

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL**

**HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2009**

**COMMITTEE ROOM M71, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Marc Francis (Chair)	(Lead Member, Housing and Development)
Councillor Abdul Asad (Vice-Chair)	(Lead Member, Children's Services)
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	(Lead Member, Resources and Performance)
Councillor Rania Khan	(Lead Member, Regeneration, Localisation and Community Partnerships)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Anisah Akther	Member of Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund Panel
Nargis Begum,	Member of Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund Panel
Tahabur Rahman	Member of Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund Panel

**Officers Present:**

Jon Underwood	– (Third Sector Manager, Strategy & Performance, Chief Executive's Directorate )
Mario Leo	– (Head of Legal Services - Environment)
Dinar Hossain	– (Head of Youth and Connexions Services Children's Schools and Families Services)
Antonia Dixey	– (Children and Young Peoples Participation Officer, Children's Schools and Families Services)
Everett Haughton	– (Funding and Development Manager, Strategy and Performance Chief Executive's Directorate)
Hilary Hughes	– (Principle Funding and Development Officer, Strategy and Performance Chief Executive's Directorate)
Zoe Folley	– (Committee Officer, Democratic Services Chief Executive's)

**COUNCILLOR M. FRANCIS IN THE CHAIR**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor A. Ullah, Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer Greener.

**Resolved**

That the apologies for absence be noted.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**Councillor A Asad** declared a personal interest in Agenda item 5.1 "Update on the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds in Tower Hamlets (GP 03/0910)". The declaration of interest was made on the basis that the report contained references to Youth services and Councillor Asad was a paid employee of the Bishops Challoner School, Shadwell which provided youth services.

**Noted.****Action by:**

**ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (L. Ali)**

Committee Officer, Chief Executive's Directorate (Z. Folley)

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES****Resolved:**

That the unrestricted minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Grants Panel held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

**Action by:**

**ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (L. Ali)**

Committee Officer, Chief Executive's Directorate (Z. Folley)

**4. DEPUTATIONS AND PETITIONS**

Nil Items

**5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION****5.1 Update on the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds in Tower Hamlets (GP 03/0910)**

Mr Dinar Hussain (Head of Youth Services and Connexions Services) introduced the report highlighting the salient points.

Mr Hussain reported that in 2009/10 Tower Hamlets had been allocated £427,000 for the Youth Opportunity Fund £125,320 additional Youth Opportunity Fund through the Mayor's Offer and £183,600 for the Youth Capital Fund.

He reported that officers from youth services worked closely with the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund Panel to develop and administer the funds. The representatives were recruited from across the Borough and have received accredited training in grant making.

Ms Antonia Dixey (Children and Young Peoples Participation Officer), welcomed to the meeting Anisah Akther, Nargis Begum, Tahabur Rahman who were present to report on the work of the YOF and their involvement in the initiative.

The representatives reported on how they heard about the Youth Opportunity Panel (YOF), how they got involved in the initiative, the training they had received, the shortlistings process, and made a number of recommendations for future action.

In reply to questions from Members, it was reported that the YOF consisted of representatives from all eight LAP areas with two from each LAP area. When assessing the applications, the Panel endeavoured to award equal funding to each LAP. Every single project was given an equal chance and if they were unsuccessful would be referred to Youth Bank Tower Hamlets for help and support through funding factory programmes. All of the applicants were offered support during every stage of the process and were given feedback.

The YOF had a very good relationship with the Young Mayor's Team. The Young Mayor regularly attends YOF meetings. The Young Mayor was preparing a report for the Council and a section of that report will be devoted to the YOF.

In relation to monitoring, it was noted that conditions were put on projects and the YOF representatives also visited the successful projects to ensure compliance with the conditions. There was also surprise visits and mystery shopping. The Young Inspectors also participated in the schemes to assess performance. They also checked the accounts and attendance records of the successful projects and training was provided to ensure the projects were delivering value for money and offered a diverse range of services. The funding was allocated incrementally and the final part was only allocated when all parts of the criteria had been satisfied. For this year, there were three rounds of funding in paired LAP areas.

The young persons representatives reported on some of their favourite YOF projects. A breakdown of costs per funding round and LAP area was before the Grants Panel.

In reply to questions about the under spend on some of the LAP area budgets, Ms Dixey reported that the service placed adverts promoting the

scheme in the East End Life and visited schools and other young persons venues in every LAP area to ensure they were made aware of the scheme. Each paired LAP had been allocated the same amount of funding. The Grants Panel noted that Round 3 was to run between 2 October and 2 December 2009 and the applications would be short listed next Wednesday (21<sup>st</sup> October 2009) The Grants Panel were invited to attend one of the YOF presentation evenings for round 3 to be held in November 2009.

In the event the YOF budget for this year was under spent, it was anticipated that they may start commissioning new projects, building on the 2012 review and Joint Area Review, and may also approach projects that had previously been successful with a view to asking them to do further work in the LAP areas. Ms Dixey reported that any under spend would be invested back into the local community where there was most need.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed expressed concern over the unevenness in spread of provision per LAP area. He considered that visits should be paid to schools and all LAP areas and marginalised groups should be targeted. He considered that this should be carried out at an early stage in the process to ensure that each LAP area received an equal amount of funding and that groups were offered support from alternative sources.

Turning to the Panel's recommendations and the Grants Panel role in the YOF process, the YOF representatives reported that from the third round onwards, the representatives themselves would contact the applicants to inform them of the Panel's decision on their application, rather than officers.

In terms of future funding, the YOF expressed a wish to have a greater pot of funding. Ms Dixey referred to potential sources of future funding for the projects and that the YOF were working to secure further funding. They had also carried out work with the Find Your Talent Initiative. The Panel had taken on responsibility for coordinating the various potential funding streams.

The YOF representatives expressed a wish to undertake its own Borough wide project to lead on delivery. The Grants Panel discussed what this may focus on. It was considered that this could focus on a number of key themes such as healthy eating and lifestyles. The Grants Panel could have a role in determining what the YOF's own project could focus on. In addition if the commissioning budget is under spent, the Grants Panel could also help determine how this could be spent.

In terms of publicity, the Grants Panel considered ways of raising awareness of the scheme to inform and celebrate the projects they had funded. Accordingly Councillor Francis proposed the following additional recommendation to that set out in the report for the consideration of the Grants Panel as follows:

"That the Youth Opportunity Fund Initiative be given a double page spread in the East End Life Magazine to inform and celebrate the projects they had funded"

Councillor Francis thanked the YOF representatives for giving up their valuable time and also extended his thanks, on behalf of the Grants Panel, to the many young people who had contributed to the assessment process and hoped that they would stay involved and more young people would continue to get involved in the Youth Opportunity Fund initiative.

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the report (GP 03/0910) on the implementation of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds in 2009/10 be noted; and
- (2) That the Youth Opportunity Fund Initiative be given a double page spread in the East End Life Magazine to inform and celebrate the projects they had funded.

## **5.2 Review of Mainstream Grants Commissioning (GP 04/0910)**

Mr Underwood (Third Sector Manager, Strategy and Performance) introduced the report highlighting the salient points.

Mr Underwood reminded Members at the last meeting of the Grants Panel in June 2009, the Grants Panel requested that the new Mainstream Grant Commissioning Process be reviewed. As a result officers have undertaken a review of the new arrangements. These had been clustered around the following main themes -

- Issues identified with the process (including online application arrangements);
- Results of the process;
- Accountability and transparency;
- Level of support available when applying for grants;
- Advertising and Publicity;
- Process timescales;
- Feedback Appeals and Enquiries.

An overview of the findings together with a detailed breakdown of the proposals was included in the report.

The Grants Panel were asked to consider the proposed process improvements and recommended them to Cabinet.

In response to the report, Councillor Ohid Ahmed commented that many organisations had contacted Members and had expressed concern over the new commissioning approach. The concern was that the small and medium sized organisations would lose out due to lack of access to the IT

infrastructure necessary to apply online. It was necessary to ensure every group received help and support in applying for grant aid assistance.

In relation to advertising and publicity, Councillor Ahmed also commented that many of the organisations considered that they were not afforded enough time to apply on line, attempted to apply but couldn't as they had not been trained or were unaware that they could do so. Councillor Ahmed queried how these issues would be addressed? He also questioned whether applicants would be enabled to submit paper applications as some many find this more convenient. There was a need to ensure those that could not apply on line were given a chance.

In reply, Mr Underwood reported that the online application process would be maintained as this would enable groups to build up their IT infrastructure. Ms Hilary Hughes (Principal Funding and Development Officer) reported that there would also be an all day training session held at Mulberry Place, Town Hall, where groups could come in and submit their written applications forms online. However if for some reason they were unable to apply online, they would be enabled to submit a paper application. The intention was to hold more IT training sessions for the groups. Should any of the groups not be able to attend the session, officers would make alternative arrangements where necessary.

Ms Hughes reported that officers carried out verification checks to ensure the organisations funded were adhering to the Council's criteria for grant aid support. Officers carried out visits and if they were any concerns carried out additional work with the groups.

The Grants Panel expressed a wish to monitor the performance of the organisations funded from mainstream grants funds. Accordingly they requested that a performance monitoring report be submitted to the Grants Panel to enable them to monitor the activity of such projects and that an extra ordinary meeting of the Grants Panel be arranged to consider this report.

Councillor Abdul Asad considered that the unsuccessful applicants should be afforded the right to appeal. Councillor Asad also requested that a clear timescale for the mainstream grant process covering the next 3 years should be produced.

Councillor Ahmed requested that consideration be given to having more than one closing date to enable unsuccessful organisations to reapply

The Chair **Moved** the recommendations as set out in the report and it was: -

**Resolved:**

That the proposed process improvements contained within the report (GP 04/0910) be agreed and recommend to Cabinet subject to the inclusion of the following proposals:

- (i) Clear details of how funding will be set aside in the Mainstream Grant Commissioning (MSG) budgets to meet the costs of any successful appeals
- (ii) Consideration of having more than one closing date to enable unsuccessful organisations to reapply
- (iii) That the proposed changes to the timetable include reasonable time for the organisations to group together and submit consortium bids
- (iv) That officers prepare and submit to an extraordinary meeting of the Grants Panel the following
  - A timetable of grants rounds to be considered by the panel over the next 3 years
  - A performance monitoring report covering the performance of every organisation funded by mainstream grant funds

A template for the monitoring report be devised and approved by the Grants Panel prior to the extraordinary meeting.

**6. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil Items.

The meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Marc Francis  
Grants Panel