

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-committee 6 March 2019	
Report of: Denise Radley – Corporate Director Health, Adults & Community.	Classification: Unrestricted
Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2019/20	

Lead Member	Councillor Denise Jones, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services
Originating Officer(s)	Jamie Bird – Strategic Commissioning Officer Keith Burns – Service Manager: Ageing Well Commissioning
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 2019/20 aims to provide financial support to these groups.

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 2019/20.
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 Joint Director of Integrated Commissioning.

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 On 31st October 2018 Cabinet agreed to a Council-wide VCS Grants Programme which will come into effect on 1st October 2019. The VCS Grants Programme will include the Ageing Well Small Grants fund going forward. A decision could be made to incorporate the Ageing Well Small Grants fund into the VCS Grants Programme immediately but as grants will not be agreed and paid out until October 2019 at the earliest, the opportunity for the fund to be used towards Eid parties and summer trips will be missed. This is not the preferred option.
- 2.2 A decision could also 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. This option would also run counter to the decision made by Cabinet in relation to the VCS Grants Programme.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Background and purpose

- 3.1 The specific purpose of this annual 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.

2018/19 Ageing Well Small Grants fund

- 3.2 On 13th March 2018, the GDSC agreed to the recommended approach for inviting applications to the Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2018/19. Responsibility for awarding grants from this fund was delegated to the Divisional Director Integrated Commissioning (now the Joint Director of Integrated Commissioning).

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](#)

- 3.3 By the 23rd May 2018 deadline, 39 completed applications were received, including four from new groups. A total of just over £21,000 was requested against a budget of £25,000.
- 3.4 The Joint Director of Integrated Commissioning agreed, on 5th July 2018, to the award of grants to 35 groups, totalling £18,130. Payments were made to the successful applicants between August 2018 and January 2019, on receipt by the Council of a signed grant offer letter. One organisation that was successfully awarded a grant ceased operating before the grant payment was made.
- 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)	20
Running costs	3
Small equipment/social activities	6

- 3.6 Equality feedback has been requested from recipients from 2018/19, but this is not due back until 31st March 2019. However, feedback from the 2017/18 fund has been used to produce the attached annual report (appendix A) which provides a detailed picture of who benefitted from a grant from this fund in 2017/18.
- 3.7 As in 2018/19, the 2019/20 Ageing Well Small Grants fund will include:
- An online application form
 - Details of grant funds recorded on GIFTS - the Council's Grant administration database
 - 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 agreeing to, the Council's standard terms and conditions of grant⁵

2019/20 budget and advertising

- 3.8 This year, £25,000 will be available for allocation to these small community groups.
- 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.

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

3.10 In order to help meet the requirement to record all Council grants on GIFTs, the application form will again be available online. Support will be provided by a Council officer to encourage applicants to submit their applications using the online form. 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 B). An officer will then input the data onto GIFTs.

3.11 Groups who received a Small Grant in 2018/19 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)
- 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 Joint Director of Integrated Commissioning. The following indicative timetable shows the various stages.

	STAGES	DATE
1	Send forms to existing recipients	Week commencing 1 April 2019
2	Send application forms to new groups	By 26 April 2019
3	Closing date for applications	By 3 May 2019
4	Assessment of applications	By 10 May 2019
5	Write report with recommendations	By 17 May 2019
6	Final approval	By 24 May 2019
7	Write to all applicants on outcomes	By 31 May 2019
8	Agree and sign Grant Offer Letters	Throughout June 2019
9	Payments processed	Throughout July 2019

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 2019/20 Ageing Well Small Grants fund.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

4.1 The 2019/20 budget planned in the medium term financial strategy for the Ageing Well Small Grants fund is £25,000. Grant awards in 2019/20 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 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. The proposed methodology meets all these requirements

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 This grant fund supports the following community plan themes: **Better Health and Wellbeing** and **Strong Resilient and Safe Communities**
- 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 – Annual Report - Ageing Well Small Grants 2017/18 fund
- Appendix B – DRAFT 2019/20 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