

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 29 JUNE 2016

**ROOM C1, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON,
E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Clare Harrisson
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Amina Ali

Officers Present:

Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Everett Haughton	– (Third Sector Programmes Manager, Third Sector Team)
Steve Hill	– (Head of Benefits Service)
Jackie Odunoye	– Service Head, Strategy, Regeneration & Sustainability, Development and Renewal
Stephen Murray	– (Head of Arts and Events, Communities Localities & Culture)
Esther Trenchard-Mabere	– (Associate Director of Public Health, Commissioning & Strategy)
Barbara Disney	– (Service Manager, Strategic Commissioning, Adults Health & Wellbeing)
Kate Boulter	– (Democratic Services)

APOLOGIES

Apoloiges for absence were received from Councillor Peter Golds

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED

That Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE be appointed as Vice Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

This being the first meeting of the Sub-Committee there were no previous minutes.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED

1. That the terms of reference, quorum and membership of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee be noted.
2. That dates of meetings of the Sub-Committee for the remainder of the 2016/17 Municipal Year be circulated by email.

5. DEVELOPING THE WORK PROGRAMME (WORKSHOP)

Kevin Kewin explained that the primary role of the Sub-Committee would be to undertake pre-scrutiny of reports before they were considered at the Commissioners Decision Making Meeting (CDMM). A report on the Sub-Committee's comments would be provided to the CDMM to inform their decision-making.

As the work of the Sub-Committee evolved consideration should be given to other ways in which it could add value to the grants decision-making process. The following areas of focus were suggested:

- Thematic impact assessments.
- Link between the Council's strategy and allocation of grants funding.
- Evidence base for proven outcomes.
- Benchmarking with neighbouring councils.

RESOLVED

That the suggestions be noted and incorporated into the work programme.

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7. LATE REPORTS - REASON FOR URGENCY

David Knight introduced the report, which sought the Sub-Committee's acceptance of the reasons for urgency for the following reports on the agenda, which were unavailable for public inspection within the standard timescales set out in the Authority's Constitution because of continuing work to finalise the reports:

- Local Affordable Housing Grants
- Whitechapel Road
- Can Do Outcomes

- MSG 2015/18 Performance Report
- Exercise of Commissioners Discretion
- Grants Review – Commissioning Intentions
- Grants Decision-Making – Transitional Arrangements
- Grants Forward Plan
- Adult Services Small Grants

In response to comments from Members expressing disappointment with the late circulation of reports, it was noted that there had been misunderstanding regarding the relationship between the report deadline for the Sub-Committee and the CDMM, and this had been clarified and would not occur again.

RESOLVED

That the late reports be accepted for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

7.1 Local Authority Grant Programme (Affordable Housing)

Jackie Odunoye introduced the report, which sought the Commissioners' approval of Right to Buy funding to Registered Providers for the provision of affordable housing in the Borough.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The proposed funding was for projects that were already in progress rather than new schemes.
- Benchmarking on Value for Money should include neighbouring boroughs in future reports.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7.2 Whitechapel High Street

Jackie Odunoye introduced the report, which provided additional information sought by the Commissioners following their decision on 24 May 2016 to award a grant of £227,000 to the London Small Business Centre to undertake shop-front upgrades and internal refurbishment works at the Royal Mail Group owned unit at 206 Whitechapel Road to provide publicly accessible workspace for the local resident community.

The following points were made in discussion:

- Local companies had expressed interest in moving in to the unit.
- The intention was for the unit to provide a 'pop-up' facility until 2019.
- It was important to publicise the unit and involve local people.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7.3 Annual Report on the Event Fund Awards 2015-16

Stephen Murray introduced the Annual Report of the Event Fund Awards for the year 2015-16, which would be provided to Commissioners for information. In January 2016 Commissioners delegated authority to the Service Head for Culture, Learning and Leisure to approve event funding and requested reports on a quarterly and annual basis. The annual budget for the fund was £52,500 with the maximum grant award being £2,500.

The following points were made in discussion:

- In 2015-16 there had been a disproportionate amount of funding to the west of the borough which had more venues.
- Applications from less-represented areas were given more weighting and there was an active campaign to raise awareness of the funding in those areas.
- Officers assisted applicants with their applications and there was ongoing targeted marketing aimed particularly at under-represented groups.
- It would be helpful for future reports to include monitoring data to enable the Sub-Committee to consider impact.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7.4 Can Do Outcomes

Esther Trenchard-Mabere introduced the Can Do Development Programme Award Report, which would be provided to Commissioners for information. In May 2015 Commissioners delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Education, Social care and Wellbeing to award Can Do community grants through local Community Assessment Panels. The annual budget for the Can Do community grants was £20,000 with the maximum grant award being £500. The Commissioners had requested an annual report on grant recipients, and a review of expenditure on the scheme over five years and an assessment of the impact on health outcomes.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The programme would end in September 2016 as a result of a reduction in the public health grant.
- The grants awarded through the scheme had high impact compared with the cost of the grant and were considered to represent good value for money.

- Where possible the experience and expertise gained through the scheme would be utilised in ongoing projects.
- It would be useful to undertake diversity mapping to identify which groups had benefitted from the funding.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7.5 MSG 2015/18 Performance Report

Everett Haughton introduced the report, which sought the Commissioners' approval of grant payments and the withdrawal of grant funding under the Main Stream Grant (MSG) Programme 2015-18. Each project had been allocated as either red, amber or green ('RAG') within the Council's agreed performance management framework, and the recommendation to allocate or withdraw funding was based on this performance rating.

The following points were made in discussion:

- Where a project was identified as under-performing (red or amber), support was offered to help improve performance. Projects were also able to self-refer for support if they felt they needed help.
- Work was ongoing to simplify and improve the monitoring of projects.
- The Sub-Committee requested that future reports:
 - include a colour version of the RAG rating;
 - highlight those projects that were recommended for withdrawal of funding, with a commentary providing context of the reasons and any action that had been taken by the Council to assist;
 - contain analysis of why particular communities were not applying for, or benefitting from, funding.
- Consideration should also be given to allowing organisations to make representations to the Sub-Committee, and a clear process for this agreed and communicated to the organisations.

The Sub-Committee noted that a representation from the Shadwell Community Project had been sent to Democratic Services earlier that day with a request that it be considered by the Sub-Committee at the meeting. The Sub-Committee noted that the letter had been received after the deadline usually allowed for representations, and there had been insufficient time for officers to consider and comment on the letter. The Sub-Committee further noted that it was not a decision-making body and agreed that the representation should be passed to the Commissioners for consideration at their meeting on 5 July 2016, with an officer response.

RESOLVED

That

(1) the report be noted;

(2) the Sub-Committee's comments for future reports be actioned by officers;

(3) the representation from the Shadwell Community Project be passed to the CDMM with officer response.

8. EXERCISE OF COMMISSIONERS DISCRETION

Steve Hill introduced the report on decisions made under the exercise of the Commissioners Discretion. This was a standing item on the CDMM agenda as decisions made outside of meetings were required to be noted at the next meeting of the CDMM.

During the discussion of the decisions made, Members requested that further details of the criteria for receiving a home repair grant be circulated to them and included in Member induction packs.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. GRANTS REVIEW - COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS

Steve Hill introduced the report, which would be provided to Commissioners for information, and which outlined a review that was taking place to identify which Council grant streams could be commissioned in future and the timeframe within which that would happen.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The views of the Voluntary and Community Sector would form an important part of the review.
- All Council leads would be contacted to obtain their views.
- Commissioning would provide greater security than the grants process for organisations providing the service.
- Outcomes would need to be measured.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10. GRANTS DECISION-MAKING - TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Zena Cooke introduced the report, which set out for the Commissioners' consideration proposed transitional arrangements for grants decision-making during the period up to the withdrawal of the Commissioners.

Under the proposed arrangements:

- The Mayor, or his delegate, would chair Decision Making Meetings in Public to consider officer recommendations on grants, in the presence of a Commissioner. The Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee would also attend the meeting;
- Emergency Fund applications requiring a decision within a very short timeframe would not be made in public. The Mayor would consider a report, also sent to the Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and the decision would be subject to endorsement by the Commissioners.

The following points were made in discussion:

- If the Commissioners agreed the proposed transitional arrangements, Cabinet would need to clarify the terms of reference for the Decision Making Meeting and the role of the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee in the process.
- Care would need to be taken to ensure there was not duplication between the work of the Decision Making Meeting and the Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED

That (1) the report be noted;

(2) an update be provided to the next meeting.

11. GRANTS FORWARD PLAN

Steve Hill introduced the report, which provided the Forward Plan for Commissioners Decision Making. It was noted that the Plan could change depending on the transitional arrangements that were agreed for grants decision making.

It was noted that the August CDMM had been cancelled.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. ADULT SERVICES SMALL GRANTS FOR PENSIONERS GROUPS 2016-17

Barbara Disney introduced the report, which sought the Commissioners' approval of arrangements for the award of grant funding for the Adults' Services Small Grants for Pensioners' Groups 2016-17.

In June 2016 Commissioners delegated authority to the Director of Adults Services to approve grant awards under the Small Grants for Pensioners Programme. The annual budget for the fund was £20,000 with the maximum grant award being £500.

The following points were made in discussion:

- It would be helpful to measure and identify whether the grants awarded addressed the themes of reduced social contact, loneliness, isolation and being alone and helped improve older people's quality of life and health.
- Consideration should be given to ways in which to promote the funding to hard to reach groups which could benefit most from increased social contact.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

There was no urgent other business.

The meeting ended at 7.22 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce
Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee