

Grants Determination Cabinet Sub-Committee 12 January 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Sharon Godman, Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority	

Lead Member	John Biggs, the Mayor Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy Emily Fieran-Reed, Senior Strategy and Policy Manager Awo Ahmed, Programme Assessment & Monitoring Officer
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	
Reason for Key Decision	
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on funding awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Recommendations:

The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the update on funding awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since their last meeting.
2. Note that the cohesion events funded through the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund have launched a new round of funding to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of this report.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There are a number of funding programmes to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in the borough where decisions are made under delegated authority by officers. These decisions are presented to the Sub-Committee for noting.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The council could decide not to provide funding to VCS organisations through its various programmes. However, to do this would be contrary to the agreed policy to support VCS activities in the borough, as set out in the VCS Strategy 2020-2024.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Small Grants Programme

- 3.1 The Small Grants Programme was established to ensure that local people and community groups will continue to be able to get funding from the council to support community initiatives – people getting together to get things done. The programme is intended to make funds available to support grass roots activity in local communities that will help make life better in Tower Hamlets and achieve the changes set out in the Tower Hamlets Plan and the council's Strategic Plan. By establishing a single grants programme with different themes or activities to be funded, the council is trying to make sure local groups seeking funds will have a one stop shop to get to the funds best suited to their needs.
- 3.2 The small grants programme has five themes that constitute the main programme and three that are focussed themes as detailed below.

Main themes

1. **Innovation** - to encourage innovation or pilot something new, especially where there is a gap.
2. **Prevention** - to promote grass roots activity to reduce the need for statutory services.
3. **Neighbourhood action** - to promote local neighbourhood initiatives
4. **Community cohesion** - to develop community resilience, promote cultural opportunities and reduce social isolation.
5. **Partnership working** - making the sector more effective through closer partnership working within the sector and across sectors.

Focussed Themes

6. **Community Support Services for Older People** – to combat social isolation of older people through the provision of community-based support services.
7. **Access and Participation** – establishing access and participation schemes to provide referral gateways for people from BAME communities.
8. **Loneliness** – Reducing the impact of loneliness and isolation.

- 3.3 Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee there has been no further funding awarded under delegated authority for the Small Grants Programme. The new round of the Small Grants Programme is currently in procurement stage and it is hoped that it will open for applications in January 2022.

Mayor's COVID Recovery Cohesion Events Fund – Jubilee Events

- 3.4 The Mayor's COVID Recovery Cohesion Events Fund is being administered by East End Community Foundation (EECF) on behalf of Tower Hamlets Council.
- 3.5 Tower Hamlets Council has established the Jubilee Celebration Events Fund, made available from the Mayor's COVID Recovery Fund, to award grants of up to £500 to organisations delivering events and street parties to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Jubilee Celebration Events Fund focuses on community cohesion and re-connecting communities who have been most affected by the pandemic. Events must take place over the bank holiday weekend (between Thursday 2nd June and Sunday 5th June 2022).
- 3.6 The fund opened for applications on 3rd December 2021 and the total amount of funding available is £10,000. Organisations can apply for grants between £350 to £500 to deliver events with a focus on community cohesion, reconnecting communities and celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Further details on the specification of the Jubilee Events Fund is set out in Appendix A. Details of organisations that have been awarded this fund will be provided at the next GDSC.

Innovation Fund

- 3.7 The council is keen to encourage and support innovation in the sector and acknowledged that this would require some funding to enable the sector to pilot new initiatives and approaches to service delivery and support.
- 3.8 The Innovation Fund supports VCS organisations to "test and learn" new ways of working, new initiatives and new delivery models that if successful could be scaled up and commissioned more formally.
- 3.9 Decisions are made by the Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation in consultation with the Chair of this Sub-Committee based on recommendations of an advisory panel which consists of the Chief Executive of the East End Community Foundation, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy and officers from within that service.
- 3.10 The Council has an agreement with the crowdfunding portal, Spacehive, to support local VCS organisations to crowdfund for projects and the Innovation Fund budget is £60,000 per annum with a total budget to date of £180,000. Total awards to date are £145,848 with a remaining balance of £34,152.
- 3.11 VCS organisations that crowdfund through the Our Tower Hamlets page of the Spacehive portal will have an opportunity to pitch for up to £10,000 (or a maximum of 50 per cent of an organisation's crowdfunding target) in match funding for their projects.
- 3.12 Further details can be found on the [Space Hive Tower Hamlets](#) and the [Innovation Fund](#) pages with more information available in the [factsheet](#).
- 3.13 Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee one organisation has been assessed and awarded funding from the Innovation Fund under delegated authority.

Organisation	Total Innovation Fund Pledge	Total Crowdfunding Target
Phase Two Crisp Street Community Cycles HUBBUBUK	£6,058.00	£11,138.00

- 3.14 Further details of the pledge and organisation awarded are set out in Appendix B.

Contingency Fund

- 3.15 The Contingency Fund was set up by the Sub-Committee to extend the existing Emergency Fund from being purely a fund to support organisations facing 'life and limb' emergencies to a fund that may also support organisations facing the impact of a significant loss of council funding.
- 3.16 At the meeting held on 29 July 2020, Cabinet agreed to close the transition element of the Contingency Fund and extend the Fund further to include support for organisations affected by Covid 19. The Covid Community fund opened for applications on the 5th Nov 2020. For a limited period, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in Tower Hamlets will be able to access funding and organisational support.
- 3.17 Awards are made from this Fund by the Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation in consultation with the Chair of this Sub-Committee.

Covid Community Fund

- 3.18 The Covid Community Fund Budget is £100,000, A further two organisations have been awarded funding since the last Grants Determination Sub Committee Meeting totalling £9,920.

Organisation	Total Covid Community Fund Award
Expressions Community Arts	£4,920.00
The Families Support Group	£5,000.00

- 3.19 To date eleven organisations have been awarded funding totalling £52,848. The remaining balance is £47,152.
- 3.20 Details of awards agreed by officers under delegated authority from the Covid Community Fund since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee are set out in Appendix C.

Emergency Funding

- 3.21 The Emergency Funding budget is £50,000 and the remaining balance is £43,153.
- 3.22 Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee there has been no further funding awarded under delegated authority for Emergency Funding.

Community Benefit Rent Reduction

- 3.23 The Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme was set up by the council to acknowledge the value of the work carried out by voluntary and community organisations leasing its premises through a reduction in the rent payable. The council charges an appropriate 'market' level rent for its premises and organisations can apply for up to 80% of this as a rent reduction.
- 3.24 CBRR is only available for short leases of three to five years. To qualify, organisations need to meet a number of criteria relating to governance, management and quality standards. Full details of the scheme are set out on the council's website at the [CBRR page](#).
- 3.25 Decisions are made by the Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation in consultation with the Chair of the Sub-Committee based on recommendations of an advisory panel which consists of the Head of Revenues (Chair), Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy and the Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service.
- 3.26 Community Benefit Rent Reduction has been approved to 12 Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and the funding is subject to the completion of their leases and an annual review. There have been no further leases agreed since the last Sub-Committee meeting.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All grants awarded need to demonstrate how they meet the needs of our diverse communities and support the council's Public Sector Equality Duty. Equalities data is collected as part of the monitoring process and this will be reported as part of the annual reporting process.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Best Value

Recent legislation, particularly the Localism Act 2010, has emphasised the role of communities working in partnership with local authorities to help achieve more effective and less costly services to local people. The process of co-production of services delivered by local voluntary and community organisations is a tool now widely recognised as a means to achieving this outcome.

5.2 Risk Management

There is a risk that, by not publishing details of funding awarded to VCS organisations, the council could leave itself open to challenge that it is not fulfilling previous commitments to openness and transparency. This report is one of a series that will provide updates on funding decisions made under delegated authority and the VCS Annual Report will provide more detailed analysis.

5.3 Crime Reduction

There are no specific crime reduction considerations arising from this report.

5.4 Safeguarding

There are no specific safeguarding implications arising from this report. However, ensuring appropriate consideration is given to safeguarding will be addressed in the development of the Small Grants Programme, both through governance requirements and in the capacity building programme for the sector.

6. **COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 This report notes the update on funding awarded to voluntary and community (VCS) organisations under delegated authority. The total of grants awarded and agreed rent reductions are contained within approved budgets.

7. **COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The grants and information noted in this report are in line with approvals previously made. There are no legal implications in this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

NONE

Appendices

Appendix A Jubilee Celebration Events

Appendix B Innovation Funding

Appendix C Covid Community Fund

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents: