

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.36 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2016

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

Members Present:

Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE (Chair)
Councillor Peter Golds (Member)
Councillor Clare Harrison (Member)
Councillor John Pierce (Member)

Officers Present:

Zena Cooke	– Corporate Director, Resources
Vicky Allen	– Strategy Policy & Performance Officer
Steve Hill	– Head of Benefits Service
Afazul Hoque	– Senior Strategy Policy & Performance Officer
Joseph-Lacey Holland	– Strategy Policy & Performance Officer
Christine McInness	– Service Head, Education & Partnership
Stephen Murray	– Head of Arts & Events
Alison Denning	– Festival & Events Officer
Sarah Williams	– Legal Services
Kathryn Smith	– Tower Hamlets Education Partnership
Michael Keating	– Tower Hamlets Education Partnership
Charles Yankiah	– Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachael Saunders, the Mayor and Councillor Oliur Rahman.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee for the duration of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

Councillor Peter Golds nominated Councillor Clare Harrison to be Vice Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee for the duration of the Municipal Year 2016/17 and this was seconded by the Chair, Councillor Abdul Mukit.

There being no other nominations it was -

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clare Harrison be appointed Vice Chair of the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee for the duration of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peter Golds declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item No. 5.2 on the agenda as a Council Nominee on the Green Candle Dance Company

Councillor Clare Harrison declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item No. 7.3 on the agenda as a School Governor.

GRANTS SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE CO-OPTees RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Chair provided the Sub Committee with an update relating to the recruitment of the Co-optees to the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee as follows: -

- 8 applicants applied for the 2 positions of Co-optees to the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee;
- 4 applicants had been shortlisted to be interviewed;
- 1 applicant withdrew having been shortlisted and been invited to attend an interview; and
- 3 applicants would be interviewed on Monday 7th November 2016.

The delay has mainly been to accommodate the applicants who had pre-booked holidays. The interviews will be conducted by the Chair, Zena Cooke and Matthew Mannion.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Sub Committee agreed to note the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. FEEDBACK: COMMISSIONERS DECISION-MAKING (INFORMATION ONLY)

5.1 Comments of the GSSC for Commissioners Decision Making Meeting - 27 September 2016

The Sub Committee agreed to note the feedback relating to the Commissioner's Decision Making Meeting.

5.2 MSG Performance Report - Variation Request Report

The Sub Committee considered the MSG Performance Report – Project Variation Requests submitted by Steve Hill, (Head of Benefits Services) who informed the Sub Committee that the Commissioners at the September Grants Decision Making Meeting highlighted 3 organisations with variation requests who were not able to deliver what had originally been agreed and raised concerns that the report did not provide sufficient detail to enable them to make an informed decision and requested a further report. The 3 organisations were Ragged School Museum, the Shadwell Community Project and the Green Candle Dance Community.

Steve Hill provided the following information relating to each of the 3 organisations: -

1. Ragged School Museum

- a. The project has been classed as RED for two consecutive periods; January to March 2016 and April to June 2016;
- b. The organisation submitted a “significant variation” request; and
- c. Due to the two periods of being rated RED, two periods of funding were withheld totalling £3000.

Recommendation – given the unique nature of the project and the value of the learning outputs and outcomes, an exceptional variation to the current policy for RED rated projects is recommended. It is recommended that the project variation request be approved and the evidence of the organisation's ability to deliver the revised outputs is reviewed and the outcome of the evidence review is reported in the next quarterly MSG Performance report.

The Sub Committee agreed to support the recommendation.

2. The Shadwell Community Project (SCP)

- a. The project has been classed as RED for two consecutive periods from September to December 2015 and January to March 2016;
- b. The organisation submitted a “letter of representation” to the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Tower Hamlets CVS

- submitted a letter seeking referral to the Commissioners Decision Making Meeting;
- c. A contributing factor to the poor project management has been the reporting of the overall organisation's finances and activities rather than project related costs and delivery;
 - d. The organisation has requested a decrease in the stated match funding from £270,806 to £96,428;
 - e. The organisation are also requesting the deletion of a small number of outputs relating to referrals as follows –
 - i. Number of residents to other organisations – 18
 - ii. Referral to and from school – 12
 - iii. Referral from Children's Centre – 10
 - iv. Referral to Social Services - 8
 - f. With regards to the request to reduce the match funding – the revised match funding amount of £96,428 over the lifetime of the project represents 79.4% of the total budget, this is well over the required minimum of 15%.

Recommendation – It is recommended that the variation to the level of match funding is approved by Commissioners.

The Sub Committee agreed to support the recommendation.

3. Green Candle Dance Company

- a. The project was classed as AMBER for the January to March and April to June 2016 periods;
- b. Due to a number of reasons the organisation has not been able to recruit the agreed target number of beneficiaries to its activity sessions, which has had a negative impact on overall project performance;
- c. A "significant variation" request has been received and the organisation has cited a number of reasons as to why the variation has been sought which in the main centre around the health issues and ill health recovery times of clients which are impacting on delivery;
- d. The organisation serves participants who in the main are people suffering from dementia at the Dance for Health at Oxford House Programme;
- e. The number of projected regular attendees is expected to be lower than originally expected due to their health condition;
- f. Not all participants are able to attend every week for several reasons therefore the average number of regular attendees is lower than the total cohort; and
- g. The requested variation outcomes are not considered to be acceptable as they are proposing an "up to" target which is not considered to be sufficiently robust.

Recommendation – Commissioners are recommended to note the work undertaken by the Green Candle Dance Company and its specialist provision for people with dementia and it is recommended

that the proposed variation is not accepted at the present time. It is also recommended that officers undertake further work with the Green Candle Dance Company to establish revisions to the targets that provide sufficient measurable outputs and outcomes before reporting back to Commissioners as part of the next quarterly performance report.

Councillor Clare Harrison enquired if more detail regarding the organisations could be made available in the reports in future as it would be useful to know about the organisations and what their projects entail. She also stated that Green Candle Company basically did not meet the basic requirements and why wasn't it picked up earlier to avoid the organisation going from Green to Amber and was there no additional support that could have been provided.

Steve Hill informed the Sub Committee that it was an oversight, but it was quickly corrected and monitored, however, if the variation is approved then it would return to Green.

Councillor Peter Golds informed the Sub Committee that he had attended the Green Candle Dance Company and had actually seen a class in progress. He stated that it would be a tragedy if the variation was not approved as the project is the only one of its kind in the Borough, it is a relatively small sum of money and the services provided are for the elderly with disabilities and has a rich multi-cultural attendance which is reflective of the Borough.

The Sub Committee agreed to support the recommendation.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

The Sub Committee noted that no public submissions had been submitted.

7. COMMISSIONERS DECISION MAKING MEETING REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Exercise of Commissioners' Discretion

The Sub Committee considered the Exercise of Commissioners Discretion report presented by Steve Hill who highlighted the following decisions made by the Commissioners: -

1. **Heartstone** - Community Cohesion Schools' Project
 - a. Date considered – 5 October 2017
 - b. Grant requested - £5,000
 - c. Amount awarded - £5,000

2. Home Repair Grants

- a. Date considered – 17 October 2017
- b. Grants requested –
 - i. Mr B - £2,926.80
 1. Amount awarded - £2,926.80
 - ii. Mr S - £1,357.00
 1. Amount awarded - £1,357.00
 - iii. Mr T - £559.32
 1. Amount awarded - £559.32
 - iv. Mr M - £1,152.30
 1. Amount awarded - £1,152.30

Councillor Clare Harrison enquired about the eligibility and criteria for the Home Repair Grants and requested that the information should be included in the report for information.

The Sub Committee agreed to support the recommendation.

7.2 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)

The Sub Committee considered the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) presented by Afazul Hoque who informed the Sub Committee that the report outlined the proposals for the Council's participation in the SVPRS and the plans for local delivery led by the Council and the requirements for grant funding to enable effective implementation of the scheme.

Afazul Hoque highlighted the following: -

- The report outlines proposals for the Council's participation in the SVPRS;
- The Council has informed the Home Office of its intention to become a volunteer Local Authority for the SVPRS;
- The Council has agreed that in delivering SVPRS, the Local Authority will operate a 'mixed' delivery model;
- The Council's own Housing Options service will secure appropriate accommodation for 'beneficiaries' in the private rented sector and support them to maintain their tenancies;
- The Council will work with the provider of its recently commissioned "New Resident and Refugee Forum" whose role is to champion the voice and concerns of newly arrived migrant communities in the Borough to ensure these are reflected in the design and delivery of services;
- The Council will also liaise with the Regional Migration Partnership as well as other London Boroughs who have volunteered for SVPRS to date, to build a pan-London support network for "beneficiaries";
- Initially the Council has agreed to resettle 3 households via SVPRS;
- An indicative cost estimate has been developed based upon the proposal to resettle three families (3x4 individuals);

- Two areas of major costs to the Council include: covering the rental gap between Housing Benefit and market rents in the Borough and providing a casework 'integration support service' to the beneficiaries;
- The model used assumes that resettled households will remain in-borough in 2 bedroom PRS properties, for the full 5 years of the scheme without changing composition and stable needs;
- The estimated net cost to the council of participation in the scheme over the full 5 years is estimated to be in the region of £50k;
- It has been agreed that the Corporate Director of Resources will make provision within the Council's budgeted reserves to cover the full costs of participation in SVPRS; and
- A cross partnership 'Steering Group' bringing together all relevant agencies in the Borough has been created and will operate as a project board when the scheme goes live.

The Chair, enquired about the assurance the Council would be working closely with other host local authorities and joined up with voluntary and community organisations in the Borough to ensure that the families do not feel isolated and are made to feel fully a part of the community.

Members raised the following concerns: -

- cost is a factor and it is a small number now, but what will happen if the situation changes and there are more costs to be incurred;
- the scheme being able to sustain itself over the 5 years;
- opportunity to involve other stakeholders e.g housing, children's services
- can the families of similar cultural backgrounds and language remain close e.g. housing and schooling in order that the families do not feel isolated;
- has the Council considered working with other authorities to deliver a successful scheme;

Sarah Williams, Legal Office commented that the scheme had a clear plan and if any additional funding would be required then the scheme will be able to seek the support of the Home Office. She also stated the Home Office were responsible for its own scheme which was an entirely different scheme.

Afazul Hoque informed the Sub Committee that a number of stakeholder were groups were being consulted and involved in the scheme and that families were being considered to be grouped together but this would be dependent on whether or not the housing would be available. He also stated that all the comments would be taken into account and raised with the 'Steering Group'.

The Sub Committee agreed to support the recommendations.

7.3 THE Partnership Business Case

The Sub Committee considered the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP) Business Case which was presented by Christine McInness, Kathryn Smith and Michael Keating of THEP Board.

Christine McInness informed the Sub Committee that it is being proposed that THEP present 6 monthly reports of activity and impact to a sub-group of the Children's Partnership, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny. She also stated that given recent Government announcements Re-Academies there is a strong rationale for THEP and its vision and values.

Kathryn Smith presented the following information relating to THEP: -

- Vision and Values;
- Membership
 - 6 Nursery Schools
 - 61 Primary Schools (69 in total)
 - 14 Secondary Schools
 - 6 Special Schools/PRU
- Associate Members
 - Aldgate & All Hallows Foundation
 - Bow Arts Trust
 - Queen Mary University of London Borough of Tower Hamlets Spitalfields Small Business Association
 - Spitalfields Music
 - Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership
 - Tower Hamlets Together
 - Toynbee Hall
 - Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
- Staffing
 - Executive Director
 - Primary Head consultant
 - Consultants as and when required
- Governance
 - Interim Board
 - Interim Advisory Council
 - Management Teams
 - Governor Forum
- Political Climate
- Partnership Working in TH's Schools
- New Funding Methodologies
- The Logo
- School Improvement/Effectiveness/Development/Transformation
- Outcomes driven

Members made the following comments regarding the information presented:

- Is the Tower Hamlets College a member?

- What's the vision for the Board for the future?
- The Governance Forum referred to in the presentation, is there going to be a voice for parents and students?
- Is there a case for the constitution of a Children's Scrutiny Panel, would it take-away from the merits of the Governance Forum in the interest of the young people?
- The growth of the THEP is welcome and the £300k seems to have been well spent, but how is it being monitored? Is there a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee providing details of the spend?
- What happens next to raise the aspirations?
- There is a role for businesses in the THEP, other than the ones already involved as Associate Members, e.g. Barclays and HSBC, where a different approach can be taken to engage with these organisations to support employment in TH etc.
- Are any comparisons being looked at with other Boroughs?
- Is any thought being given to Post 16-18 year old opportunities?

Councillor John Pierce informed the Sub Committee that there is a scrutiny function opportunity for a Children's Scrutiny Panel, but it depends on the number of meetings, the capacity and resources available. But the discussion is worth having and looking into the progression of it.

Kathryn Smith informed the Sub Committee that Tower Hamlets College were not members of THEP yet, but there was an enormous piece of work to be done to look at the size of the Board and keep in mind the wide range of skills and expertise both locally and internationally that is available.

Zena Cooke stated that in relation to the reporting mechanism and holding to account that the decision making relating to Grants is currently with the Commissioners and a regular schedule is submitted to Cabinet. But there is an opportunity for Pre-Scrutiny to be looked at and to work with scrutiny officers to schedule that in.

Michael Keating commented that engaging with elected members for feedback and as School Governors would be helpful to ensure that THEP get it right and take everything into account.

The Chair enquired about the funding and the forecast for 2019/20 to be self-funding and how the increase in subscription affects the level of income referred to and with regard to accountability the Sub Committee should be monitoring the activity, so when will reports be presented to the Sub Committee.

Kathryn Smith informed the Sub Committee that:

- The self-funding is all about building capacity and delivery of the vision and values of THEP.
- THEP are building training services and would be selling the services which would generate income, but also increasing the income streams through conferences and improving the function of THEP as well.

- There are lots to be developed and there is currently an exercise in progress where information is being gathered and a report would be submitted in 6 months which would have clear details about the work at hand and how it can be achieved.
- Organisations like Barclays and the Queen Mary University of London are organisations that THEP are keen to work with and get on board and that is another area that is also being looked at currently.
- Other London Boroughs and other authorities across the country are being looked at in terms of how things are done, the make-up of the Board and generating income etc. To date information has been gathered from Lambeth Council, Camden Council and Birmingham City Council.

The Sub Committee agreed to note the report and the presentation and support the recommendations.

7.4 Event Fund Awards Report

The Sub Committee considered the Events Fund Awards 2016/17 presented by Stephen Murray and Alison Denning.

Stephen Murray informed the Sub Committee that the report covered the 1st quarter of Event Fund applications between 1st April 2016 and 30th June 2016 and that the Event Fund is a small grant fund for community arts events which has been operating successfully for a number of years and works on a rolling programme with monthly deadlines to support small scale local events.

Alison Denning referred to paragraphs 3.1 – 3.7 of the report that identified the following –

- Annual budget for the Event Fund is £52,500;
- Maximum grant award is £2,500, however, most awards are in the region of £500 - £1,500;
- A total of £15,200 was awarded in the Quarter 1;
- Applications are assessed by 3 officers independently of each other and are initially checked for eligibility;
- If not eligible then applications are rejected and not assessed;
- If eligible then applications are scored across 7 sections on the assessment form;
- Each area attracts a maximum score of 5 with the overall application receiving a maximum score of 35 by each assessor;
- The 3 assessor's scores are then added together to give a maximum score of 105;
- The minimum score of 63 is required to be considered for funding, but the ultimate decision is made by the Service Head for CLC.
- A total of 31 applications were received in Quarter 1;
- A total of 24 applications were awarded funding;
- A total of 7 applications were declined funding;

- 2 applications did not send in their acceptance packs despite a number of reminders and was therefore disqualified;
- From the £52,500 annual grant allocation, up to £5,000 was set aside for events to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday in June 2016;
- Awards were offered up to £250, with 10 applications being received and 10 applications being awarded £250 each; and
- With the adoption of the online Grants system for the 2016/17 period, reports can be generated automatically and will be uploaded onto the Tower Hamlets Council Online Grant Portal which would allow access to the general public, Commissioners and Councillors to view the amounts awarded via the Event Fund.

The Chair enquired about the 7 events that were declined and the reasons for declining their applications and welcomed the monitoring information about the applicants but also need clarification on the over representation of certain postcode areas e.g. E1W and E2 and also what is being done to increase the applications from under-represented areas of the Borough.

Alison Denning informed the Sub Committee that the report is specifically for the 1st Quarter of the year and since then improvements have been made to monitor information and address any issues that may arise during the course of the year. She also stated that the 7 applications that were declined were based upon a number of reasons including some organisations applied for funds over the maximum limit, some budgets didn't balance, information did not match in the applications and were contradictory, there were events that were closed to the public, some lacked evidence and some just did not meet the criteria.

Stephen Murray also commented that the geographical spread of the applications across the Borough is also monitored and sometimes applications can be denied for those reasons as well where a particular venue may be over-represented in applications.

The Chair enquired that though the reasons given for declining applications are valid, is there any support provided to community groups and applicants where English may not be the first language or the funding forms are too complicated to understand.

Stephen Murray stated that officer resource is limited but the application review process is quite flexible although there are guidelines to follow and criteria to meet. He stated that there is an online toolkit with guidelines available and where mistakes have been made on applications or budgets don't balance, officers usually contact the organisations to seek clarification and offer advice.

Alison Denning commented that officers do speak to organisations and the funding team can be flexible with deadlines in order to support organisations, but due to the process being scrutinised and monitored by the Sub Committee and Commissioners procedures have to be tightened up and applied appropriately in all cases.

Councillor Clare Harrison enquired about background information being made available relating to applications and organisations to ensure that scrutiny and monitoring of applications and organisations takes place effectively.

Zena Cooke informed the Sub Committee that Appendix 1 included in the report identified the organisation, the project and activity together with the funding information, but both Stephen Murray and Alison Denning could bring along the score-sheets to the Sub Committee meeting, which can be referred to if any questions need to be clarified relating to a particular organisation or application.

The Chair commented that he thought the forms were designed for professionals and organisations that could afford a consultant to complete the application forms rather than the grass-root organisations and volunteers that are usually the ones to complete the applications.

Stephen Murray informed the Sub Committee that workshops are held to discuss the application and funding process and organisations are invited to attend these workshops. He also stated that applications and assessments are evenly weighted across the Borough and it must be remembered that it is a small budget of £52k that is being utilised across the Borough for small grants. He stated that the team do a great job assessing the applications and looking at the criteria and awarding the grants accordingly and that overall there is value for money that is supporting community cohesion and cultural diversity projects and events across the Borough.

Councillor John Pierce thanked the Grants Team for the report and the work involved and congratulated the Team on the transparency. He stated that where there were issues with organisations and their applications that possibly more in-depth checks could take place with Board Members, the types of organisations and the frequency and amounts of funding received.

Zena Cooke commented that more in-depth checks for the Event Fund would be too time consuming and it is only a small pot of £52k and such in-depth checks should be proportionate to the amount of funding available. She also stated that the Grants Register would be submitted to the Sub Committee on a quarterly basis and that in comparison to other London Boroughs the TH budget is relatively small in comparison.

The Sub Committee agreed:

1. the report and supported the recommendations; and
2. that the Grant Fund Awards criteria be circulated to the Sub Committee.

7.5 Grants Forward Plan

The Sub Committee considered the Grants Forward Plan for 2016/17 presented by Steve Hill who highlighted the reports for submission at the December 2016 and February 2017 meetings.

Councillor John Pierce enquired about doing site visits to other London Boroughs to see what they did and how their processes worked in relation to Grant Funding.

Zena Cooked commented that if the Sub Committee wanted to review its Terms of Reference to reflect the ability to analyse best practice in other authorities then that could be done. She also stated that if the Sub Committee were keen to do more than just look at reports, but to learn from other authorities and see best practice then organisations like LGA may be able to assist with providing some beacon councils.

The Sub Committee agreed:

1. The Grants Forward Plan for 2016/17; and
2. To look into best practices at other authorities as well as consul the LGA regarding beacon councils relating to Grant Funding.

8. SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Revised Terms of Reference

The Sub Committee noted the revised Terms of Reference as agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

9. REVIEW OF GRANTS SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT UPDATE

The Sub Committee were informed by Vicky Allen (Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer) that one of the recommendations was to 'consider looking at arrangements the council puts in place to support local organisations with a move to a more commissioning-based approach' and at the September meeting, the Sub Committee considered a report about the Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience commissioning arrangements starting in the new financial year. She also stated that it should review the arrangements that the Council is putting in place to support local organisations with a move to a more commissioning-based approach. This will include an overview of the co-commissioning approach, an update on progress to date, feedback from the CVS on the needs of the voluntary and community sector, and details of activities currently being undertaken by both the Council and the CVS to support the sector. A presentation spotlight session would be added to the agenda in the New Year. An end of pilot

evaluation report of the Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience theme commissioning will also be added to the GSSC forward plan.

The Sub Committee agreed to receive a report providing an overview of grants in the Council at the next meeting.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

There was no other business to be considered.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee