms and financial assistance for children unable to afford school trips. The PTA applied for this funding.
- Cllr Tricia Clarke is a governor of Tufnell Park Primary School that has been allocated funding for three projects: £500 for a Coronation Bee Garden, £1000 for a computing and robotics project and £960 for outdoor play rickshaw carts.

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

- Junction Ward Partnership – meeting on 29 March - £22.70
- Laycock Ward Partnership – meeting on 27 April - £100
- St Mary's and St James' Ward Partnership – fun day on 10 June - £480

- Tufnell Park Ward Partnership at Hilldrop Community Centre Spring Fair on 6 May - £95

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.

## 5. Implications

### 5.1. Financial Implications

The Local Initiatives Fund in Financial Year 2023/24 has a total of £233,286 to allocate. This is comprised of an annual budget of £221,000 and a carried forward underspend/unallocated amount of £12,286 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 2024/25.

Financial Year 2024/25 will start with a comprised annual budget of £221,000 and any additional carried forward underspend/unallocated. An additional £17,000 LIF budget will be 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 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.

The council has adopted a Code of Conduct for its members which is in Part 6 of the Constitution and is on the council's website. All members need to register their disclosable interests – both disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests that must be declared and registered as required by the council's Code of Conduct for members or by members' duty to act in conformity of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

One of the Seven Principles of Public Life is the principle of integrity, that *"holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships."*

Members' registration of personal interests should be guided by this duty. They should also give the Monitoring Officer who is responsible for the register of members' interests any information they may request in order to keep that register up to date and any other information which members consider should be entered in the register.

### **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: 30 June 2023

Report Author: Patricia Keating, Community Partnerships Investment Officer  
Tel: 020 7527 8325  
Email: [Patricia.Keating@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Patricia.Keating@islington.gov.uk)

Financial Implications Author: Ellena Smith, Deputy Finance Manager (Community Engagement and Wellbeing)  
Tel: 020 7527 4257  
Email: [Ellena.Smith@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Ellena.Smith@islington.gov.uk)

Legal Implications Author: Sonal Mistry, Interim Chief Lawyer (Governance)  
Tel: 020 7527 3833  
Email: [Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk)

Environmental Implications Author: Gearoid Kennedy, Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership Manager  
Tel: 07907 979 563  
Email: [Gearoid.Kennedy@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Gearoid.Kennedy@islington.gov.uk)