


Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub Committee 13 th March 2018	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Denise Radley – Corporate Director Health, Adults & Community.	Classification: Unrestricted
Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2018/19	

Lead Member	Councillor Denise Jones, 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

Executive Summary

Social isolation and loneliness are known to be particular problems of older age and there is significant evidence that loneliness has 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 2018/19 aims to provide financial support to these groups.

Due to lease issues, a decision has yet to be made for four applicants to the 2017/18 Small Grants funds. As negotiations around the lease are ongoing with the organisations concerned, a decision is sought to agree to the award of four grants totalling £1,850.

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

Recommendations:

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

1. Approve the process for inviting applications for the Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2018/19.
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 Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning.
5. Agree to the award of four grants, totalling £1,850, from the 2017/18 Ageing Well Small Grants fund.

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 Strategy³, approved by Cabinet on 2nd May 2017⁴.

2017/18 Small Grants fund

- 3.2 On 12th September 2017, the GDSC agreed to the recommended approach for inviting applications to the Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18. Responsibility for awarding grants from this fund was delegated to the Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning.
- 3.3 By the 12th November 2017 deadline, 40 completed applications were received, including six from new groups. A total of just over £22,000 was requested against a budget of £25,000.
- 3.4 The Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning agreed, on 12th December 2017, to the award of grants to 36 groups, totalling £18,965. The Divisional Director also resolved to refer back to GDSC for a decision around four applicants delivering services from Council premises for which a formal agreement to occupy was not in place. Payments were made to the 36 successful applicants in January and February 2018, on receipt by the Council of a signed grant offer letter.
- 3.5 Grants were awarded in the following broad categories:

Category	# of grants
Rent (including room hire)	3
Small equipment (e.g. bingo machines, kitchen equipment, materials)	3
Social activities (including day-trips, parties, or facilitator/tutor costs)	28
Rent/social activities	2

- 3.6 Equality feedback has not yet been returned from groups. Once received, this will be used to produce a more detailed annual report. It is known that organisations awarded a grant include a number of BME groups including those with Somali, Bangladeshi and Caribbean attendees.
- 3.7 Following feedback, the 2017/18 Small Grants scheme featured some significant changes to a process that had remained largely unaltered for a number of years. These included:
- An online application form
 - Details of grant funds recorded on GIFTS - the Council's Grant administration database

³ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Adult-care-services/Supporting-adults/Ageing_Well_Strategy.pdf

⁴ [Cabinet decisions 2nd May 2017 – Item 5.1 Ageing Well Strategy](#)

- Grant Offer Letters produced for each successful recipient, detailing the value of award, the activity/ies to be delivered and monitoring requirements
- Grant recipients made aware of, and agreed to, the Council's standard terms and conditions of grant⁵
- Responsibility for awarding grants being delegated to the Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning. This contributed to a shorter time between the deadline for applying and initial grant payments being released to successful applicants (a period of just over two months).

2018/19 budget and advertising

- 3.8 This year, £25,000 will be available for allocation to these small community groups. This figure does not include the £1,850 recommended for four applicants to the 2017/18 fund, which will be met from this year's remaining funds.
- 3.9 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 available was increased to £600 in 2017/18.
- 3.10 In order to help meet the requirement to record all Council grants on GIFTs, the application form will again be available online. Due to a poor take up in 2017/18, a workshop will be held and support will be provided by a Council officer to encourage applicants to submit their applications online. However, 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 (appendix A). An officer will then input the data onto GIFTs.
- 3.11 Groups who received a Small Grant in 2017/18 will automatically be sent application forms inviting them to apply for this year's programme. Officers will also 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.
- 3.12 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 agreement to occupy in place at the time that recommendations are formulated.
- 3.13 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)

⁵ [Tower Hamlets standard terms and conditions of grant agreement](#)

d) Social activities (including day-trips, parties, or facilitator/tutor costs)

3.14 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

3.15 After assessing the applications, a report containing award recommendations will be produced, with a view to obtaining final approval by the Divisional Director for Integrated Commissioning. The following indicative timetable shows the various stages.

	STAGES	DATE
1	Send forms to existing recipients	Week commencing 3 April 2018
2	Online application workshop	w/c 9 April 2018
3	Send application forms to new groups	By 27 April 2018
4	Closing date for applications	By 4 May 2018
5	Assessment of applications	By 11 May 2018
6	Write report with recommendations	By 18 May 2018
7	Final approval	By 25 May 2018
8	Write to all applicants on outcomes	By 1 June 2018
9	Payments processed	Throughout June 2018

Monitoring requirements

3.16 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 brief qualitative feedback to help the Council determine the impact that the grant fund has had on recipients

These requirements will be set out in 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.

- 3.17 An annual report will be produced for the 2018/19 Ageing Well Small Grants fund.

Pending 2017/18 awards

- 3.18 At the GDSC on 12th September 2017 it was agreed to delegate responsibility for agreeing awards for the Small Grants 2017/18 fund to the Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning. However, legal advice is that this would not include responsibility to award grants to organisations in a Council owned building without a formal lease currently in place. Four applicants have been identified as falling into this category. The Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning therefore resolved to refer these back to the GDSC for a decision.
- 3.19 Given that negotiations are ongoing with the organisations involved; the organisations involved are all engaging positively in these negotiations; none of the payments are a contribution towards rent or other accommodation costs; and there are no other outstanding issues which might prevent payment, it is recommended to award the following four grants totalling £1,850 as a contribution towards social events or small equipment purchases:

Organisation	Recommended Grant Award
Bentworth Friendship Club	£450
Birchfield OAP's Club	£500
Collingwood TRA Friendship Club	£400
Will Crooks TRA	£500
TOTAL	£1,850

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This report recommends payment of £1,850 in total to four organisations from the 2017/18 Ageing Well Small Grants fund. If agreed, the total grant payments in 2017/18 would be £20,815 against a budget of £25,000.
- 4.2 The 2018/19 budget planned in the medium term financial strategy is £25,000. Grant awards in 2018/19 will be contained within this budget value.

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 general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which allows the Council the power to provide the grants detailed in this report if it so wishes.
- 5.4. 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. Those criteria must also be applied in a fair way to all the applications.
- 5.5. The Council is obliged, to ensure any payments it makes represent Best Value under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This means that the Council must make provision to monitor the use of the grants and 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.
- 5.6. In the event that the Council intends to allow the use of its premises for a cost to an organisation 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.
- 5.7. The payment of the four outstanding grants may be considered to be in the best interests of all and to allow the arrangement to continue to be sustainable given the fact that the sum has been outstanding for a considerable period of time. However, any organisation residing using Council owned premises should do so under an appropriate occupancy agreement.
- 5.8. The Council should note that the application process crosses an election and the relevant purdah period. However, the decision making process occurs outside of this period and therefore, the purdah period should not affect the

overall timescales as set down in paragraph 3.15. However, during the Purdah period all correspondence with interested parties should be kept apolitical and not refer to any individual member of the Council or other person who holds an elected post.

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 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 – DRAFT 2018/19 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