


<b>Cabinet</b>	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	
<b>Report of:</b> Sharon Godman, Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance	<b>Classification:</b> [Unrestricted]
<b>Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Mayor John Biggs and Cllr Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor &amp; Cabinet Member for Community Safety &amp; Equality</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy Emily Fieran-Reed, Senior Strategy and Policy Manager Robert Mee, Programme Analysis and Review Officer
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	18 May 2021
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Financial Threshold / Impact on Wards
<b>Community Plan Theme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills</li> <li>• good jobs and employment</li> <li>• strong, resilient and safe communities</li> <li>• better health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>

### **Executive Summary**

The Council is committed to supporting our residents and stakeholders to deal with the impact of the pandemic. We have played a key role in helping prevent and limit the spread of Covid-19 in Tower Hamlets and tackle the wider negative impacts of lockdown and to grasp opportunities to make positive and lasting change. At the core of our response has been working closely with our partners and communities to ensure those most vulnerable are supported. Further details of our response can be found in the Covid-19 Response – Annual Report 2020-21 which is elsewhere on the Cabinet agenda. We have also continued to deliver our core priorities and business as usual despite the pandemic and our Annual council delivery and performance report for 2021-22 sets this out.

At the budget setting meeting of Full Council on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, it was agreed that the Council would establish a £3 million ‘ Mayor’s Covid Recovery Fund (CRF)’ to be used to “kickstart our community’s recovery from the pandemic over the next 12-24 months and help to ensure we build a brighter post-pandemic future for our

borough”.

This report presents proposals for funding projects to support the Tower Hamlets community to recover from the impact of the pandemic. The areas that the fund will focus on were developed following council assessment of the impact of covid, the covid survey of local residents, ongoing engagement of local residents and discussion and agreement on partnership borough wide recovery priorities with stakeholders, as part of the review and refresh of our strategic plan and partnership priorities. 21 projects are recommended for funding totalling £2,406,048 from the Mayor’s Covid Recovery Fund in this report. In addition, four projects totalling £590,217 were approved by Individual Mayoral Decision (IMD) on 17 June 2021 in order for proposed expedited activities to be delivered. These are set out in Appendix 2. The total value of the 25 projects supported by the Mayor’s Recovery Fund is £2,996,265.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree to fund projects listed in Appendix 1 totalling £2,406,048 as Mayor’s Covid Recovery Fund to support the recovery of the borough.
2. From the Mayor’s Covid Recovery fund agreed in Recommendation 1 add £50,000 to the cohesion theme of the Small Grants Programme in accordance with our current grants policy.
3. Authorise the relevant Corporate Director to enter into an agreement with East End Community Foundation (EECF) for the management of the fund referred to in recommendation 2 in line with the other small grants fund themes.
4. Authorise the relevant Corporate Director to enter into any other agreements to give effect to the recommendations in this report.
5. Note that details of any grants awarded from Mayor’s Covid Recovery Fund monies will be reported to Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub Committee.

### **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 There is a need to support the Tower Hamlets community to recover from the impact of the pandemic and to address the damage caused by it. This report presents details of the Mayor’s Covid Recovery Fund, including an overview of the proposed funding programme and themes, along with details of recommended project proposals to help achieve the commitments to support community recovery.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The Council can decide not to contribute to the borough's recovery. This is not recommended as our impact and engagement work, detailed below, has highlighted that it is crucial to support recovery of the borough in order to ensure that we can achieve the aims and objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 The Council could agree an alternative set of projects to be funded or ask for some proposals to be reworked.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The Council is committed to supporting its residents to recover from the impact of the pandemic. Feedback on the impact of the pandemic from residents and a range of partners, as well as wider research, has indicated a need to ensure there is support available for key priorities. The Council's priorities are set out in the Strategic Plan agreed by Cabinet in April 2021. As noted in this Cabinet agenda our Covid-19 Response – Annual Report 2020-21 and Annual Council Delivery and Performance Report for 2021-22' sets out the scale and breadth of the action we have taken to tackle the pandemic and its wider impacts over the last year and how we have continued to deliver our core priorities and business as usual despite the pandemic.
- 3.2 At the budget setting meeting of Full Council on the 4th March, 2021, it was agreed that the Council would establish a £3 million "Covid Recovery Fund (CRF)" to be used to "kickstart our community's recovery from the pandemic over the next 12-24 months and help to ensure we build a brighter post-pandemic future for our borough". The Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund will seek to address some of the damage caused by the pandemic by prioritising initiatives that support:
- residents to access jobs and our businesses and high streets recover
  - residents to address mental and physical health and wellbeing including people with disabilities
  - children and young people to deal with the impact of the pandemic on learning, and physical and mental health and wellbeing, including those with disabilities
  - residents to access welfare advice and guidance
  - communities to come together in celebration and recognition
  - residents to access a range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) services
  - residents to manage future outbreaks

### **Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund**

- 3.3 The Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund provides a one-off funding allocation that reflects the priorities and values of the Council, demonstrating that we are

putting residents at the centre of our approach to recovery. It adds unique value and does not duplicate government initiatives or funding packages.

- 3.4 The themes for the fund were developed following council assessment of the impact of covid including impact on different protected characteristics as noted in the Covid 19 Response Annual report 20-21; the covid survey of local residents; on-going engagement of residents on impact and support to deal with the pandemic; and discussion and agreement on partnership borough wide recovery priorities with stakeholders, as part of the review and refresh of our Strategic Plan and partnership priorities. The themes of the fund have been informed by key findings from the Covid Resident Survey and Impact Report and some key examples are set out here:
- 3.5 The theme **A community led recovery**, which includes a range of support for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, reflects the themes within the impact report of VCS and Community cohesion and involvement. Within the Covid Resident Survey, between 10% and 20% of residents said the pandemic has had a negative impact on relationships with neighbours or feeling of belonging to the local community. In addition, around 10% of respondents said they needed help with knowing what is on offer in their community.
- 3.6 The theme **A healthy recovery**, which includes healthy living initiatives, tackling trauma and loneliness, reflects the themes within the impact report of Mortality & physical health, Mental health, Social Care, Domestic Abuse, and Safeguarding adults. Within the Covid Resident Survey, nearly 70% were extremely or fairly worried about a negative impact on their stress and anxiety. Over 60% were extremely or fairly worried about the impact on their mental health. 86 percent of worried respondents said they had a health problem or disability. In addition, more than 50 percent of residents reported that the pandemic had had a negative impact on stress and anxiety, their mental health, feelings of loneliness and their exercise
- 3.7 The theme **A community recognised and celebrated**, which includes a series of thank you events and awards for community members contributions during the pandemic, reflects the fact that within the Covid Resident Survey, respondents have started or are doing more to support the community (21.4%) and volunteer work (13.4%).
- 3.8 The theme **An economic recovery**, which includes promoting high streets and markets with things like shop banners and deep cleans, as well as providing grants to support small businesses to become covid secure, reflects the Impact Report themes of Deprivation and Employment; and Business. Within the Covid Resident Survey, 35% said support for residents who are unemployed or on a low income was their top priority. Around 25% said improvements to streets and pavements for social distancing was their top priority. Around 10% needed help with employment support or information on their rights. Additionally, around 50% of residents said there has been a negative impact on their employment status and work.

- 3.9 The theme **Supporting children and young people recover**, which includes a range of provision over school holidays, such as additional tutoring during summer, reflects the Impact Report themes of Education and Learning, and Safeguarding children. Within the Covid Resident Survey, around 24% of people said that schools reopening was one of their top concerns. Around 10% of people said that support for young people was one of their top concerns. 12% said they were juggling both work and children being at home. In addition, around 5% said they needed help with healthy start vouchers for low income households/pregnant women.

### **Proposed Programme**

- 3.10 **Appendix 1** sets out the summary of recommendations and the distribution of those recommendations across different themes, with 21 projects recommended, totalling £2,406,048 in funding.
- 3.11 **Appendix 2** lists the projects already approved through IMD in order for expedited activities to be delivered. This consists of four projects totalling £590,217.
- 3.12 The total sum of the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund is £2,996,265 and provides coverage against all the themes of the fund with a clear aim of helping our community in recovering from the pandemic. The programme will be delivered through a mix of council services and commissioning of external providers with some provision as an add on to existing services. We will also look at if there are ways to enhance our current Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) provision and lobby government to provide additional DHP funding.

### **Summary of areas recommended for Mayor's Covid Recovery Funding**

The following summary describes the programmes we have recommended by theme:

- 3.13 **A community led recovery** – under this theme, we have recommended funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to address cohesion and social isolation, through funding support for people to reintegrate and generate new social and friendship groups as well as through a grants programme of community events to bring people together. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets and our existing VCS advice network will also be supported to continue the crucial work they have been doing to address the increased demand for their services during the pandemic and tailor this to the particular needs of the recovery period. The ability of the community to lead its own recovery is also supported through our recommendations to fund food pantries as a route for people to get cheaper food and access to support to increase their income as well as through recommending training and work experience in becoming a market trader and business skills.

- 3.14 **A healthy recovery** – under this theme, we have recommended the funding of proposals to improve wellbeing, including meditation and mindfulness as well as training for community groups to support wellbeing. There is specific wellbeing support for particular groups - around adult social care service users of day centres; mental health support for those experiencing domestic abuse and support with addressing loneliness for disabled people. There is also an emphasis on physical wellbeing and fitness.
- 3.15 **A community recognised and celebrated** – this theme is addressed by a single proposal of memorial events including a webcasting, bringing in the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum and incorporating tree planting in parks.
- 3.16 **An economic recovery** – under this theme, we have recommended a range of support to local business, including support to market traders in terms of digital, funding for businesses to adapt to become more covid safe and cleaning of high streets. We have also recommended funding workers who will help those people struggling to pay rent into employment.
- 3.17 **Supporting children and young people recover** – under this theme, we have recommended three packages of “Bounce Back” funding packages. Bounce Back to Play includes a range of activities, mainly over summer, including sports such as football, basketball, cycling and athletics; provision for particular groups such as girls, and year 6 students and activities alongside food provision for low income households. Bounce Back to learning includes reducing care leavers Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), summer tutoring for children in care and keeping children safe online. Bounce Back with support includes support with mental health, and young people taking a leading role in health promotion.
- 3.18 The recommended projects, both those recommended in this report and those already approved through IMD, include direct funding to VCS organisations and businesses as well as a range of Council and commissioned services to support residents of Tower Hamlets.

Theme	Total recommended for CRF Funding (£)	Funding for VCS component (£)	Funding for business component (£)
A Community Led Recovery	679,936	545,000	0
A Healthy Recovery	867,951	119,017	0
A Community Recognised and Celebrated	44,500	0	0
An Economic Recovery	552,550	0	460,550
Supporting Children and Young People to Recover	851,328	158,500	0
	<b>2,996,265</b>	<b>822,517</b>	<b>460,550</b>

- 3.19 Funding to the VCS comprises:

- £190,000 of grants - small grants to fund events in the community including to bring communities together and for VCS organisations to support residents with the impact of the pandemic.
- £197,517 of direct commissioning (named organisation(s) in the proposals) - includes additional funding for the existing Advice consortium and extending the Covid Volunteer Hub.
- £435,000 of wider commissioning – proposals without a named provider, but to be commissioned with a commitment to VCS delivery.
- The funding to businesses also includes £350,000 of business grants.

3.20 It is expected that upon delivery, the actual funding that the VCS receives from the fund is likely to be higher than the figures stated above. This is because a number of proposals do not specifically commit that funding will go to the VCS but do lend themselves to that being a likely outcome, for example, the food pantries proposal.

### **Expedited Activities**

3.21 **Appendix 2** consists of a list of the component within the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund recommendations consisting of projects that are time sensitive and whose delivery timelines require an expedited decision process e.g. because they are due to deliver summer activities. Four proposals that require expedited delivery are recommended for funding, with the total for these proposals at £590,217. These projects are a component within the overall recommendations from the Fund, as discussed above.

3.22 These projects *have been agreed* by Individual Mayoral Decision on *17 June 2021*, to ensure they can deliver on time.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

3.23 The promotion of the Mayors Covid Recovery Fund will be promoted using bespoke branding dedicated to the fund. This will be designed to stand out so people in Tower Hamlets can appreciate the impact of the fund and see things happening out in the community over summer and autumn. Consideration will be given to how this is framed and the link to broader context and other things the Council is doing.

3.24 All projects link to the outcomes of the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund and include outcomes and outputs they will deliver. Lead services for these projects will monitor progress against these. At the end of project, an evaluation report will be prepared providing an overview of the project activities that took place and the outcomes and outputs achieved. The impact of the project on the ground, backed up by case studies will also be reported. This will be disseminated and communicated widely to ensure residents can see the impact of the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund.

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The themes of the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund provide opportunities to fund services and activities for people with a range of protected equalities characteristics. We have previously reported to Cabinet on the impact of covid on our communities and we will provide a further update on this in Autumn. We have also had a range of feedback from partners and the community through a range of engagement activity. At this stage, no disproportionate adverse impact from introducing the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund has been identified. The development, prioritisation and delivery of the project proposals should ensure that opportunities for a positive impact for people with protected equalities characteristics are maximised.

## **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.

- 5.2 [Report authors should identify any other specific issues relevant to consideration of this report. Including, but not limited to, the issues noted above. This section of the report can also be used to re-emphasise particular issues that Members must have considered before taking the decision (for example issues that may come up if an objection was taken to court). Note – Paragraph 5.1 MUST NOT be deleted.]

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 The Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund (CRF) of £3m has been created from the New Homes Bonus reserve to be used to kickstart our community's recovery from the pandemic over the next 12-24 months. The 21 projects recommended to be funded from the £3m CRF in this report are to the value of £2,406,048. In addition to these projects, 4 projects were approved by Individual Mayoral Decision on *17 June 2021*, to ensure they can deliver on time and the total of funding required is £2,996,265. As the funding covers two years, a timeline of when the funding will be released will be needed for each scheme.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to undertake the activities referred to in this report.



- 7.2 Grants are usually awarded following a decision made by Grants Determination Sub-Committee under the Council's constitution. However, the GDSC acquires its decision-making power from the Mayor under the constitution and therefore in accordance with administrative law the delegator of a decision-making power may still take the decision him or herself. Therefore, the Mayor is entitled to make a grant related decision himself and not as part of the Grants Determination Sub-committee. The grants will be subject to an evaluated application procedure and supported by a legally binding agreement to assist in the monitoring of and attaining of Best Value.
- 7.3 The Council must ensure that it obtains Best Value in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness with the commissioned activity. The commissioned activity will be subject to a competitive process to obtain the most economically advantageous bid following the Council's Procurement Procedures.
- 7.4 The commissioned activity will be supported by legally binding agreement terms and monitoring to ensure that the money is used in the anticipated manner to deliver the anticipated results.

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

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1 List of recommendations**
- **Appendix 2 Projects approved by IMD to deliver Expedited Activities**

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

- NONE

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

- N/A