


Grants Determination Sub – Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
01/09/2021	
Report of: James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture	Classification: Unrestricted
One-off Restart Small Grants for Community Languages Providers	

Lead Member	Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit
Originating Officer(s)	Judith St John, Divisional Director, Commissioning and Culture Jonathan Solomons, Strategy and Policy Manager, Children and Culture
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	03/08/2021
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

Executive Summary

The report puts forward a proposal to launch a one-off small grants programme for community languages providers that plan to restart mother tongue classes from 2021/22 academic year.

The proposal is for the East End Community Foundation - EECF (who already run the small grants programme on behalf of LBTH) to manage this small grants programme of approximately £120,000 to support voluntary sector providers of community languages classes (mother tongue classes) with a one-off small restart grant. There are around 35 provider organisations in Tower Hamlets that would be eligible for this funding and it would be a closed application process with a maximum grant of £3,000 per grant. There would be an additional fee of 8% fee to EECF for the administration of the funds.

The report sets out the purpose, criteria and funding available and EECF's role in

managing the process of assessing the applications and distributing the funds in the autumn term 2021/22. It will also propose that a further final report on how the funds were spent be considered by the Grants Determination sub-committee later in 2022, once the academic year is complete.

Directorate Leadership Team
Corporate Leadership Team

Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the provision of a small grants programme of £120,000 for voluntary sector providers who wish to restart community language (mother tongue) classes.
2. To approve the East End Community Foundation (EECF) to administer this programme on behalf of the council. The cost of this will be 8% of the total fund or £9,600
3. To authorise the Director of Commissioning and Culture to approve the grants, following EECF's evaluation of the applications received and a report with recommendations presented to the EECF board.

- 1.1 Cabinet took the decision in December 2019 to close the Community Language Service. A number of options were presented in order to do this and the decision was taken that a one-off grant would be provided to enable providers to deliver the classes themselves. This paper sets out the approach to how this decision will be actioned.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The sub-committee could decide to suggest alternative options for the delivery of this programme or indeed that it is no longer appropriate for such a programme to be delivered at all.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Community Languages Service (CLS) began as the “Mother Tongue & Study Support” Service back in 1979. While information in relation to the rationale for establishing the service is limited, it appears that there are two main reasons. Firstly, to support children who spoke only English to learn their mother tongue. Secondly, as the time that the service was launched, languages were not being routinely being taught as part of the national curriculum and there is compelling research which outlines the benefits to educational development of being bilingual.
- 3.2 Since 2013, Modern Foreign Languages have been a part of the National Curriculum for primary school children (2004 for Secondary School); however, the service continued to deliver these classes, without very much change.
- 3.3 While the venues and associated costs were not borne by the local authority, the cost of employing the teachers was. There was also a small team of staff who managed and facilitated the service. The overall budget for 2018/19 was £684,400, with the vast majority of this being spent on paying for the teachers.
- 3.4 The CLS was a service that appeared to be unique to Tower Hamlets, particularly in the way that it is delivered, making direct comparisons with other local authorities difficult. The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) suggest that providers of supplementary education should be charging a regular fee to parents as this will support them to provide additional activities. There is also a strong argument that such a parental contribution supports engagement and commitment.
- 3.5 The decision was taken by Cabinet in December 2019 that the Community Language Service should close. Cabinet agreed a closure option that would provide a small one-off grant to existing providers who wished to continue to offer classes. The intention of the grant would be to support their initial set up costs.

- 3.6 From March 2020, the COVID pandemic effectively stopped all mother tongue classes from running throughout the past year and until the full closure of the CLS in March 2021. This fund will enable providers to restart their own community language classes in the 2021/22 academic year.
- 3.7 The total budget for the grants programme is £120,000. In order to be eligible, organisations will have to demonstrate that they intend to provide an ongoing programme of language classes. They will be able to apply for a maximum of £3,000 which can be spent on
- Accommodation
 - Tutors
 - Accreditations and/or training
 - Other expenses directly linked to the provision of language classes
- 3.8 Only organisations that previously provided classes with a teacher provided by the local authority or received mainstream grant aid for mother tongue classes in 2018/19 will be eligible to apply. This will limit the administrative burden of the programme as there will be a defined list of organisations that are able to apply. We are in the process of identifying a definitive list of organisations and we expect that this will be a maximum of 35. It is possible that not all organisations will be planning to continue to provide language classes and any grant funds not allocated will be returned to the council. Each organisation will only be eligible for one grant regardless of how many classes that they were previously offering.
- 3.9 We have approached the East End Community Foundation (EECF) who administer a number of other small grants programmes on behalf of the local authority and they have agreed that they would be able to administer this. They have agreed to do this at a cost of 8% of the overall programme which is £9,600. EECF will contact all eligible organisations to advise them of the programme. They are also able to provide support with the application process if this is required. EECF will undertake an evaluation of the applications received and provide a report with recommendations on who should receive a grant to the Director of Commissioning and Culture, following approval by their board for final decision on who should receive a grant. LBTH is represented on the EECF Board. The Director of Commissioning and Culture would require approval via delegated authority to sign off the grants. There are a number of funding programmes to support voluntary and community sector organisations in the borough where decisions are made under delegated authority either by officers or, in the case of the Small Grants Programme, the East End Community Foundation (EECF). These decisions are presented to the Sub-Committee for noting.
- 3.10 Should the sub-committee agree, we aim to open the application process as soon as practical. This is likely to be during the week commencing 6th September with a closing date around four weeks later. We would aim to have a finalised list of successful organisations for review by the end of October 2021. We will endeavour to distribute the grants by the start of 2022 which will enable organisations to provide two full terms of teaching. This is a tight

timeframe and there is the risk of some slippage, particularly if the decision of the sub-committee is “called in” by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.11 A condition of the grant will be that successful organisations will have to report on their use of the funds and confirm that they have continued to provide language services. This will take place at the end of the school summer term and will be a one-off exercise.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A full equality impact analysis was carried out to inform the decision to close the service. This current proposal will support organisations to continue to provide language services should they wish to do so. These classes are primarily aimed at children from BAME communities.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is no statutory requirement to provide Community Language Services which is why at a time of increasing budget pressure, the difficult decision was taken to close the service. It is acknowledged that these classes were highly valued within the community and as a result this small grants programme has been developed to enable community organisations to continue to provide these should they wish.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The full budget for community Language services was given up as an MTFS saving and therefore the provision of the grants programme will create a pressure that will need to be met from elsewhere in the community and culture budget. The service will be requesting to reduce the current savings target to take account of the revised grants programme highlighted in this report which would then meet the costs. If approval to reduce the currently approved budget saving is not forthcoming, the service will need to identify budget reductions elsewhere to cover the costs, that presently are not budgeted for.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to undertake the actions referred to in this report.
- 7.2 Grant recipients are required to submit an evaluated application showing how the funds will be used. This will form a part of the grant agreement and allow the Council to monitor the use of grant against objectives and assist the Council to demonstrate Best Value is being achieved in respect of the grants.
- 7.3 A person’s language is legally a part of a person’s ethnicity and therefore this contract goes directly to the heart of the Council’s Equality Duty in terms of eradicating discrimination between people who have a protected

characteristic and those who do not. However, wider than that, the Council will evaluate the distribution of grant funding following the closure of the grant process to evaluate the overall effect of the grant and distribution in terms of ethnicity across the borough.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Cabinet report 18 December 2019 item 6.2 “Review of the Community Language Service” (web link: [Tower Hamlets Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 18th December, 2019, 5.30 p.m.](#))

Appendices

- None

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

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A