

<p align="center"><b>Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee</b></p> <p align="center">Wednesday, 18 September 2024</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Robin Beattie, Acting Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p align="center"><b>VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority</b></p>	

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

	Step [Delete as applicable]	Date
DLT Level (Tier One)	DLT / CD	
CLT Level (Tier Two)	CLT / CE	
Discussion with Mayor (Tier Three)	MAY	
Discussion with Lead Member (Tier Three)	LM	
Member Level (Tier four)	MAB / 121	PAM 2 Sept 2024
Decision (Tier five)	Cabinet / IMD	GDSC 18 Sept 2024

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr Saied Ahmed, Resources and the Cost of Living</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque, (Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy), Robert Mee (VCS Grants Lead)
<b>Wards affected</b>	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	[Insert date notice was published – see <a href="#">forthcoming decisions webpage</a> ]
<b>Exempt information</b>	n/a
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tackling the cost-of-living crisis</li> <li>3. Accelerating education</li> <li>4. Boosting culture, business, jobs and leisure</li> <li>6. Empowering communities and fighting crime</li> <li>7. Working towards a clean and green future</li> </ul>

### 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.

### VCS FUNDING AWARDED UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY (JUNE)

### THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION

#### Decision Type

<b>Key Decision?</b>	<b>Urgent Decision?</b>	<b>Exempt from Call-In?</b>	<b>Restricted Report or Partially Restricted (e.g. appendix)?</b>
No	No?	No?	No?

#### Specific Issues for Pre-Decision Meetings

(Officers may use the following table to add points of note for internal meetings such as CLT, MAB or DMTs. Content can be deleted at any stage and, in any case, will be before publication for the decision making meeting.)

<b>Directorate Leadership Team</b>
<b>Corporate Leadership Team</b>
<b>Mayor's Advisory Board</b>
<b>Communications</b>

**THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION**

**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 two organisations have been assessed and awarded funding from the Emergency Fund budget under delegated authority.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Total Emergency Funding Approved</b>
Grand Union Orchestra	£6,480.00
Tower Hamlets Community Transport	£6,100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,580.00</b>

- (c) Details of the above Emergency Funding awards are set out in Appendix 1.

### 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) Since the submission of the report for the last meeting of the Sub-Committee there have not been any awards through this fund.

### **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) 2024/25 Round 1 – Update**

The first round of 2024/25 opened for applications on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and closed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024. To support organisations to apply the council did an extensive communications and marketing campaign and delivered three information events. These sessions were a combination of face to face and virtual. The recommendations for this round are awaiting decision and the outcome of this decision will be reported at the next meeting.

#### **c) 2024/25 improvements to the process**

As part of the VCS Strategy consultation a few improvements to VCS support from the Council was proposed. For the Small Grants Programme an action being taken forward is when the next round is open it remains open for the rest of the financial year, covering Rounds 2 and 3 in 2024/24 in the same way the Community Chest is open all year. There will still be 'Rounds' where the applications submitted by a specific date will be assessed, recommendations and a decision made but this will give more time for applications to be submitted rather than restricting it to a six-week period.

## **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.

- 6.2 There is an annual budget of £0.8m for the Mayor's Small Grants Programme and £0.1m for the Emergency Fund.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The grants and information noted in this report are in line with approvals previously made and the terms of reference for this sub-committee. There are no other legal implications in this report.
- 7.2 The proposal to leave the small grants application open for the entire year is lawful provided every subsequent received application is subjected to the same evaluation and review process applied to the other previously received applications. Consideration will all need to be given to the efficacy of grants awarded towards the end of the application cycle given that the time frame over which performance indicators will need to be achieved will be shortened as grants are awarded within the relevant budgetary time frame.
- 7.3 The Council will have to introduce a process of regular equality review to ensure continuing compliance with its Equality Act obligations

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- NONE

#### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority EF Awards

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

- NONE

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A