

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee

Wednesday, 11 October 2023 at 5.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel

Supplemental Agenda

6 .2 EMERGENCY GRANT REVIEW (Pages 3 - 20)

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<p style="text-align: center;">Grants Determination Sub Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">11 October 2023</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie, Interim Director of Strategy, Improvement & Transformation</p>	<p>Classification: [Unrestricted or Exempt]</p>
<p>Emergency Grant review</p>	

Executive Summary

The Emergency Grant Fund provides grant funding to local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations who are facing a significant loss of council funding or unforeseen emergencies. Under this grant organisations can apply for a one-off grant of up to £10,000.

However, despite evidence that VCS organisations are facing significant challenges including increased wages and energy costs, which have been made worse by the impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis, the funding has been underspent every year since it was created.

Following Cabinet decision in March 23 to review the current Emergency Grant a review was conducted, and new refreshed programme will be launched from 1st November 2023.

This report provides an update on outcomes of the review and for GDSC to delegate authority to Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation in consultation with the Mayor to approve Emergency Grant fund applications.

Recommendations:

The GDSC is recommended to:

1. Note the Emergency Grant Fund prospectus.
2. Authorise the Director of Strategy Improvement & Transformation, in consultation with the Mayor, to award Emergency Grant to organisations as and when they arise.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 In March 23 Cabinet agreed to review the current Emergency Grant to ensure that VCS organisations who require emergency support can access the funding and continue to deliver services to Tower Hamlets residents.

- 1.2 A review of the Emergency Grant Fund has now been concluded. The review included engagement with internal officers, VCS organisations and looking at good practices from other Boroughs.

A new prospectus has been produced based on the findings from the review and approved by the Chief Executive under delegated authority as per March 2023 Cabinet decision.

- 1.3 To make the decision-making process more efficient, we are recommending GDSC to authorise the Director of Strategy Improvement & Transformation in consultation with the Mayor, to award Emergency Grant to organisations as and when they arise. This will ensure organisations are able to access the funding quickly and are able to deal with the emergency they are facing in a timely manner. GDSC will be provided with updates on the funding on a regular basis.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Alternative option is not to delegate the authority to the Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation to approve Emergency Grant fund applications. This is not recommended as it would delay the process for grants award process which will impact on the emergency facing organisations.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Council has a vision to support a thriving and diverse voluntary and community sector that improves outcomes for communities. Cabinet approved a new Grants Policy & Outcomes Framework in March 2023. This consist of three funds: Mayor’s Community Grants Programme, Small Grants Programme and Emergency Grants.
- 3.2 The purpose of Emergency Grant has previously been to provide support to VCS organisations who are facing a significant loss of Council funding or unforeseen emergencies. The total budget for the Emergency Grants Fund is £100,000 per year. Organisations can apply for a one-off grant of up to £10,000.
- 3.3 Below table shows Emergency Grant Fund award from financial year 2014/15 to 2023/24.

Financial year	Total Amount Awarded (£)
1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015	39,936
1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016	49,130

1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017	16,575
1st April 2017 - 31st March 2018	6,130.01
1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019	23,658
1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020	2,060
1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021	6,846
1st April 2021 - 31st March 2022	9,722
1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023	7,749

- 3.4 This funding helps organisations in need to survive, continue to deliver vital services for residents and take steps to become more sustainable in the future.
- 3.5 Despite VCS organisations facing numerous challenges such as increased wages and energy costs made worse by Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis, the funding has been underspent every year since it was created.
- 3.6 The Council has undertaken a review of the Emergency Grant which started in July 2023 which included reviewing the current process, why organisations are not applying for the fund, eligibility criteria, “what we will fund” section and the application form.
- 3.7 The review included:
- Interviews with VCS organisations who previously received Emergency Grant and Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service.
 - A workshop with internal officers who have experience of working with VCS organisations and Emergency Grant
 - Identifying best practice from other boroughs
- 3.8 The analysis of the above work has identified the following improvements:
- Eligibility Criteria: Expand the criteria so more organisations are eligible to apply
 - What we will fund: Expand the list of things we will fund to ensure it meets current VCS emergency needs
 - Application form: Make the application form easier to read and navigate.

- Monitoring form: Developed a new monitoring form, which organisations will be expected to complete after 3 months of receiving the fund so we can demonstrate the impact of the fund.

3.9 The above findings have been used to produce a new grant prospectus, refreshed application form, and creation of a new monitoring form.

3.10 Another finding from the research is that many VCS organisations are not aware of its existence. Once the refreshed Emergency Grant fund has been agreed, we will be strengthening communications and promotion of the fund.

3.11 To make the decision-making process more efficient, we are recommending GDSC to authorise the Director of Strategy Improvement & Transformation, in consultation with the Mayor, to award Emergency Grant to organisations as and when they arise. This will ensure organisations are able to access the funding quickly and are able to deal with the emergency they are facing in a timely manner.

3.12 The council recently finished its assessment and awards process for the Mayor's Community Grants Programme. This included an external audit and internal review process. We have gathered the good practice and lessons learned from this process, which will be applied to the delivery of emergency grants and other small grants.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. Once the new grant is launched it will be important to ensure a diverse range of VCS organisations are accessing the fund. As part of the communication and promotion we will use a diverse range of mediums.

4.2 Please see appendix 2 Equalities Impact Analysis Screening Tool.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no statutory implications.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There is a budget of £100k for the grants programme. Awards must not exceed this limit and historically the budget has been underspent.

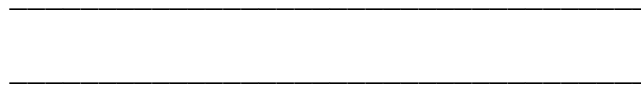
7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council has the legal power to set up this grants scheme in the manner indicated in the prospectus and other associated documents.

7.2 The Council has the legal duty to obtain Best Value when delivering its functions in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness. The Prospectus

highlights the areas which the Council considers important when evaluating applications and this will assist the Council to demonstrate that the grant funds align with the Council's view of what represents Best Value. These criteria will be used when judging which applications should receive funding and this will contribute to the Council's demonstration of Best Value.

- 7.3 The Council will monitor the grants to ensure that the funds are used in line with the application and the purposes for which it is given. This will also contribute to the Best Value demonstration.



Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

1. NONE

Appendices

1. **Appendix 1: Prospectus**
2. **Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Analysis Screening Tool**

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

3. NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities • Strategy, Improvement & Transformation

Craig Morbey, Strategy & Policy Lead

Inlia Aziz, VCS Development Officer

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Prospectus

Emergency Grant Fund



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Introduction

Tower Hamlets Council provides grant funding to local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations (VCS), who are facing an emergency.

The purpose of this prospectus is to provide information to VCS organisations on the grants criteria and how to apply.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for funding, organisations must meet the eligibility criteria below:

1. Be a voluntary and community sector organisation
2. Have a Constitution, Memorandum and Articles of Association or other recognised governance documents
3. Have been in receipt of council funding in the past two years
4. Be able to show long-term financial viability
5. Be in danger of closing or unable to continue to provide funded services
6. Have already taken measures to address the emergency
7. Not owe the council a debt of over £1000
8. Be registered in Tower Hamlets, have a base in Tower Hamlets or be able to demonstrate a track record of successful service delivery within the borough

How much money is available

The total budget for the Emergency Grant Fund is £100,000 per year.

Organisations can apply for a one-off grant of up to £10,000 per year.

What will we fund

The Emergency Grant will fund:

1. Building repairs for essential emergency work or health and safety requirements
2. Legal costs
3. Redundancy costs
4. Staff salaries/wages (to cover unforeseen medium/long term absences)
5. Recovery from damage or accidents

Please note: This is not an exhaustive list. If you are unsure whether the issue you are seeking funding for is an emergency contact the Voluntary and Community Sector team at vcs@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Bidding process

To apply for Emergency funding you need to submit an application form via the Council's grant management portal, Blackbaud. You can access the application form by clicking [here](#).

There is no deadline for submitting bids. Applications will be considered when they are received.

Assessment

The Council will assess your application against the grant criteria and aim to let you know if you have been successful within four weeks of receipt of your application.

The assessment is to see whether your organisation and emergency meets the standards the Council expects of organisations it supports with public funds. All the questions require a written response.

Criteria	Application question
About your organisation	<p>Describe the purpose of your organisation, how your activities benefit Tower Hamlets residents, and how they link to Council priorities You can find Council's priorities via this link Strategic Plan 2022-26 (towerhamlets.gov.uk)</p> <p>Your organisation must be registered in the borough, have a base in Tower Hamlets or be able to demonstrate a track record of successful service delivery within the borough. (if you are registered in the borough please provide your address, if you are based in the borough please attach your rental agreement, or if you deliver in the borough for at least two years please provide some other evidence to demonstrate this.</p>
About your emergency	<p>Please explain the emergency your organisation is facing and the impact it will have on your organisation and service users.</p> <p>Please provide details of any action you have taken so far to tackle the emergency.</p>
What you want funding for	<p>What do you want emergency funding for and how will it ensure your organisation is financially sustainable in the future.</p> <p>Please set out how you would spend the emergency grant by filling in the budget table provided.</p>
Link to Council	Please detail all Council funding your organisation is currently receiving and how the emergency will affect this funding.

	Is your organisation based in a Tower Hamlets Council building. If so, do you have an appropriate property arrangement in place.
Your reserves	Does your organisation have a Reserves Policy? If so, please attached the copy with your application. Please explain how much reserves you have available and why these cannot be used to tackle the emergency.
Accounts	You may either provide us with your most recent year end management account or fill in the form provided.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All successful organisations will be required to complete a monitoring and evaluation form 3 months after the grant award.

This will ensure the grant has been spent correctly and the Council is able to continue to improve the fund.

This will need to be completed via Council's online grant management portal Blackbaud.

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Equality Impact Analysis Screening Tool

Section 1: Introduction

Name of proposal For the purpose of this document, 'proposal' refers to a policy, function, strategy or project
Emergency Grant Fund Review
Service area and Directorate responsible
Corporate Strategy & Communities Strategy, Improvement & Transformation Directorate
Name of completing officer
Craig Morbey, Strategy and Policy Lead Inlia Aziz, VCS Development Officer
Head of Service
Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them
- Foster good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them

This Equality Impact Analysis provides evidence for meeting the Council's commitment to equality and the responsibilities outlined above. For more information about the Council's commitment to equality, please visit the Council's [website](#).

Section 2: Summary of proposal being screened

Describe the proposal including the relevance of proposal to the general equality duties and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010
<p>The proposal includes Grants Determination sub-committee delegating decision making authority to the Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation to approve Emergency Grant fund applications.</p> <p>The proposal is also for Grants Determination Sub-Committee to note the changes to the Emergency Grants Fund, and the creation of new prospectus, refreshed application form and monitoring form which has been approved by CEO under delegated authority.</p> <p>The proposal will not have any direct impact on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. However, it the funding could ensure that organisations who are supporting groups with protected characteristics are able to continue to do so.</p>

Section 3: Equality Impact Analysis screening

Is there a risk that the policy, proposal or activity being screened disproportionately adversely impacts (directly or indirectly) on any of the groups of people listed below? Please consider the impact on overall communities, residents, service users and Council employees. This should include people of different:	Yes	No	Comments
▪ Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
▪ Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
▪ Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
▪ Religion or Philosophical belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
▪ Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender re-assignment status 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People who have a Disability (physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marriage and Civil Partnerships status 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People who are Pregnant and on Maternity 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<p>You should also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents and Carers ▪ Socio-economic status ▪ People with different Gender Identities e.g. Gender fluid, Non-binary etc. ▪ Other 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

If you have answered **Yes** to one or more of the groups of people listed above, **a full Equality Impact Analysis is required**. The only exception to this is if you can 'justify' the discrimination (Section 4).

Section 4: Justifying discrimination

Are all risks of inequalities identified capable of being justified because there is a:	
(i) <i>Genuine Reason</i> for implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
(ii) The activity represents a <i>Proportionate Means</i> of achieving a <i>Legitimate Council Aim</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(iii) There is a <i>Genuine Occupational Requirement</i> for the council to implement this activity	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5: Conclusion

Before answering the next question, please note that there are generally only two reasons a full Equality Impact Analysis is not required. These are:

- The policy, activity or proposal is likely to have **no or minimal impact** on the groups listed in section three of this document.
- Any discrimination or disadvantage identified is **capable of being justified** for one or more of the reasons detailed in the previous section of this document.

Conclusion details

Based on your screening does a full Equality Impact Analysis need to be performed?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have answered **YES** to this question, please complete a full Equality Impact Analysis for the proposal

If you have answered **NO** to this question, please detail your reasons in the 'Comments' box below

Comments

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