

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee report 12 January 2022		 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director Place		Classification: Unrestricted
Grant offer to Toynbee Hall to support the production of an updated Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area		
Lead Member	Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning	
Originating Officer(s)	Anna Zucchelli, Heritage at Risk Project Officer and Petticoat Lane High Street Heritage Action Zone Project Officer	
Wards affected	Spitalfields & Banglatown	
Key Decision?	No	
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.	
Forward Plan Notice Published	13/12/21	
Exempt information		
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in	

Executive Summary

As part of the Petticoat Lane High Street Heritage Action Zone, the Council has committed to update the Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area.

Toynbee Hall and the Council have successfully applied for additional grant funding from Historic England to work collaboratively with the local community to update the Plan using a series of thematic surveys and archival research. A Council officer will then use this information as an evidence base to write the Plan. Toynbee Hall will lead on delivery of this element of the project; however, the local authority is required to administer the grant and act as project assurance. To release the grant to Toynbee Hall for the delivery of the project, authorisation is required from Grants Determination Sub-Committee. A third-party grant agreement for £40,324 between the Council and Toynbee Hall is also required.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- Authorise the Corporate Director Place to enter into a third-party grant agreement with Toynbee Hall for £40,324 to support the production of an updated Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The project is an opportunity to utilise the wealth and knowledge within the local community to explore new ways for the Council to update the Plan for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area and provide an enriched understanding of what makes the conservation area special to local people. This follows Objective 2.6 of the Council's Conservation Strategy (2017-2027), which states that future reviews may allow for partnership working with local amenity societies, particularly in respect of historical research and survey work.
- 1.2 The project helps to address some of the challenges highlighted in the Conservation Strategy (2017-2027):
 - Engagement with key stakeholders involved in the heritage resource is not as proactive and effective as it could be
 - There is a general lack of awareness amongst the public of the conservation and management needs of heritage
 - Community involvement in heritage does not fully represent the demographic profile of the borough
 - Although there are many values associated with the heritage resource, its contribution is not being fully realised, and communities and stakeholders are therefore not being fully engaged with it.
- 1.3 The project aims to raise interest in local heritage and understanding of the historic environment, including increased awareness of what is sensitive change and what is appropriate development in conservation areas, leading to improved planning applications and less enforcement cases. It is an innovative approach for Council officers to work collaboratively with the local community to prepare policy that shapes their local area.
- 1.4 It is an opportunity for local people to work together on a project and to share experiences, build connections, enhancing community cohesion. The Community Appraisers will gain skills that could lead to future employment. Working with Toynbee Hall means that skills, knowledge and connections remain within the local community beyond the life of funding period.
- 1.5 Toynbee Hall is a local grass-roots organisation with strong local connections, further enhanced through the wider regeneration programme. Their involvement will ensure a wide range of participants from different

backgrounds are involved in the project as Community Appraisers.

- 1.6 Historic England have agreed to offer a grant for the project and therefore there will be no cost to the Council. It is a requirement of Historic England that the grant is administered by the Council. To release the funding to Toynbee Hall, authorisation is required from Grants Determination Sub-Committee, along with a third-party grant agreement for £40,324 between the Council and Toynbee Hall.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Plan is produced internally entirely by the Place Shaping (Strategic Planning) team and would require additional officer resource, which is currently not accounted for. The grant funding from Historic England would be withheld and Toynbee Hall would not be able to carry out the project. It would be a missed opportunity for the Council to work collaboratively with the local community prepare policy that shapes their local area.
- 2.2 The Council Officer works with the Community Appraisers to carry out the thematic surveys and archival research. This would take up a large amount of officer resource and would likely require recruitment of a new member of staff, which would delay the project and cost more. A Council Officer would not have the same outreach potential in the local community as Toynbee Hall.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) scheme is a nationwide initiative running from four years until March 2024, funded by Central Government and managed by Historic England, which is designed to secure lasting improvements to 68 historic high streets for the communities who use them. The £800,000 funding for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area contributes towards shopfront improvements, a cultural programme, a heritage trail, building maintenance workshops and a borough-wide shopfront guidance.
- 3.2 The Council has also committed to updating the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Wentworth Street. The formulation and publication of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas is a requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservations Areas) Act 1990, s.71.
- 3.3 The same Act places a duty on local authorities to review conservation areas from time to time, especially those where there has been substantial physical change to the area's character or appearance since the last review was produced or there is substantial pressure for change within or to the setting of the conservation area. Wentworth Street Conservation Area is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register.

- 3.4 Through discussions with Toynbee Hall at the start of the regeneration programme, an opportunity was seen to be able to utilise the wealth and knowledge within the local community to explore new ways for the Council to produce an updated Plan for the Wentworth Street Conservation Area. The project is based on similar completed project in Winchester, also funded by Historic England, called *Winchester Future 50*.
- 3.5 Toynbee Hall and the Council applied to Historic England for additional HSHAZ grant funding in April 2021 and were successful (see Appendix 1). The total sum of the grant awarded was £39,582 – since agreed with Historic England to increase to £46,274. £5,950 of the grant funding is allocated to a heritage consultant, whilst the rest - £40,324, is allocated to Toynbee Hall to deliver the project.
- 3.6 The project will involve a series of thematic surveys which will be used by paid local volunteers as ‘Community Appraisers’ to appraise the character of the conservation area. This will include basic condition reports and recent photographs of each asset type within the conservation area – character, shops, street scene, architectural features, open space, designated heritage assets, views, etc. The thematic surveys have been devised by the same heritage consultant who was involved in the *Winchester Future 50* project.
- 3.7 A Heritage Officer has been employed by Toynbee Hall to support delivery of the project from November 2021 to October 2022. The Heritage Consultant will support the Heritage Officer in the training and execution of the surveys. Community Appraisers will be trained in archival research, photography, basic assessment of condition, understanding architectural features, presentation skills, etc.
- 3.8 Toynbee Hall have produced a project plan, which includes a risk analysis, milestones, budget and monitoring indicators. Regular meetings will be held between Toynbee Hall and the Council’s HSHAZ lead officer, at least monthly, for the duration of the project to ensure the project is going to plan and to release payment instalments on receipt of progress reports.
- 3.9 The results from the thematic surveys and archival research will be collated, analysed and presented to Council officers at the end of the project and an exhibition held at the Petticoat Lane Community Hub in the summer. Archival research findings will be uploaded to the Survey of London Whitechapel map.
- 3.10 A Council Officer in the Place Shaping (Strategic Planning) team will then use the collated results and research to prepare the Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan from November 2022 and bring it to adoption by March 2024.
- 3.11 The proposed grant of £40,324 will be used for
 - A part-time Heritage Officer employed by Toynbee Hall on a one-year contract (and associated recruitment and supervisor costs)

- Costs of Community Appraisers on equivalent of London Living Wage (£12p/h)
- Training for Community Appraisers
- Uploading of archival research findings to the Survey of London Whitechapel map

The Heritage Consultant's fees are not included - this would bring the total cost of the project to £46,274. Council Officer resource to complete the Plan is not included here as it counts as match funding to the Historic England grant.

3.12 The grant will be paid in two instalments

- January 2022 - £26,712
- March 2022 - £13,612

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Toynbee Hall is a grassroots community-led organisation with extensive community engagement and outreach experience. They have excellent connections and existing networks with the local community around Wentworth Street and therefore can enable a wide range of participants in the project, including those hard to reach and BAME.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- Best Value Implications
N/A
- Consultations
N/A
- Environmental (including air quality)
N/A
- Risk Management

The risk of the omicron Covid variant may impact how some of the project is carried out. Fortunately, some of the training and all surveys will be carried out outdoors in groups of 2-3 people and is therefore considered low risk in terms of covid spread. Other training can occur online. Archival research may have to occur online on individual laptops with home-based working rather than at the Archives themselves. Toynbee Hall will be expected to manage this risk.

- Crime Reduction
N/A
- Safeguarding
N/A

- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment
N/A

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report is to authorise the Grants determination Sub Committee to enter into a third-party agreement with Toynbee Hall which has been awarded a grant of £40k from Historic England as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone grant funding scheme, and to develop a Local Cultural Programme. This is to be used pay volunteers to provide condition reports, photographs and records to appraise the character of the area.
- 6.2 The council will act to administer the funding and act as project assurance on behalf of Historic England.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to make the grant referred to in this report.
- 7.2 The Council will monitor the use of the grant to ensure that it matches the the terms of the grant under which the money was given to the Council (of which the Council was a party) but also to ensure that the money is used in a manner consistent with the Council's legal Best Value duty.
- 7.3 It should be noted that as Toynbee Hall was a joint applicant to the main grant the Council has no discretion to alter the nature of the grant award

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1: High Street Heritage Action Zone Additional Funding Request – Toynbee Hall- CAAMP

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

- List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.
- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

Officer contact details for documents:

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