


Commissioner Decision Report 13 th January 2016	
Report of: Shazia Hussain Service Head Culture, Learning and Leisure	Classification: Unrestricted
Event Fund Delegated decision making to award grants	

Originating Officer(s)	Alison Denning
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	One Tower Hamlets

Executive Summary

The Event Fund is a small grant fund for community arts events which has been operating successfully for a number of years. It works on a rolling programme with monthly deadlines to support small scale local events. The fund is part of the council's revenue budget and is intended to support the delivery of the council's Community Plan priorities.

On 9th September 2015 the commissioners considered a report on this fund and agreed that responsibility for its administration could be delegated to the relevant Service Head until the remainder of the financial year. This report seeks a decision from the Commissioners that delegated authority to award grants should remain with the Service Head for Culture Leisure and Learning.

Strategic Alignment

The Community Plan provides the long-term vision for the borough, articulating local aspirations, needs and priorities. It informs all other strategies and delivery plans of the council and its partnership, including the council's Strategic Plan. The plan has been developed in consultation with local residents and service users, community and voluntary sector organisations, and a range of representative groups and forums, as well as members of the council. It outlines how the council and its partners will work together to improve the lives of all those who live and work in the borough, and continues the existing focus on tackling poverty and social exclusion in Tower Hamlets.

The Community Plan incorporates a set of high level and cross-cutting priorities with the aim of making a real difference in these areas over the lifetime of the plan.

It is the objective of the Event Fund to help support the Community Plans outcomes and contribute towards its five themes. The five community plan themes are:

A Great Place to Live - Tower Hamlets will be a place where people live in quality affordable housing, located in clean and safe neighbourhoods served by well-connected and easy to access services and community facilities.

A Prosperous Community - Tower Hamlets will be a place where everyone, regardless of their background and circumstances, has the aspiration and opportunity to achieve their full potential through education and vibrant local enterprise.

A Safe and Cohesive Community - Tower Hamlets will be a safer place where people feel safer, get on better together and difference is not seen as threat but a core strength of the borough.

A Healthy and Supportive Community - Tower Hamlets will be a place where people are supported to live healthier, more independent lives and the risk of harm and neglect to vulnerable children and adults is reduced.

The Community Plan prioritises equality, cohesion and community leadership through the theme of One Tower Hamlets. Through this theme the council and its partners are committed to reducing inequalities, supporting cohesion and providing strong community leadership. The Event Fund is a distinct allocation from the Tower Hamlets Mainstream Grants budget and exists to provide small grants for high quality public events and festivals, which are accessible to, and of benefit to the community. The aim of the Arts Fund is to support a range of activities and events to promote the One Tower Hamlets principles across the borough, which are:

- Tackling Inequality
- Strengthening Community Cohesion and,
- Building Community Leadership

The events are expected to achieve the following:

- A programme of arts and events activities that include credible methods of delivery to reach a wide audience and promote the One Tower Hamlets principles;
- Produce promotional materials and identify channels to use these events and activities to effectively promote messages which celebrate the rich diversity of all communities within Tower Hamlets;
- Reach a wide range of people throughout the events programme, providing information about anticipated attendance, including from people from a range of different backgrounds and ages, across the 9 protected equality groups where appropriate.

The projects are expected to demonstrate:

Administration and management of events

- An engaging programme of events through a combination of directly delivered events and events which are delivered in partnership with other groups or community organisations.

A robust process for collaborating with community groups or organisations

- Evidence they have a strong approach to partnership working and robust partnership processes in place when funding other local organisations to deliver events on its behalf.

A strong understanding of equality, including:

- Understanding of the council's commitment to equality through the Community Plan and ideally, also some understanding of the council's commitment across the protected characteristics as detailed in the Single Equality Framework.
- That the essence and values of the lead organisation are set by those who use the service. Staff and board members must be representative of the target audience.
- A track record of reaching a range of local residents from diverse backgrounds, living across the borough.
- An understanding of what types of events are most suitable to achieve equality outcomes and how their chosen delivery method will reach the intended client group.
- A proposal that outlines what issues or topics will be addressed through the events, why these have been selected and how they help the council to achieve the One Tower Hamlets principles.

Monitoring & evaluation

- Organisations will be expected to have a system in place to measure the outputs and outcomes by the protected characteristics as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant and appropriate.

The Event Fund also contributes towards the following strands of the Mayor's key priorities:

- Regeneration and the creation of Sustainable Communities;
- Creating Jobs and supporting the growth of the Local Economy;
- Young People and Schools;
- Older People and Health;
- Community Safety and Community Cohesion;
- Environment and Public Realm; and
- Arts, Heritage, Leisure and Culture.

Recommendations:

The Commissioners are recommended to:

- 1) Agree that delegated authority to approve Event Fund awards should remain with the Service Head for Culture Leisure and Learning, subject to a quarterly report of awards being copied in arrears to the Lead Commissioner for review.
- 2) Should the commissioners be minded to agree (1) above then they are further recommended to agree to retain the existing monthly cycle of applications.
- 3) Should the Commissioners not be minded to agree (1) above then they are recommended to agree to modify the Event Fund programme from a monthly review and approval programme to one that coincides with the Planned Public meetings for Commissioner grant decisions.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1. To facilitate the allocation of this small grant programme in the most efficient and practical way.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Commissioners can decide not to delegate decision making to officers, but to revert to the Commissioners Decision Making meetings in public. If they decide the above and do not decide to align the grant decision making process with the limited number of Commissioner Decision making meetings in public then decisions impacting on events will often not be made in a timely fashion, resulting in those events being abandoned due to lack of preparation time.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Event Fund Process and Administration

- 3.1 The Event Fund is a small grant fund for community arts events. The events supported by the Fund must take place in Tower Hamlets and benefit Tower Hamlets residents but the organisers applying for funding do not have to be Tower Hamlets based. The purpose of the Event Fund is to provide small grants for high quality public events and festivals, which are accessible to, and of benefit to the community.
- 3.2 The annual budget for the Event Fund is £52,500. The maximum grant award is £2,500. However, most awards are in the region of £500 - £1,500. The

Event Fund works on a rolling programme with monthly deadlines. The available budget is projected forward over the year and an estimated budget allocation is identified for each quarter. Initial projections are based on historical performance and knowledge of the annual cycle of peaks and troughs in the number of events throughout the year. Projections are updated on a monthly basis depending on demand and supply of funds. This is done in order to ensure funding is available to applicants and for events throughout the year.

3.3 The Event Fund is administered and managed through the Arts, Parks and Events service, and assessment of the applications is carried out by three officers following a scoring system against a list of criteria as set out in the Event Fund application form. The assessments are carried out monthly and the amounts recommended for award are dependent on the amount of funding remaining available for the quarter, the assessment score and the number of applications.

3.4 Applications are assessed by three officers independently of each other. Applications are initially checked for eligibility. If not eligible they are rejected and not assessed. If eligible, applications are scored across a number of areas:

- track record of delivery for the organisation;
- event content,
- benefit (how it meets the EF Priorities, and objectives of One Tower Hamlets), accessibility,
- marketing,
- partnerships,
- community involvement,
- outcomes
- value for money.

These areas form 7 sections on the assessment form and each area attracts a maximum score of 5, with the overall application receiving a maximum score of 35 by each assessor. The three assessors' scores are then added together to give a maximum score of 105.

3.5 Following the assessment of applications received a report will be submitted to the Service Head for Culture, Learning and Leisure for consideration with a follow-up meeting with a Festivals and Events Officer to discuss the recommendations and agree awards.

3.6 A quarterly report will be submitted to the Commissioners to include an overview of all events awarded funding within a 3 month period. This will be in line with other grant fund reports. See Appendix H.

3.7 With the adoption of the online Grant system (GIFTS) for the 2016/17 Event Fund application process, the reports will be generated automatically through the GIFTS system and will be uploaded onto the Tower Hamlets Council Online Grant Portal. This will allow access to the general public, Councillors and Commissioners to view the amounts awarded via the Event Fund, it will

not however reflect any differentiation if awards have not been paid in full, or events have been cancelled as grant funding is released periodically subject to satisfactory project performance and evaluation.

Option A: Retain the existing monthly cycle of applications with delegated decision making to award grants by the Service Head – Culture, Learning & Leisure in light of the strategic alignment to the Community Plan and Mayoral Priorities, the low value of individual grants and the annual budget overall.

- 3.8 This option proposes to continue with delegated decision making to the Service Head – Culture, Learning & Leisure in line with other small grants programmes for which the Commissioners have delegated decision-making to officers.
- 3.9 The annual budget for the Event Fund is comparatively small at £52,500 per annum and individual grant awards do not exceed £2,500 with the majority of awards being between £500 and £1,500.
- 3.10 Robust processes and criteria for the Event Fund have previously been agreed by the Commissioners and revised forms for 2016/17 are attached in full for review.
- 3.11 As this option maintains the monthly application review process it has the advantage of continuing to facilitate the smaller community led initiatives that are often fairly spontaneous and have short lead in times. Moving to fewer decision points in a year as set out in Option B would be likely to result in far fewer small community events being supported, whilst favouring the larger events with longer lead in times.
- 3.12 Delegation of this low value, low risk funding stream to Service Head – Culture, Learning & Leisure is in line with achieving efficient service delivery in accordance with the Best Value duty, putting in place systems and processes commensurate with risks.

Option B: Reverse the earlier commissioner decision to delegate authority for grant making under this grant regime to the relevant Service Head and agree to modify the Event Fund programme from a monthly review and approval programme to one that coincides with the Planned Public meetings for Commissioner grant decisions

- 3.13 The planned Commissioners' Decision Making meetings in public take place on a six weekly cycle and it would be very difficult to maintain the monthly grant decision making model if grant awards were to be considered and approved by the Commissioners at the six weekly meetings. This option would therefore necessitate the alignment of the application deadlines associated with the Event Fund from a monthly cycle to one that aligns with the approximately six weekly cycle of Commissioners' Decision Making Meetings.

- 3.14 As set out under Option A officers expect that if the time period between decisions is increased, the profile of applicants is likely to change from community-led events which are often more short notice in nature to more professionally led events with associated longer planning cycles. This would represent a significant refocusing of the purpose of the grant programme and is arguably less aligned to the facilitation and empowerment of grass roots communities.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1. The report seeks the approval of the Commissioners to agree that the delegated authority for award of the Events Fund grants remain with the Service Head for Culture Leisure and Learning, rather than under the Commissioners Decision Making public meeting. There is an annual total of £52,500 available to fund community arts events. The process is managed through Arts, Parks and Events team who consider the grant applications and assess them for the purposes of grant award.
- 4.2. The maximum grant award is £2,500 although most are in the region of between £500 and £1,500. The size of the awards recommended is dependent on the overall demand for grants, money available, the level of priority attached to the event, the proposed use of the grant, and to what extent the stated criteria can be met in each case.
- 4.3. Awards of £500 or more, will receive an initial payment of 80% of the grant reflecting the spend profile of events that typically require necessary infrastructure to be purchased in advance of the events. The balance of the 20% of the award will be retained until receipt of the completed evaluation form, final budget statement and all supporting documents as specified in the guidelines and criteria.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The power of the commissioners to make decisions in relation to grants arises from directions made by the Secretary of State on 17 December 2014 pursuant to powers under sections 15(5) and 15(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the "Directions"). Paragraph 4(ii) and Annex B of the Directions together provide that, until 31 March 2017, the Council's functions in relation to grants will be exercised by appointed Commissioners, acting jointly or severally. This is subject to an exception in relation to grants made under section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, for the purposes of section 23 of that Act (disabled facilities grant).
- 5.2 It is open to the Commissioners in the exercise of their decision making functions to decide to delegate matters to an officer. It is also open to the Commissioners to make minor amendments to the timetable of the grants arrangements without involving a full review of that particular grant process.

Both options posed in relation to the timetable and decision making process are therefore available to the Commissioners.

- 5.3 To the extent that the Commissioners are exercising powers which would otherwise have been the Council's, there is a need to ensure the Council has power to make the grants in question. The Commissioners will wish to be satisfied that this is the case. It appears from the information provided in the report that the grants recommended to be made are capable of being supported under the Council's powers and, in this regard, the powers set out below appear particularly relevant.
- 5.4 The proposed grants may be supported under a variety of the Council's statutory powers. For example, the Council has power –
- To support the provision of entertainment in the borough under section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972.
 - To secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people in the borough under section 507B of the Education Act 1996
- 5.5 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to specified restrictions and limitations imposed by other statutes. This power may also support the giving of grants for community arts events, provided there is a good reason to do so. There may be a good reason for giving a grant if it is likely to further the Council's sustainable community strategy. The Council's strategy is set out in the Tower Hamlets Community Plan, which includes "One Tower Hamlets" as a cross-cutting theme. The eligibility criteria for these grants include a requirement that funded activities contribute directly to priorities in the Tower Hamlets Community Plan or the Council's Strategic Plan (which is concerned with delivery of the Community Plan) (see paragraph 4(f) of the Event Fund 2016/2017 Guidelines and Criteria in Appendix A).
- 5.6 The Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is referred to as the Council's best value duty and the following matters are relevant to discharge of the duty –
- The scheme is advertised and, to this extent, the grants are exposed to a degree of competition.
 - Applications are assessed against pre-defined criteria designed to ensure benefits are delivered in Tower Hamlets, including by reference to the Tower Hamlets Community Plan. Based on this, the Council should be able to demonstrate a direct benefit accrued from the money spent under each grant.

- 5.7 There should be a grant agreement for each grant and provision made to ensure delivery of the projects in line with the application and approval and in the event of non-delivery to protect the Council's position. Robust monitoring requirements need to be in place and appropriate performance related payment mechanisms introduced into the terms of any grant award.
- 5.8 When implementing the scheme, the Council must ensure that no part of the funds issued represents a profit element to any of the recipients. The inclusion of profit may indicate that the grant is really procurement activity and would otherwise be subject to the Council's Procurement Procedures and other appropriate domestic and European law.
- 5.9 All the proposed grants would fall under the *de minimis* threshold for the purposes of European restrictions on State aid
- 5.10 When making grants decisions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). A proportionate level of equality analysis is required to discharge the duty and information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section of the report as well as Appendix F (Equality Analysis) and Appendix G (Equality Analysis Assurance Checklist).

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Event Fund is designed to support small local events that bring people together and help promote a sense of community. Tower Hamlets has a very rich and diverse community. The Event Fund helps to support the local community to celebrate this richness of cultures creating an environment where there is a sense of wellbeing, community and local pride. Many of the events promote diversity, equality and intergenerational work which support the Council's One Tower Hamlets theme, making a significant contribution to creating a cohesive community.
- 6.2 The evaluation criteria for applications under the scheme set out the types of events which will be given priority for funding. These are focused on promoting equality of opportunity, including for people who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.3 All applicants under the scheme must demonstrate that they will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will not discriminate on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics specified in the Act. All groups funded must fill in the attached monitoring forms which include a template for the recording the nine protected characteristics. This information may be used by the Council to assess the degree to which funded events are successfully serving people with protected characteristics.

- 6.4 An equality analysis assurance checklist [Appendix F] and an equality analysis [Appendix G] have been completed.
- 6.5 Successful applications in 2014/15 enabled events to take place in every ward area in the borough, and identified areas with less funded activity which were targeted as priorities in 15/16. The ward areas which have received less funding for events in 15/16 will be targeted as priorities for 16/17 as outlined on the Guidelines and Criteria Appendix A.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The conditions of the Event Fund state that it cannot be the sole source of funding so in all cases it helps to lever in other funding and assistance in kind for community activity.
- 7.1 The level of funding offered takes into consideration the cost, subsidy per head, other cash funding agreed or pending, the amount of in-kind support, the audience or participants benefiting from the project and / or the overarching artistic value of the project and its benefits.
- 7.2 Applicants applying for higher level awards will need to demonstrate a high quality offer and good value for money, with sufficient cash funding from other sources
- 7.3 Awards will depend on the overall demand for grants, the level of priority attached to the event, the proposed use of the grant, and to what extent the stated criteria can be met.
- 7.4 The Event Fund offers exceptional value for money to the council, as annually it supports 40 – 50 community events, and in many cases it is an essential part of the income for community events that would not be possible without it.
- 7.5 The Event Fund received 78 applications in 2014/15, 50 of which were supported, 28 of which unsuccessful, withdrawn / cancelled or rejected.
- 7.6 A report setting out the outcome and impact of the Events Fund will be presented to the Commissioners on a quarterly basis.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no issues connecting to action for a greener environment other than some events taking place in parks and helping to bring more people into them. Terms and conditions of using parks for events include protection for the environment including clearing of all litter.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 These are relatively small amounts of funding and the council retains a proportion of grant which is offered on receipt of monitoring information. Any

group not providing information would lose their second payment and may not be eligible for future funding.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Free community events help to promote community cohesion which in turn helps to reduce crime and disorder, particularly where young people are engaged in volunteering and supporting local events.
- 10.2 Priority is given to arts events which involve young people, encourage personal responsibility and making a positive contribution to the community.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no specific safeguarding implications

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Event Fund Guidelines and Criteria
- Appendix B: Event Fund Application Form 1617
- Appendix C: Event Fund Assessment Questions
- Appendix D: Event Fund Assessment Score Sheet
- Appendix E: Event Fund Evaluation Form
- Appendix F: Equality Analysis
- Appendix G: Equality Analysis Assurance Checklist
- Appendix H: Quarterly Grant Reporting Format

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

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