


<p align="center">Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee</p> <p align="center">Wednesday, 26 June 2024</p>	
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie, Acting Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation</p>	<p>Classification: Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p align="center">VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority</p>	

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:

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the update on funding awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since the last meeting.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There are several funding programmes to support VCS organisations where decisions are made under delegated authority by officers. These decisions are presented to the Sub-Committee for noting in line with the Committee's terms of reference.

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 set out in the VCS Strategy 2020-2024.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Emergency Funding

- a) The Emergency Funding is grant support from the Council to local VCS organisations based in Tower Hamlets who are facing a significant loss of council funding. Organisations can apply for one-off grants up to £10,000. Applicants must clearly demonstrate the need for the funding and the fact that they are facing an unforeseen emergency.
- b) Since the submission of the report for the last meeting of the Sub-Committee there have not been any awards through this fund.

3.2 Community Benefit Rent Reduction

- (a) The Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme was set up by the Council to acknowledge the value of the work carried out by VCS 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.
- (b) CBRR is only available for short leases of three to five years. To qualify, organisations need to meet several criteria relating to governance, management and quality standards. Full details of the scheme are set out on in the council's VCS Premises Policy ([VCS-premises-statement-of-policy-and-procedures.docx \(live.com\)](#)).
- (c) Decisions are made by the CBRR Panel which consists of the following Council officers - Head of Revenues and Benefits (Chair), Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy, the Head of Asset Management - and the Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service.
- (d) There has been 1 CBRR award made under delegated authority since the submission of the report for the last meeting of the Sub-Committee. This award was agreed by CBRR panel on 13 May 2024.

Organisation	Community Benefit Rent Reduction Funding Approved
Bow West Organisation	£27,000 gross £10,800 net (40% CBRR) £16,200 CBRR value

- (e) Details of the award are set out in in Appendix A

3.3 Small Grants Programme 2023 - 2027

- a) Background

The Council's [Strategic Plan 2022-26](#) sets out eight priorities designed to improve outcomes for residents. This includes a commitment to partnership working with the voluntary and community sector. In March 2023 Cabinet agreed a new Grants Policy & Outcomes Framework with a commitment to provide long-term funding to enable the achievement of our shared vision to 'support and invest in a thriving and diverse VCS to enable it to improve outcomes for Tower Hamlets residents'. This builds on our recognition that the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Tower Hamlets plays a crucial role in supporting residents with many important services. They played a key role in the response to the pandemic, the subsequent recovery as well as throughout the current cost of living crisis.

To support this vision, the Council launched the Mayors Small Grants Programme on Monday 11th December 2023. The new programme provides £800,000 of annual grant funding between November 2023 – March 2027. The Small Grants is targeted at small voluntary and community sector organisations with an income under £150,000, to ensure a wide range of organisations can access Council funding.

b) 2023/24 Round 1 – bidding process

The first round of the Small Grants Programme opened for applications on 11th December 2023 and closed on 2nd February 2024. To support organisations to apply the council did an extensive communications and marketing campaign and delivered four information events that were attended by 53 organisations which focused on our vision and priorities for the grants programme and the application process. These sessions were a combination of face to face and virtual.

c) 2023/24 Round 1 – applications received

In total, 179 applications across all five themes were received. The organisations applied for a combined amount of £645,000. The table below sets out the number of applications by themes:

Theme	No. of applications	Amount requested
Community events	52	£169,160.45
Mayor's Capacity Building Programme	35	£111,450.45
Community Chest	25	£15,050
Mayor's Positive Activities for Young People	48	£279,000.88
Mayor's & Young Mayor's Youth Empowerment Fund	19	£71,176.36
Total:	179	£645,838.14

d) 2023/24 Round 1 – assessment of bids and recommendations

The assessment period ran for 3 weeks. Each theme had a designated assessor who oversaw the assessment process. Each application was assessed once against the criteria set out in the prospectuses. The

assessments consisted of an organisational assessment and a project assessment. For the organisation assessment the application scored a pass or fail, on the project assessment they received a numerical score. If an organisation failed the essential criteria on the organisation assessment (governance, local connection and managing money) or received less than 50% on any question in the project assessment then their application was not considered for funding. All assessments that failed on essential criteria on organisation assessment were moderated by a senior manager. Following the completion of assessments, a sample of 20% of all assessments were moderated by a senior manager to ensure the correct guidance was followed. Projects chosen to be moderated were done by choosing one application from each ward and when had gone through all the wards started again from the beginning. To ensure assessors were supported to conduct high quality assessments, training and support to all assessors and moderators were provided, including two training sessions, a daily huddle, and an assessor's guidance pack.

Following the assessment process, officers developed a long list of projects which had passed all the requirements set out in the prospectus and were eligible for funding. In this round all the eligible projects for funding were able to be recommended.

e) 2023/24 Round 1 – funding awarded

58 projects were recommended for funding, for a total of £157,244.

Due to not enough organisations passing the assessment criteria the £400,000 budget has been unable to be spent in full. The next round of Small Grants launched in May 2024 and several information sessions have been delivered to support groups to apply for the grant. Those who were unsuccessful were also provided opportunity to seek feedback and officers undertook a learning event to ensure improvements to small grants process.

The recommendations were approved by the Director Strategy, Improvement and Transformation under delegated authority with the breakdown set out below:

Theme	No. of projects awarded funding	Total amount
Community Events	18	£44,120
Mayor's Capacity Building Programme	15	£33,845
Community Chest	9	£4,450
Mayor's Positive Activities for Young People	9	£50,347
Mayor's & Young Mayor's Youth Empowerment Fund	7	£24,482
Total	58	£157,244

f) Details of the award are set out in Appendix B

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 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 **Best Value Implications** - The Council is required to ensure it achieves statutory Best Value in the delivery of its functions. Grants form part of that statutory framework and the monitoring of the use of the grant and achieved outcomes assists in compliance with the Best Value duty. The structure and process pathways of the Mayors Community Grants Programme were developed to meet the Council's best value duty. QC advice was secured confirming that the approach taken complied with the Best Value Duty.
- 5.3 **Risk Management** - The Mayors Community Grant Scheme is subject to independent external audit and internal challenge by a panel of senior officers resulting in learning and improvement actions as necessary.
- 5.4 **Safeguarding** arrangements are addressed as part of the grant application evaluation process.
- 5.5 There are no other specific statutory implications relevant to consideration of this report.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report notes the update on funding awarded to voluntary and community sector (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 GDSC terms of reference requires a report to be brought to the subcommittee detailing the use of any delegation of authority from the subcommittee since the previous reporting period. This report demonstrates conformity with the terms of reference.
- 7.2 The award of small grants was in line with the priorities detailed in the Council's prospectus and the methodology followed by the Council in making the awards was in conformity with the methodology previously advised to applicants. The priorities stated in the prospectus show what in the Council's opinion are effective and efficient measures to meet the Council's legal functions with the final award amount being a sum that the Council considers economic to achieve those measures. Therefore, within the bounds of the Council's discretion to make grant awards the process complies with the Council's Best Value duty.
- 7.3 The Council pre-advertised the award process and the Council followed that process in making the awards. Therefore, all applicants were treated fairly and in line with the Council's legal duties.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

NONE

Appendices

Appendix A – Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) Award agreed at the CBBR Panel Meeting on 13th May 2024

Appendix B – Small Grants 2023-2024 – 2023/24 Round 1

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

NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A