

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS DETERMINATION (CABINET) SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)

Members Present:

Councillor Candida Ronald (Chair)	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Mayor John Biggs	(Executive Mayor)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Tarik Khan
(Scrutiny Lead Resources)

Officers Present:

Onyekachi Ajisafe	(Strategy & Policy Officer, Strategy Policy & Performance)
Janet Fasan	(Divisional Director, Legal, Governance)
David Freeman	(Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy Manager)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Robert Mee	(Programme Analysis and Review Officer)
Zoe Folley	(Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Asma Begum declared a Non-DPI interest in Agenda items.

This was on the basis that Councillor Tarik Khan was a Trustee of Tower Hamlets Youth Sports Foundation.

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Councillor Sirajul Islam declared a Non-DPI interest in agenda item 6,2, VSC Funding Under Delegated Authority. This was due to a historic application for an allotment from Prospect Walk (listed in the Attachments)

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the 4th March 2020 meeting were agreed and approved as a correct record.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

There were none.

5. EXERCISE OF MAYORAL DISCRETIONS

It was noted that the following Individual Mayoral Decision was taken since the last meeting in March 2020

- Community organisations and Faith Based Groups Leasing Premises from the Council – Rent Relief (23 April 2020).

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 MSG Performance Report October 2019 – March 2020

Robert Mee (Programme Analysis and Review Officer) presented the report. This was the final performance report and covered the MSG extension agreed by Cabinet.

Councillor Tarik Khan (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) advised of the Overview and Scrutiny's questions on this report, regarding the low take up of the MSG Rent Subsidy scheme, expected participation in the Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme and whether this was temporary.

In response the following information was noted.

- That the aims of the MSG Rent Subsidy scheme were to provide temporary support to organisations, to prevent large rent increases when agreeing a new lease.

- Only two MSG organisations qualified for support (of the groups listed in the report) - Stifford Centre and Our Base.
- Our Base had discontinued. Therefore, only Stifford Centre participated in the scheme.
- MSG Rent Subsidy was set up as a temporary scheme while the Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme was developed and implemented.
- To date 11 groups had been awarded funding from the CBRR scheme with one group currently receiving the benefit.
- The other groups need to have their leases finalised before payments can be released.
- The CBRR is a permanent scheme for VCS groups in Council premises, that could demonstrate that they were providing a community benefit.
- Ongoing updates would be provided to the Committee as part of the VCS project updates.
- It was also noted that a video had been prepared showing MSG project outcomes and this could be recirculated.

Written responses to the questions are attached at Appendix 1.

In response, Members noted the amount of work that had gone into the MSG programme and thanked Officers for this. They also acknowledged the wider programme of support provided by the Council to groups, in addition to the Grants programme, which included commissioning and working with partners.

RESOLVED:

1. Note the performance of the Mainstream Grants (MSG) programme as set out in 3.3 – 3.6 and the premises update 3.7 – 3.9 of the report.

6.2 VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority

David Freeman, (Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy Manager), presented the report that provided an update on VCS Funding awarded under delegated authority by Council officers or, in the case of the small grants programme, the East End Community Foundation.

Councillor Tarik Khan (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) advised of the Overview and Scrutiny's questions on this report. In response it was noted that this was a regular update report to the Committee covering the period from the end of February 2020 to the end of August 2020, it included all delegated decisions in respect of the VCS Grants programme, as highlighted above.

Written responses to the questions are attached at Appendix 1.

In response, the Committee were mindful of the challenges that organisations may face due to the loss of income at this time. It was felt important that the Council understood these challenges.

RESOLVED:

1. Note the update on funding awarded to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since their last meeting,
2. Note the new Small Grants Programme theme 'Covid-19 Test and Trace Outreach and Engagement' set out at appendix A2, and
3. Note the decisions made by the Mayor regarding rent relief for VCS organisations that lease premises from the council.

6.3 Local Community Fund (LCF) Project Performance and Update Report – October 2019 – March 2020

Robert Mee presented the report. This was the first report since the introduction of the new LCF programme. The report asked the Committee to agree programme management arrangements and provided an update on project performance.

Councillor Tarik Khan (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) advised of the Overview and Scrutiny's questions on this report. Clarity was sought on the following issues:

- The impact of COVID-19 on project delivery. It was noted that the LCF annual report, covering October 19 – September 20 and plans for the next 12 months, will provide details of project performance and will be submitted to the Sub - Committee on 3rd December 2020.
- Real DPO and Hestia Housing and Support. It was noted that due to the submission of the outstanding paperwork, (that had been outstanding since April 2020) payment could be released to REAL and they were now a green rated project. In addition, due to the satisfactory performance of Hestia Housing in terms of project delivery, payment could also now be made.

Written responses to the questions are attached at Appendix 1.

In response the Committee discussed the following issues:

- The approach to monitoring projects during the Covid 19 period.
- It was noted that the Council sought to take a different approach to monitoring project performance. The intention was to adopt an outcomes based approach, particularly during the Covid period, to identify how projects were actually making a positive contribution, rather than focusing on specific targets.
- Members felt it was important that projects should look at alternative ways of delivering services and outputs if necessary during the Covid period, and set revised targets.

- It was reported that Officers were working with groups to identify any underspends with a view to allocating these to other activities with the same outcomes, by the end of September 2020.
- Officers expressed confidence that the programme should achieve its aims over the remainder of the programme, potentially through using different ways of delivering outcomes.
- The Mayor noted that since last meeting, Rupert Williams the CEO of St Hilda's East Community Centre had retired. He noted he had done a great job.

RESOLVED:

1. Agree the LCF Programme Management arrangements including delegated authority to undertake appropriate actions in respect of all matters relating to the fund including but not exclusively in respect of Premises, Debtors, Projects and performance prior to payment
 2. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund programme as set out in 3.3 to 3.8 for Oct 19 – Mar 20 and the impact of Covid-19 in 3.9 and Appendix 4.1 – 4.5.
 3. Agree the premises condition dispensation continues for Age UK and REAL as set out in 3.8 with future decisions made by delegated authority as part of the proposed LCF Programme Management arrangements.
 4. Agree that the Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding due to Tower Hamlets Community Transport be re-purposed to fund work on restructuring options
7. **ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**
There were none

The meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Candida Ronald
Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee

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Agenda Item	Item Name + Ward Impacted	Summary of item	Questions from Cllrs + Potential Key Lines of Enquiry	Response
6.1	<p>MSG Project Performance Report – October 19 to March 20</p> <p>All Wards</p>	<p>The Mainstream Grant (MSG) 2015/18 Programme was approved by the Commissioners on 29 July 2015 and was initially expected to be delivered from 1st September 2015 through to 31st August 2018. Further extensions to the programme until 30th September 2019 were agreed at GDSC. As part of the transitional arrangements following the move to the Local Community Fund it was later agreed to continue to fund some MSG projects in the Community Languages and Lunch Club strands. This was at the same level of funding under the council's mainstream grants programme (MSG) for a period of six months from 1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020.</p> <p>This is a final noting report, that outlines the projects that have been delivered during this period October 2019-March 2020, particularly those delivered before COVID-19 peaked in the UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of the 7 organisations intended to be put on the MSG Rent Subsidy scheme, is it only one that took part in the scheme? • How many organisations do you expect to take part in the Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme? • Is it a temporary scheme? If so, what will replace it? 	<p>The MSG Rent Subsidy scheme was a temporary measure put in place while the Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme was being developed and it was to ensure the MSG funded organisations were not met with a large rent increase when agreeing a new lease. The scheme was in place while the MSG programme was running and a lease needed to be agreed and rent invoices raised and sent to organisations before the MSG Rent Subsidy was paid. Only Stifford Centre and Our Base had rent invoices raised and Our Base subsequently shut down operations when MSG came to an end.</p> <p>The Community Benefit Rent Reduction scheme is a permanent scheme which, subject to eligibility criteria, will benefit VCS organisations that lease premises from the council. The 80% rent reduction is intended to acknowledge the benefit to local residents of activities run by these organisations from our premises where the cost of</p>

				<p>rent is not met by other funding from the council. CBRR is only paid after an eligible organisation has completed a new lease with the council. To date, one organisation is in receipt of CBRR, ten further organisations have approved CBRR and are awaiting completion of their leases before payment commences and we anticipate that a further 10-15 organisations may seek CBRR when they move to formal lease arrangements.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a report on Council premises leases to VCS organisations will be presented to Cabinet in November which will include further information about the CBRR scheme and respond to the issues raised by the Scrutiny Challenge session held in November 2019.</p>
6.2	<p>VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority</p> <p>All Wards</p>	<p>This report provides an update on funding awarded to voluntary and community sector organisations under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee. Including the small grants programme, innovation fund, contingency fund, the community benefit rent reduction scheme, and rent relief (the Mayor made an</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What period of funding does this report cover? • Does this report indicate all the grants awarded to VCS organisations during this period? 	<p>This report is a regular item on the GDCSC Agenda and each report covers the period since the last GDCSC meeting. The report presented to the meeting on 9 September covers the period from the end of February 2020 to the end of August 2020.</p>

		Individual Mayoral Decision to award rent relief to support local community based organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic).		The report includes all VCS grants programmes where decisions are made under delegated powers either by officers or, in the case of the small grants programme, the East End Community Foundation.
6.3	<p>Local Community Fund (LCF) Project Performance and Update Report – October 2019 – March 2020</p> <p>All Wards</p>	<p>The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. A total of 50 projects were awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes – Inclusion Health and Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion and Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance, Employment and Skills, Community Safety.</p> <p>This report provides a performance update for the period covering October 2019 to March 2020 on the 50 projects that were awarded funding. Of the 50 projects, 48 are rated Green, 1 Amber and 1 Red.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we identify the impact of COVID-19 on project delivery? • Both Real DPO and Hestia Housing and Support have not met their targets. Considering any impact of the pandemic, do we plan to keep paying them? • Are there any other funds these organisations not on the LCF can go under? 	<p>Grant Officers are working with LCF organisations to support them with project delivery and the impact of Covid-19. An Annual Report covering Oct 19 – Sep 20 will be submitted in October and plans for the next 12 months should also be agreed at this time. This will help identify the impact of Covid-19 on delivery and whether the original aims of the project can be achieved to the same extent going forward.</p> <p>All projects had an impact on achieving targets due to Covid-19. Real DPO and Hestia Housing were not rated Green for specific issues:</p> <p>Real DPO – not submitting a signed funding agreement and partnership agreement – both documents have now been submitted</p> <p>Hestia Housing – did not submit the</p>

				<p>first two monitoring returns and there was a question of what was achieved in that period. A meeting with the organisation has now happened to go through the activity on the project.</p> <p>In both these cases it was more of a project management issue than a delivery issue and now this has been resolved payments can now take place.</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 impacting on the programme no projects have had funding withheld for not meeting targets over this period.</p>
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