

**Report of: Executive Member for Economic and Community Development**

| Meeting of:                              | Date         | Agenda item | Ward(s) |
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| Voluntary and Community Sector Committee | 13 July 2015 |             | All     |

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**SUBJECT: Islington Council's Community Chest: Round One Grant Awards 2015/16**

**1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 Small voluntary and community organisations play an important role in Islington, helping to build community resilience and supporting residents who are experiencing poverty and isolation. Islington Council's Community Chest, 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 sets out recommendations for awarding the first tranche of Islington Council's Community Chest funding for 2015/16.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 To agree the proposed grant awards for the first round of Islington Council's Community Chest for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix A.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Islington Council's Community Chest (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 ICCC 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:
  - Advising and supporting people
  - Educating people and improving their skills and employability

- Reducing isolation and increasing people's involvement in the community
- Improving people's mental and/or physical health
- Improving the local environment and making communities safer

- 3.3 Community chest programmes in Islington have been successfully managed by Cripplegate Foundation for many years. Under current arrangements, agreed by VCS Committee in March 2015, the council contributes £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 administering and developing the programme).
- 3.4 In addition Cripplegate Foundation has committed up to £2,500 a year towards the costs of holding an annual celebration event to promote the achievements and impact of activity supported through ICCC. This year's event was held in Islington Assembly Hall on 10 June 2015. Well over 100 people attended the celebration and enjoyed a range of excellent performances from community chest beneficiaries as well as an opportunity to network and learn more about projects supported by community chest.
- 3.5 A panel made up of representatives from Islington Council, Cripplegate Foundation and the local voluntary sector (nominated by Islington Community Network) meets three times a year to consider applications and to make recommendations to the VCS Committee. It is chaired by the council's Executive Member for Economic and Community Development.
- 3.6 The panel also considers issues of wider relevance to the local voluntary and community sector and reviews priorities annually to ensure that the programme continues to meet the needs of Islington's most vulnerable and isolated residents. In addition panellists track application trends and identify any gaps in the programme that should be addressed.

#### **Round One Grant Awards 2015/16**

- 3.7 The first round of ICCC for 2015/16 opened for applications in March 2015. It was widely advertised to local groups through voluntary sector networks and forums and on the Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation websites. Information sessions were arranged for organisations thinking of applying.
- 3.8 31 eligible applications were received including three deferred from a previous round, with a total requested amount of £143,229. As part of the assessment process grants officers at Cripplegate Foundation held face-to-face meetings with applicants, offering additional support to groups where there were barriers such as language and disability. In this round applicants were provided with information about Islington Giving Week, Voluntary Action Islington and Big Lunch Extras.
- 3.9 The ICCC panel met on 23 June 2015 to consider applications and, after careful deliberation, agreed recommendations totalling £80,009 to 18 organisations. 28% of recommended applicants have not previously received funding from ICCC. A list of organisations recommended for funding and the proposed grant award for each organisation is set out in Appendix A.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

The council's contribution of £200,000 per year referred to in this report will be met from existing budgets allocated to ICCC in the Chief Executive's Department.

### **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).

#### 4.3 Environmental Implications:

One of the priorities of ICCC is 'improving the local environment and making communities safer'. Funding proposals in this report support grassroots community activity which will have a positive impact on the local environment.

#### 4.4 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.

ICCC provides resources for small community organisations, many of which are volunteer-led and wouldn't meet the criteria for funding under other programmes. It enables some of Islington's poorest 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. Analysis of previous grants demonstrates ICCC's success at meeting the needs of groups with protected characteristics, for example people from black and minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds, young people and older people, women, and people with disabilities.

### 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report will help 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. 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.

#### Appendices

Appendix A – Recommended Grant Awards for ICCC: Round One 2015/16

**Background papers:** none

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**

Executive Member for Economic and Community Development      29 June 2015

**Received by:**

Head of Democratic Services

Date

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