

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS DETERMINATION (CABINET) SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 5.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2021

ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)

Members Present:

Councillor Candida Ronald (Chair)	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, Faith and Equalities)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Leema Qureshi
(Scrutiny Lead, Resources)

Officers Present:

Awo Ahmed	(Programme Assessment and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Strategy & Policy, Communities Team)
Rupert Brandon	(Head of Housing Supply, Place)
Imelda Burke	(Regeneration Officer, Place)
David Esdaile	(Environmental Sustainability Officer, Place)
Jonathan Fox	(Principal Contracts Lawyer, Legal Services Governance)
Anna Zucchelli	(Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Place)
Filuck Miah	(Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate Strategy and Policy Team)
Zoe Folley	(Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mayor John Biggs.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No Declarations of Pecuniary Interests were reported.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. The minutes of the meeting of the Sub – Committee held on 3rd February 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

There were none

5. EXERCISE OF MAYORAL DISCRETIONS

None reported.

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 SME Energy Improvement Grants Programme 2021

David Esdaile (Environmental Sustainability Officer) presented the report. This would be the third phase of the programme to award funding to SMEs for energy reduction projects. Following feedback, changes had been made to the programme. It was proposed to provide:

- A 50% grants up to £10,000 to SMEs who carry out heat decarbonisation and renewable energy projects.
- To continue to provide 50% funding up to £5,000 to SMEs for all other retrofit projects that see the installation of energy efficient technologies such as lighting upgrades and more efficient machinery.

Councillor Leema Qureshi, (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) asked questions on the report regarding the following issues:

- Case study highlighted in the report. Clarification was sought about the overall costs and the SME's contributions to the grant.
- It was noted that the business would have contributed half of the costs covering such things as the purchase of solar panels and installation.
- The need to allocate a small business with a small turn over a £10K grant.
- It was noted that overall, the Council had supported around 43% of the costs of project. Therefore, it was felt that supporting 50% of the costs was appropriate
- The controls in place regarding the release of funding.
- It was noted that the SMEs were only paid the grant once the works had been completed. Due diligence checks were undertaken to ensure the works had been carried out in line with requirements.

The Committee asked a number of questions and discussed the following points:

- The work to encourage smaller businesses to compete and apply for grants. The reasons for awarding a 50% grant rather than follow the same approach for the school retrofit project.
- It was noted that SMEs varied in size. The first phase had been made up mostly of smaller businesses. It was considered that allocating businesses 50% of the costs (rather than the full amount) encouraged best practice and businesses to take ownership of the project. The feedback suggested that they supported the initiative and that the size of the grant was sufficient.
- Officers provided support to SMEs in applying for the funding, in a number of ways.
- The impact of Covid on the initiative and business investment.
- It was found that all of the funding for the previous rounds had been allocated quickly. In addition, Officers continue to receive lots of enquiries and it was found that SMEs still wished to take the opportunity to invest.

Members welcomed the programme to reduce the carbon footprint.

RESOLVED:

1. Approve the grant funding of £400,000 to deliver the SME Energy Reduction Programme 2021.
2. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to enter into grant agreements and make any associated decisions in order to distribute the funding in accordance with this report.
3. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to nominate a Council Officer or Officers as the Corporate Director Place shall determine to sign on behalf of the Council any grant agreements and or offer letters necessary for the fulfilment of this scheme.

6.2 Schools Energy Retrofit Programme 2021

David Esdaile (Environmental Sustainability Officer) presented the report. This was the third phase of programme to provide funding to schools for initiatives, to install energy efficient measures into schools that will reduce their energy consumption, carbon emissions and energy costs. A maximum grant of 30k may be awarded to each school to cover the costs of projects. Details of the schools supported by the initiative were set out in the report to deliver projects in line with the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration.

Councillor Leema Qureshi, (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) asked a number of questions as highlighted below:

- Section 3.3 of the report regarding the process for seeking expression of interest. Assurances were sought about the robustness of this process.
- Clarity was sought on the assessment criteria to ensure fairness to small schools.
- It was noted that Officers had worked to keep the process as straightforward as possible so that the initiative was accessible to all schools regardless of size and support they had available.
- A number of factors are taken into account in awarding the funding, such as the efficiencies that the school may achieve based on their emissions, as well as the wider benefits, rather than just the total carbon reduction that would be achieved. So all types of schools may benefit from the scheme.

The Committee asked a number of questions and discussed the following points:

- The merits of a building management system to remotely control heating to save energy and create savings.
- It was noted that Paragraph 3.4, (setting out the types of technology eligible for funding), included such a system.
- The Committee welcomed this initiative especially as it would help young people to be involved in energy efficiency projects.

RESOLVED:

1. Approve the grant funding of £250,000 to deliver the Schools Energy Retrofit Programme 2021.
2. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to enter into grant agreements and make any associated decisions in order to distribute the funding in accordance with this report.
3. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to nominate a Council Officer or Officers as the Corporate Director Place shall determine to sign on behalf of the Council any grant agreements and or offer letters necessary for the fulfilment of this scheme.

6.3 Changes to Grant Funding to Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT)'

Imelda Burke, (Regeneration Officer, Place) presented the report seeking to amend the grant payment to the ORT, highlighting the key issues in the report. This sought to grant a one off payment of £80k ending the ongoing agreement with the ORT.

Members were advised of the key features of the previous Grants Determination Sub- Committee decision to allocate £809k in January 2019. Since that time, the situation had changed. There had been a number of

meetings with ORT to discuss the need to alter the funding whilst ensuring that the ORT and the Harford St Community Centre continued to operate. The ORT will continue to receive income from ground rents and this will continue to cover the running costs of the Harford St Community Centre.

Councillor Leema Qureshi, (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) asked a number of questions about the following issues:

- The proposal to revise the agreement and the impact of this. What other factors and alternatives had been taken into account?
- The consultation with the community over the proposals.
- In response, Members noted the existing funding arrangements with the shops on Ben Johnson Road and ORT. The reduction in the income from this earmarked funding has had an impact on how much funding was available to the ORT, which was an Interim Legacy Group.
- It was emphasised that that the ORT will continue to receive ground rents payments from leaseholder units for activities.

The Committee asked a number of questions and discussed the following points:

- The amount of ground rent from shop income.
- The ORT received ground rent totalling £118k 2020/2021. This income will enable the ORT to continue to operate as a community facility, but under a different model.
- That Officers were working with the existing tenants of the ORT and Harford St Community Centre which included Stepney Life Centre to ensure their continued use of this space, they were working on agreements.
- The use of the proposed grant fund. It was anticipated that the Grant funding would support the delivery of community grants, projects and some running costs.
- This running of the centre. The centre will continue to be managed internally by the Council's facilities management to provide a cost effective service.
- The proposals also sought to realign the allocation of ringfenced HRA funding in line with the aims of that funding.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree an amendment to the January 2019 approval of a three-year grant funding to ORT.
2. The amendment is for a one-off payment of £80k derived from shop income on Ben Jonson Rd. This would then end any future funding from the retail unit income to the ORT. This sum is requested from the £809k originally approved in January 2019, minus a sum of £80k already granted for 2019/2020 (as above).

3. The ground rent income will not be affected and will continue to be collected by the Council and transported annually to ORT first quarter of each year in line with the original Ocean Estate development agreement. The year 2019/2020 ground rents totalled £118k. This is an ongoing income for ORT and will not be affected by ending the recommendation of this report.

6.4 Formal offer of Historic Buildings Grant to Greenlight Youth Club

Anna Zucchelli (Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Place) presented the report. This sought authorisation to issue a formal offer of grant of £12,000 from the Historic Buildings Grant budget, at the request of the Green Light Youth Club for works to the building. The youth club had been closed. It had also experienced break ins. The building is in need of joinery repairs to its front elevation due to the deteriorating condition of the timber. Works now will prevent large scale repairs in the future and further loss of historic fabric.

Only external works that are of public benefit are eligible for the Council's Historic Buildings Grant, therefore security works do not form part of this grant application.

The building is monitored as "vulnerable" by Historic England's Heritage at Risk team. Whilst the building is not currently on the Heritage at Risk register, if the condition and occupancy of the building does not improve in the near future, it may be added to the list. Grants were normally allocated to buildings on this register. However no applications for this had been received for this financial year. Therefore, it was considered appropriate to allocate grant funding for the building to prevent the building from being added to this list.

In response, the Committee felt that the works were necessary and supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

1. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to issue a formal offer of grant to Greenlight Youth Club to a maximum of £12,000 towards the cost of timber repairs to the first-floor bay windows, shutters and front door.
2. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to enter into the grant agreement and any such other agreements required to affect the grant and the use of the grant as detailed in paragraph 1.

6.5 VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority and Equalities Contract Provision Transition Fund

Awo Ahmed, (Programme Assessment and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Strategy & Policy, Communities Team) presented the report.

This report set out the VCS Funding awarded under delegated authority since last meeting of the Committee. It also asked the Committee to agree the

creation of £10,000 equalities transition fund to be delivered as a grant programme by the successful bidder of the Equalities Hub contract,

RESOLVED:

1. Note the update on funding awarded and available to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since their last meeting.
2. Agree the creation of £10,000 equalities transition fund to be delivered as a grant programme by the successful bidder of the Equalities Hub contract, as set out in section 3.25 to be allocated in accordance with the terms of this report

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

None

The meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Candida Ronald
Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee