

Report of: Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Meeting of: Voluntary and Community Sector Committee

Date: 25 March 2024

Wards: All

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## Subject: Islington Council's Community Chest: Continuation of Council's commitment.

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1** Small voluntary and community organisations play an important role in Islington, helping to build resilient communities and support residents who are experiencing poverty and isolation. Islington Council's Community Chest (ICCC), one of the borough's most popular grant programmes, has proved to be a very effective way of funding grassroots activity and developing the capacity of local groups.
- 1.2** This report recommends that Islington Council continues to support the partnership with Cripplegate Foundation for the administering and delivery of Islington Council's Community Chest (ICCC) programme for 1 further year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 with a financial commitment of £190,000 per annum which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1** To agree to the renewal of the council's partnership agreement with Cripplegate Foundation for administering and delivery of the ICCC programme for 1 year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 2.2** To agree a financial commitment from the council of £190,000 per annum for the financial year of the ICCC programme 2024/25. To agree a financial reduction of £10,000 to the current agreement of £200,000 per annum.
- 2.3** To agree for the Community Partnership team to work with Cripplegate Foundation to establish and scope a complete review for the ICCC programme beyond 01 April 2025, including priorities, criteria, how the grant is administered and governance.

### 3. Background

- 3.1** ICCC is a partnership between Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation. It is a small grants programme that funds grassroots activity and brings additional capacity building, networking and development support to local voluntary and community organisations. By providing resources for local groups ICCC helps to build community resilience and to tackle poverty and isolation.
- 3.2** Islington Council is committed to working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The council solely awards grant-funding to organisations that are paying employees London Living Wage and has amended our procurement approach so that we only procure services from organisations that pay their staff at least the London Living Wage.
- 3.3** ICCC is one of the borough's most popular grant funding programmes and is available to local organisations with a turnover of no more than £100,000 per year – in most cases less than £50,000 per year. Organisations can apply for one grant of up to £5,000 per year. The priority is to support applications from the most deprived areas of the borough with a focus on:
- respond to the cost-of-living crisis
  - seek to address community safety
  - aim to make Islington a more environmentally sustainable place to live

Cripplegate Foundation has successfully managed community chest programmes in Islington for many years, established in 2011. The council has historically contributed £200,000 per year and Cripplegate Foundation adds £50,000 per year (from which £36,000 per year is deducted to cover the costs of managing the programme).

- 3.4** Cripplegate Foundation commits up to £2,500 a year (inclusive of VAT) towards the costs of holding an annual celebration event to promote the achievements and impact of activity supported through ICCC. This helps to raise awareness of the council's role as main funder of ICCC. Cripplegate and the council will work together to plan these events and to secure in-kind contributions for venue and refreshment costs where possible.
- 3.5** The ICCC panel is made up of representatives from Islington Council, Cripplegate Foundation and the local voluntary sector. Chaired by the council's Executive Member for Homes and Communities, the panel meets three times a year to consider applications.
- 3.6** This panel considers issues of wider relevance to the local voluntary and community sector and reviews priorities annually. These priorities are set in partnership. For 2024/25 consultation will be undertaken with relevant council departments to ensure strategic alignment between the programme and the council's corporate priorities and

the council's recently established outcome areas. In addition, the panel track application trends and identify any gaps in the programme that should be addressed.

- 3.7** In April 2017 the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee decided to transfer full responsibility to ICCC Panel regarding confirming the awarding of grants to VCS Organisations, rather than been required to decide on recommendations made by the panel. This change has helped to streamline the decision making process and reduce delays in notifying VCS organisations of the outcome of their applications. The council's interests are protected by having the Executive Member for Homes and Communities as Chairperson of the ICCC Panel. The VCS Committee continues to receive reports to note decisions made by ICCC Panel in respect of awards through the programme. However, the Council has reserved the right to adjust this arrangement if deemed necessary.
- 3.8** The current management agreement is due to end on 31 March 2024. It is recommended that the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee considers continuing it's commitment to ICCC, with a small reduction, and for Cripplegate Foundation to manage the administration of grants to VCS organisations.
- 3.9** The £10,000 reduction will be repurposed to explore a locality participatory model. The funding will still reach the community, this might be residents themselves, grassroot start up groups and other voluntary sector organisations. This will better align to the council locality model ambitions. This will be scoped out in the first quarter of 24-25 and brought to the VCS Committee.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

The Community Chest budget sits within the Voluntary Community Service department of Community Engagement and Wellbeing, with a 2023-24 budget of £200,000. Therefore, as per the business case to extend the agreement with Cripplegate, the council is in a position to commit £190,000 for a year as this a reduction of £10,000 on the amount already committed.

The total amount available for distribution, excluding any underspends carried forward in each financial year, totals £214,000. On top of this the Cripplegate Foundation fund an annual celebration up to £2,500.

Cripplegate is a long-standing organisation with substantial funds available at its disposal. In the rare event that Cripplegate did have financial difficulties, Islington Council would need to clarify any financial liabilities we may have for the remaining projects. As the council are providing a large share of the total funding (£190,000) paid in three instalments after each funding round. The risks would be minimal.

## 4.2 Legal Implications

The council has power to provide grants for the voluntary and community sector under the General Power of Competence set out in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The provision of grants for the voluntary and community sector as described in this report is not subject to any other statutory provision. In providing these grants the council must ensure that it complies with its duty to secure best value (Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999) and its fiduciary duties to council taxpayers.

## 4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

Most if not all, of the projects funded by this grant have carbon and environmental impacts, including the use of energy, fuel, water, food and drink, materials, prizes, generators, fireworks and printing, while events being funded may create waste or journeys that contribute to transport-related emissions especially if attendees drive.

However, many projects also have positive environmental impacts, including repairing items including bikes, a free library box, planting, greening areas, local food growing and increasing local biodiversity. Wherever possible, projects will be undertaken with regard with the council's goal of achieving a net zero Islington by 2030, as per Islington Council's Environmental Policy.

Cripplegate will endeavour to ask organisations the below when they give out the award letters:

- Show how the projects are complying with the council's Net Zero strategy
- Feedback on what more they'd like to do
- Feedback on the barriers they may have encountered in doing so, how they overcame them
- Let us know the impact this had in terms of mitigating carbon and enabling resilience to the impacts of climate change (increased likelihood of floods, overheating, other extreme weather events)? For example, it would be good for the groups to make provisions so that on days like this, the most vulnerable Islington citizens are still able to get support or volunteer.

## 4.4 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.

ICCC provides resources for small community organisations, many of which are volunteer-led, and would not otherwise meet the criteria for funding under other programmes. It enables some of Islington's most disadvantaged residents to access community-based services and activities including through newly established groups who offer the potential for adding to existing provision locally, or who can reach communities that may not otherwise be supported.

## 5. Conclusions and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1** ICCC helps to nurture and sustain an innovative and resilient voluntary and community sector in Islington, in particular providing resources for smaller organisations that find it hard to access funding from other programmes. ICCC is an effective way of developing grass roots activity across the borough and building capacity in local organisations to support residents who are experiencing poverty and isolation.
- 5.2** Islington Council's Community Chest is an effective way of developing grass roots activity across the borough and building capacity in local organisations to support residents who are experiencing poverty and isolation. Continuing this successful partnership that has a direct benefit for local VCS organisations and communities is recommended so that Cripplegate Foundation continues to award on behalf of the council until 31 March 2025.

### Final report clearance:

**Signed by:** Una O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities

**Date:** 14/03/24

Report Author: **Pamela Aristokle**  
Tel: **020 7526 4257**  
Email: [Pamela.aristokle@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Pamela.aristokle@islington.gov.uk)

Financial Implications Author: **Ellena Smith**  
Tel: **020 7527 4257**  
Email: [Ellena.Smith@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Ellena.Smith@islington.gov.uk)

Legal Implications Author:

**Sonal Mistry**

Tel:

**020 7527 3833**

Email:

**[Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Sonal.Mistry@islington.gov.uk)**

Environmental Implications Author:

**Simon Bishop**

Tel:

**020 7527 3691**

Email:

**[Sarah.Hitchcock@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Hitchcock@islington.gov.uk)**