

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

RECORD OF THE DECISIONS OF THE GRANTS DETERMINATION (CABINET) SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 1 MAY 2019

COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14 2BG

Members Present:

Councillor Candida Ronald (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Asma Begum (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities)
Councillor Amina Ali (Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Marc Francis (Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee)

Officers Present:

Mark Baigent (Interim Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)
Janet Fasan (Divisional Director, Legal, Governance)
David Freeman (Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy Manager)
Ellie Kershaw (Tackling Poverty Programme Manager, Housing Options)
Robert Mee (Interim Voluntary & Community Sector Team Manager)
Zoe Folley (Committee Officer, Governance)

It was proposed by Councillor Asma Begum and seconded by Councillor Amina Ali and **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Candida Ronald be elected to serve as Chair for this meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Mayor John Biggs and Councillor Sirajul Islam.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

**3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES
DECISION:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2019 were presented and approved as a correct record of proceedings.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

There were no public submissions

5. EXERCISE OF MAYORAL DISCRETIONS

The Sub - Committee noted that, since the last meeting, the Mayor had taken no urgent decisions in the form of an Individual Mayoral Decision that related to grants.

6. GRANTS DETERMINATION SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 School Uniform Grant

Ellie Kershaw, (Tackling Poverty Programme Delivery Officer) presented the report seeking approval of the continuation of the school uniform grant and authority to authorise the Corporate Director of Resources to approve future grants within budget. She provided an overview of the policy including the payment arrangements.

The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee reported feedback on their consideration of the report. The Sub – Committee welcomed the proposals. The GSSC sought and received further information regarding, amongst other matters: the slight decrease in applications, the use of the small underspend and the approach to dealing with oversubscription. The GSSC were satisfied with the answers and endorsed the report.

Councillor Ronald then invited GDSC Members to comment on the report. The GDSC also asked questions and received reassurances about the decrease in claims (as detailed in the report), due to changes in the number of pupils eligible for the support.

DECISION

1. That the provision of school clothing grants in 2019/20 within the budget specified in this report be approved;
2. That the Corporate Director for Resources be authorised to approve future grants, subject to budget restrictions

6.2 Homelessness Prevention Procurement Hub (Capital Letters) MHCLG Sub-Grant Agreement

Mark Baigent, (Interim Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration) presented the report. This report sought approval for the allocation of government funding to Capital Letters - a LBTH led homelessness prevention hub, comprising a number of other London Borough, to deliver initiatives.

The Committee noted an overview of the project including: the establishment of a company, the staff recruitment plans, the funding per performance measures and the Memorandum of Understanding, setting out project milestones.

The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee reported feedback on their consideration of the report. The Sub – Committee were supportive of the proposals given the pressures on services. They sought and received assurances regarding the staffing arrangements amongst other issues.

Councillor Ronald then invited GDSC Members to comment on the report. The GDSC also welcomed the programme and that it was LBTH led. They thanked Officers for working hard to put this in place.

DECISION

1. That the award of grant funding of up to £37.8m be authorised to Capital Letters (London) Ltd through a Sub-Grant Agreement; drawing on the grant from the MHCLG awarded to Tower Hamlets, Lead Borough of the Pan-London Homelessness Prevention Procurement Hub programme.
2. That the Corporate Director, Place be authorised to enter into a grant agreement and make decisions relating to resolution 1 above.

6.3 MSG Project Performance Report - Extension Period 01 (September to December 2018)

Robert Mee (Interim Voluntary & Community Sector Team Manager) presented the report regarding MSG project performance during the period September to December 2018.

The Sub – Committee noted the update on the following three red rated projects:

- Cubitt Town Bangladeshi Cultural Association
- Stifford Centre – Community Languages Service
- Toynbee Hall – Wellbeing in Tower Hamlets

The Sub – Committee also noted key achievements set out in the appendix. Members were also advised that two projects in Appendix 1 of the performance report (on page 65 of the agenda pack) were stated to be green in the text but the colour on the report was Red. It was clarified that the text was correct and both projects were rated green.

Regarding the Toynbee Hall, it was noted that Officers had engaged with them in respect of the issues. Based on the initial findings of the assessment, it was anticipated they should progress to an amber rating due to improvements.

The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee reported feedback on their consideration of the report. The Sub – Committee noted the issues (reported above) about the colour coding. They also asked questions and were satisfied with the responses received regarding progress with addressing the issues in respect of the red rated projects. They also discussed the involvement of the TH CVS in the monitoring process.

Councillor Ronald then invited GDSC Members to comment on the report. The GDSC noted the issues around the submission of safeguarding certificates (in respect of the Cubitt Town Bangladeshi Cultural Association and the Stifford Centre). The GDSC were advised that the issues had been addressed. Therefore, it was anticipated that the performance ratings for these projects should now move up into a green rating, since this was the only issue. Premises updates would continue to be provided in the monitoring reports.

Regarding the Toynbee Hall, Mr Mee provided a further progress report. Officers were still in the process of reviewing the information regarding a rise in workshops and the attendance figures. Depending on the extent of the improvements, it was possible that the project could move to an amber rating.

DECISION

1. That the performance of the Mainstream Grants (MSG) programme be noted as set out in 3.3 - 3.6 and the premises update 3.7 – 3.8 of the report.

6.4 Emergency Funding Criteria Revision

Robert Mee (Interim Voluntary & Community Sector Team Manager) presented the report. He highlighted the three main proposed changes to the eligibility criteria in respect of:

- the need for organisations based in Council buildings to have appropriate premises agreements.
- recipients indebted to the Council.
- allowing groups in receipt of Council funding in the previous two years to be able to be able to receive emergency funding

In addition a new time limited revision to the criteria around the change from Mainstream Grants (MSG) to the Local Community Fund (LCF) was presented.

He outlined the key features of the proposed time limited criteria, to support organisations experiencing issues arising from the end of the MSG. He outlined the type of issues which would be taken into account in considering if an organisation met the criteria for this funding.

The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee reported feedback on their consideration of the report. The Sub – Committee welcomed the changes in principle and sought assurances regarding the adequacy of the review period

The GSSC also discussed the impact of the move to the new LCF on the emergency fund given the possibility that it might lead to an increase in applications for funding. The Committee were mindful of the pressures this might place on the fund and the opportunity costs of the proposals in terms of leaving a shortage of funding for other groups facing ‘life and limb’ emergency situations. The Sub – Committee endorsed the report.

Councillor Ronald then invited GDSC Members to comment on the report. In response to questions, it was confirmed that the applications for the transitional funding would be considered on their own merit against the funding criteria. The sort of issues that might qualify an organisation for the funding included serious viability issues related to the move to the LCF.

Regarding the process for prioritising applications, given the budget restraints, it was noted that Officers were working with the organisations such as the TH CVS to provide support to unsuccessful LCF applicants and also identify alternative funding options. The nature of the type of support that would be offered was noted. Officers were mindful of the issues around increasing the amount of money in the emergency budget given this may change the nature of the funding. It was felt important to ensure it remained a source of emergency funding. The GDSC supported this point regarding the need for the budget to be reserved for emergencies rather than become another source of funding.

DECISION:

1. That the revised criteria for the Emergency Funding be agreed as detailed in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.12 and appendix A of this Report.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Local Community Fund Presentation

David Freeman, (Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy Manager, presented the update on the Local Community Fund and the Small Grants Fund.

The Committee noted an overview of a number of issues (as set out on the presentation slides circulated in a supplementary agenda) regarding: the bidding and assessment process, the engagement with the third sector, and details of the ongoing activities to help support applicants, apply for the funding with a focus on MSG supported groups. This included the provision of support sessions including TH CVS sessions, held at various different times of the day and support with preparing bids. The Committee were also advised of the number of applications received so far.

Turning to small grants fund, there would be five funding themes aims at supporting groups carrying out innovative work and small projects amongst other things. The Committee noted the application timescale and that there would be several funding rounds a year. Regarding the external contractor, the Committee noted details of the proposed arrangements and the contact details.

It was noted that Council's Communications Team would carry out a lot of engagement on the application process.

The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub – Committee reported feedback on its consideration of the report. The Sub - Committee sought clarity and received information about plans to outsource the administration of the fund and the risk of a duplication with Council work. Clarity was also sought about the role of the Council's scrutiny process in overseeing the new fund, particularly whether the Chief Executive's decisions on the applications could be called in.

In response, it was clarified that the Chief Executive decisions would go to the Cabinet for endorsement. As a result, the scrutiny committee would have the opportunity to consider and comment on the decisions with a view to ensuring that the process had been properly applied and the decisions were robust.

Councillor Ronald then invited GDSC Members to comment on the report. The GDSC noted the desire for scrutiny to continue to have a role in the process and that the Council were working to develop a rigorous and transparent decision making process. Regarding the role of the East End Community Foundation in assessing the applications, it was noted that they had in place a well established process for assessing small grants and it was envisaged they would apply a similar approach. In response to further questions, Members also noted further information about the number of applications received to date.

8. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

The meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee