


Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub Committee		 TOWER HAMLETS
12 th September 2017		
Report of: Denise Radley – Corporate Director Health, Adults & Communities.		Classification: Unrestricted
Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18		
Lead Member	Councillor Rachael Saunders, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services	
Originating Officer(s)	Jamie Bird – Strategic Commissioning Officer	
Wards affected	All wards	
Key Decision?	No	
Community Plan Theme	A healthy and supportive community	

REASONS FOR URGENCY

This paper should be considered for an urgent decision, in particular around the award of the small grants to organisations whose grant has been in abeyance due to rent/lease issue. It has taken some while to establish the route through the complexities of these rent/lease issues. This is a small overall amount (£3,435) and further delay could detrimentally affect the recipients of the outstanding grants.

Executive Summary

Social isolation and loneliness are known to be particular problems of older age and are believed to have a negative impact on older people’s quality of life and physical and mental health and wellbeing. Older people living in Tower Hamlets are predicted to be the loneliest in all of England according to a model looking at risk factors for loneliness which quantifies the many factors that can increase the risk of loneliness in older age¹.

Older people have told us that clubs and activities have an extremely positive impact on ‘not being lonely’². Throughout the borough, there are a number of small groups, often on estates, which go some way to alleviating social isolation. The Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18 aims to provide financial support to these groups.

Analysis of the equality data collected for the 2016/17 fund has flagged up what could be perceived as underrepresentation from certain groups (e.g. LGBT, BME communities and men). Attempts will be made to address these issues by using

¹ [Loneliness and Isolation in Older People – Factsheet \(JSNA\)](#)

² Talking About Loneliness – findings from Community Perspectives on Loneliness in Over 50s in Tower Hamlets

established networks to promote the fund to attract applications from these groups.

Due to lease issues, a decision is pending for a number of grant awards from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 Small Grants funds. As negotiations are ongoing with the organisations concerned, a decision is sought to agree to the award of eleven grants totalling £3,435.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the process for inviting applications for the Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18.
2. Note the availability of funding for the proposal.
3. Agree the process for awarding the grant funding, and subsequent monitoring arrangements.
4. Agree to delegate responsibility for approving the awards of grant to the Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community Services or the Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning.
5. Agree to the award of eleven grants, totalling £3,435, from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 Small Grants funds.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To promote independence and contribute towards a reduction in social isolation amongst older Tower Hamlets residents by providing grant funding to a range of peer support groups for older Tower Hamlets residents.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 A decision could be made not to support this proposal and to allocate the budget elsewhere, or indeed take it up as a saving proposal. In this event, a number of groups who apply annually – and have told us that this is the only external funding they receive - may be unable to deliver activities to their members or, in the worst case scenario, cease operating.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Background and purpose

- 3.1 This is an annual grants fund, previously known as Small Grants for Pensioners' Groups. The specific purpose of this fund is to provide financial support to small

organisations to enable them to deliver social activities for older Tower Hamlets residents in their own neighbourhoods. This aligns with Key Theme 8 (Optimising independence and wellbeing: Reducing isolation and loneliness) of the Ageing Well Strategy, approved by Cabinet on 2nd May 2017³.

- 3.2 In 2016/17, a total of £13,666 was awarded to 33 groups. At the Commissioners Decision Making meeting of 5th July 2016, it was requested that an annual report be produced for the 2016/17 fund. Grant recipients were requested to provide qualitative feedback and equality data to inform the report, which is attached at appendix A. This was the first time that such information had been requested for this fund.
- 3.3 The qualitative data collected indicates that grant awards are highly valued by those who receive it and, by funding or enabling social activities go some way to providing support and opportunities for social interaction. The equality data has flagged up what could be perceived as underrepresentation from certain groups (e.g. LGBT, BME communities and men). Attempts will be made to address these issues by using established networks to promote the fund to attract applications from these groups. This includes contacting:
- LinkAge Plus who have links with BME and LGBT groups
 - Positive East, who operate a dinner club for older LGBT men
 - Organisations previously in receipt of MSG funding to deliver older people's lunch club services, particularly those run by and for BME communities
 - Somali groups identified as part of recent community cohesion work

Review of Small Grants fund

- 3.1 This Small Grants fund has been largely unchanged for a number of years. Ahead of the proposed 2017/18 programme it was decided to review elements of the processes and priorities in order to ensure that requirements were being met, and to give recipients the opportunity to provide their views on the fund.
- 3.2 Discussions with the Third Sector Team identified a number of requirements that are to be addressed in 2017/18:
- Details of grant funds must be recorded on GIFTS - the Council's Grant administration database;
 - A Grant Offer Letter must be produced for each of the successful recipients detailing the value of award, the activity/ies to be delivered and monitoring requirements;
 - Grant recipients must be made aware of, and agree to, the Council's standard terms and conditions of grant⁴.
- 3.3 In June 2017, a letter was sent to recipients of a 2016/17 award requesting feedback on the Small Grants process with a view to informing the 2017/18 fund. An officer

³ [Cabinet decisions 2nd May 2017 – Item 5.1 Ageing Well Strategy](#)

⁴ [Tower Hamlets standard terms and conditions of grant agreement](#)

from the Ageing Well Team also met several of the groups throughout July 2017 to discuss the programme. Amongst the issues raised were:

- Importance of keeping the application process simple;
- Be clearer around why we are requesting equalities information, and explain some of the terms used;
- Provide examples of the types of expenditure and activities that could be funded (e.g. exercise classes);
- Costs of coach hire has increased, and is quite often higher than the maximum grant award;
- This is the only funding received by the group, and is considered important as well as being welcomed.

2017/18 budget and advertising

- 3.4 This year, £25,000 will be available for allocation to these small community groups. This excludes the £3,435 recommended for outstanding 2015/16 and 2016/17 awards.
- 3.5 In recent years we have been in a position to award grants to all eligible applicants and the fund has always been underspent. The maximum grant award of £500 has remained the same for over ten years, despite the fact that costs have increased. To address this, it is proposed to increase the maximum grant award to £600.
- 3.4 In order to help meet the requirement to record all Council grants on GIFTs, the application process will be available online. This will incorporate the fields contained in the proposed application form (appendix B) and will use a similar process to that used for recent Mainstream Grants programmes. It is proposed to explore delivering an application workshop to assist with online applications.
- 3.5 During the development of the Ageing Well Strategy, older people told us that the internet is not necessarily the best way to access (or provide) information, so we will still be accepting hard copy application forms. An officer will then input the data onto GIFTs.
- 3.6 The 33 groups who received a Small Grant in 2016/17 will automatically be sent application forms inviting them to apply for this year's programme.
- 3.7 In 2016/17 an advert was placed in East End Advertiser at a cost of £358. This cost was met from the Small Grants budget. However, it did not generate a great deal of interest so it is proposed to not place an advert this year, thus maximising the amount of grant funding available. Instead officers will attempt to exploit networks to promote the grant fund, including through RSLs, Sheltered Housing Schemes and LinkAge Plus. The fund will be advertised on the Council's website.

Evaluation and Allocation

- 3.8 Applications will be assessed by an officer in line with the eligibility criteria included on the application forms. This will include a requirement for those groups operating

from Council-owned buildings to have a formal written rental agreement in place at the time that recommendations are formulated.

3.9 Small Grants awards fall into the following four broad categories, listed in order of priority:

- a) Rent (including room hire)
- b) Running costs (including utilities bills, insurance etc.)
- c) Small equipment (e.g. bingo machines, kitchen equipment, materials)
- d) Social activities (including day-trips, parties, or facilitator/tutor costs)

3.10 To be able to deal with all funding requests in a fair and equitable way:

- a) Budget permitting, all requests for rent and running costs will be met up to the maximum £600 grant award per organisation
- b) Groups requesting assistance with small equipment/materials and social activities are allocated awards based on the number of beneficiaries identified in the group's application, using the following guidelines:

Number of beneficiaries	Maximum award
Up to 19	£400
20 to 29	£450
30 to 39	£500
40 to 70	£550
70 and above	£600

3.11 After assessing the applications, a report will be produced with award recommendations, with a view to obtaining final approval by the Corporate Director Health Adults and Community Services or Divisional Director for Integrated Commissioning. The following indicative timetable shows the various stages.

	STAGES	DATE
1	Send forms to existing recipients	By end September 2017
2	Send application forms to new groups	by end October 2017
3	Closing date for applications	by mid-November 2017
4	Assessment of applications	late November 2017
5	Write report with recommendations	by end November 2017
6	Final approval	by mid-December 2017
7	Write to all applicants on outcomes	by end December 2017
8	Payments processed	January 2018

Monitoring requirements

3.12 Grant recipients will be required to:

- Submit evidence (e.g. receipts) that the grant has been spent as outlined in their application
- Provide equalities information for beneficiaries

- Submit qualitative feedback to help the Council determine the impact that the grant fund has had on recipients

These requirements will be included on the Grant Offer Letter. An officer will check that organisations have provided the required information. Any organisation not providing this will not be considered for any future Small Grant award and measures may be taken to recover any funds that have not been spent, or have been spent inappropriately.

- 3.13 An annual report will be produced for the 2017/18 Ageing Well Small Grants fund.

Pending 2015/16 and 2016/17 awards

- 3.14 At the Commissioners Decision Making in Public meeting on 5th July 2016, Commissioners agreed to delegate responsibility for agreeing awards for the Small Grants 2016/17 fund to the Director of Adults' Services (now Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Community). A number of applicants were identified as delivering services from Council owned buildings and a decision was made to defer a decision on these until a paper on the community buildings review had been considered by Cabinet. A decision on these remains outstanding, as does a decision related to several grant awards from the 2015/16 for which a decision was deferred for the same reason.
- 3.15 Given that negotiations are ongoing with the organisations involved, it is recommended to award the following eleven grants totalling £3,435 as a contribution towards social events or small equipment purchases:

Organisation	Small Grants Fund	Recommended Grant Award
Barley Mow Bingo Club	2016/17	£285
Bentworth Friendship Club	2016/17	£300
Birchfield OAP's Club	2016/17	£400
Collingwood TRA Friendship Club	2016/17	£250
Cranbrook Over 50's Club	2016/17	£300
Locksley TRA	2016/17	£350
Will Crooks TRA	2016/17	£450
Barley Mow Veterans Club	2015/16	£200
Collingwood TRA Friendship Club	2015/16	£250
Cranbrook Over 50's Club	2015/16	£300
Will Crooks TRA	2015/16	£350
TOTAL		£3,435

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The total annual budget available for Small Grants awarded in 2017/18 is £31,900. Within this amount a provision for potential prior year payments of up to £4,035 has

been made available, in addition to the estimated £25,000 identified for allocation to the small community groups. Marketing of this grant will be through existing Council networks and on-line advertisement on the Council's website which will maximise the fund available for distribution to the organisations and hopefully increase exposure to relevant organisations. This funding has not been fully utilised for the past 3 years.

For 2017-18 the amount of grant awarded is still dependent on the number of registered members for that organisation but priority has been given to the four categories of the claim. There is sufficient funding available to meet the number of prior year claims at the highest level of award and still provide for an increase in the number of organisations eligible to claim. All grants awarded will be within the available 2017-18 budget.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. The purpose of the Ageing Well Small Grants fund is consistent with the Council's duties under sections 1 through to 7 of the Care Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act'). Section 1 of the Act places a general duty on the Council when exercising its functions, to promote an individual's well-being relating to their physical and mental health, emotional well-being and personal dignity. Further, there is a general duty to prevent needs for care and support from developing. There is a duty under section 6 for the Council to co-operate generally with those it considers appropriate who are engaged in its area relating to adults with needs for care and support. Section 8 provides that those eligible needs may be met in a number of ways, including care and support at home or in the community, and by providing the service itself, arranging another provider to provide the service, or direct payments.
- 5.2. When determining the process for approving grants funding, regard must be given to the public sector equalities duty to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010. The duty is set out at Section 149 of the 2010 Act. It requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination (both direct and indirect discrimination), harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share that protected characteristic.
- 5.3. The Council has the power under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to "do anything that individuals generally may do" and that extends to doing things "for, or otherwise than for, the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area". This power is referred to as the general power of competence and includes the award of grants. The scheme as set down seems to be consistent with the Council's statutory powers.
- 5.4. However, the Council is obliged to allow fair and open access to all its resources. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the application procedure and the award of grants are based upon evaluation criteria that are in themselves open and transparent and non-discriminatory in nature. However, it is notable from the report that reference is made to under – representation for certain groups. Therefore, the Council must also be mindful of the need to address any apparent inequality and advance equality of opportunity in accordance with section 149 of the Equality Act

2010 and in particular where the users of such groups are persons with a protected characteristic.

- 5.5. It is also notable therefore that following the completion of the grants process the Council should perform an equality assessment in respect of all the recipients of the grants and consider whether further action is required in order to ensure that the Council is compliant with its section 149 duty.
- 5.6. The Council is obliged, to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” as a best value authority under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. Therefore, the Council must also make provision within the arrangements to monitor the use of the grants to ensure that the anticipated benefits from the use of the money are achieved by the grant recipient. It therefore follows that the grant should only be given upon agreement of an appropriately drafted agreement which allows the Council a sufficient and proportionate level of monitoring of the use of the grant.
- 5.7. It should be noted that where the Council intends to allow the use of its premises for a monetary value which is less than the open market rent the difference between the actual rent charged and the open market rent should be considered to be a grant under the law.
- 5.8. Whilst the Directions under which the Commissioners made the original decision have been fulfilled and therefore are no longer binding on the Council, the decision is still binding on the Council at this stage. However, when the Directions were agreed to be completed with the Secretary Of State that part of the Council’s functions relating to grants became part of the Executive once more. Therefore, the Executive has the discretion to make a new decision in respect of the payment of these grants although it does not necessarily have to.
- 5.9. It should be noted that the payment of the grants cannot be made unless a new decision so to do is made. This is because the delegated authority provided by the Commissioners was subject to agreeing terms for the use of the buildings.
- 5.10. Whilst it may be prudent and in the best interests of all to make the payment of these grants due to the long outstanding nature of the grant funds and the potential effect that it may have on service users, it should be noted that best practice dictates that all Council buildings should be subject to some form of appropriate user agreement.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 This grant fund supports the following community plan theme: **A healthy and supportive community.**
- 6.2 Small groups such as these contribute to a safe and supportive community by promoting peer support and volunteering, and ensuring that services are safe to use for all service users, as well as providing opportunities for peer led advice around healthy living, exercise activities and health promotion.

- 6.3 As can be demonstrated from the attached annual report for the 2016/17 programme, this fund enables the needs of a wide range of clients - including those with disabilities, long term conditions and from diverse faith and ethnic communities - to be catered for and included.
- 6.4 Due regard continues to be given to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low through volunteering, and engagement in shaping services and decisions that affect their own lives, such as involvement in user groups.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 By prioritising funding for rent and other running costs, these Small Grants can potentially safeguard the existence of groups that provide our older residents with opportunities to socialise and both provide and receive support from peers, reducing isolation and increasing independence.
- 7.2 Where a grant is used as a contribution towards social activities, the level of funding is determined by the number of beneficiaries identified in the groups' application. This ensures that the available budget is tiered to reach a larger number of beneficiaries.
- 7.3 Applicants who receive other funding from the Council (e.g. Mainstream Grant funding to operate a Lunch Club) will not be eligible to receive a Small Grant, thus reducing the risk of duplication in funding.
- 7.4 Loneliness has a negative impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing. A range of personal circumstances such as poor health, living alone and lack of support network are factors contributing to feelings of loneliness. For such a small outlay this programme will contribute to preventing longer term effects.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no immediate sustainability or environmental issues to consider. The prospective recipients, as organisations within the borough, would be required to comply with all national and local legislation regarding energy conservation, recycling etc. As services will be provided locally, most of their staff/volunteers would also be local, thereby reducing commuting.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 These are small one-off payments for which invoices and evidence are to be provided and monitored.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no immediate Crime and Disorder reduction implications.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no immediate Safeguarding implications.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix A – Annual Report for 2016/17 Small Grants programme
- Appendix B – DRAFT 2017/18 Ageing Well Small Grants application form

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A