

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS DETERMINATION (CABINET) SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 1.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2021

COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

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| Councillor Candida Ronald (Chair) | (Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector) |
| Councillor Asma Begum (Member) | (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services, Education and Equalities (Statutory Deputy Mayor)) |
| Councillor Kahar Chowdhury | (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm – (Job Share post as part of Social Inclusion and Public Realm portfolio)) |

Other Councillors Present:

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| Councillor Leema Qureshi* | (Scrutiny Lead, Resources) |
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Officers Present:

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| Awo Ahmed | (Programme Assessment and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Strategy & Policy, Communities Team, Governance) |
| Emily Fieran Reed* | (Corporate Strategy & Policy, Communities Team, Governance) |
| Jonathan Fox | (Principal Contracts Lawyer, Legal Services Governance) |
| Daniela Licciardo | (Senior Lawyer, Contracts, Legal Services Governance) |
| Ross Hughes | (Programme Manager, High Streets Team, Place) |
| Anna Zucchelli | (Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Place) |
| Zoe Folley | (Democratic Services Officer, Committees, Governance) |

*Attended on line.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mayor John Biggs and Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety. Councillor Kahar Chowdhury (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm) was deputising.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Kahar Chowdhury declared a non DPI interest in the following agenda items as the Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm

- Item 6.1, Historic Buildings Grant to 57 Brick Lane for historic shopfront improvements.
- Item 6.2, Shopfront Improvements Grants–Middlesex Street Regeneration Programme.

Councillor Kahar Chowdhury also declared a non DPI interest in Item 6.1 on the grounds that he had briefly met the owner of the property, during a recent meeting with Officers to Brick Lane, as part of his Council duties.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED:

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

4. CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

There were none.

5. EXERCISE OF MAYORAL DISCRETIONS

There were none.

6. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Historic Buildings Grant to 57 Brick Lane for historic shopfront improvements

Anna Zucchelli (Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Place) presented the report. The report sought permission to offer a grant of £10,000 to Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane, from two sources. These were: the Historic Buildings Grant and the Brick Lane Regeneration Programme (where it was normally required the business owner make a contribution). However, due to the mitigating circumstances, highlighted in the report, Officers considered that this was beyond their means. It was reported that the building was in a poor condition including severe timber decay and broken glazing. The building was located in a prominent position on the corner location - opposite the grade II* listed Brick Lane Mosque. The project provided an opportunity to enhance the historic shop front and listed building. Due to these factors, it met the grant criteria.

Other features of the scheme were noted and these included:

- The grants conditions. These included: the need to seek three competitive quotes, before an offer could be made and the completion of an inspection of the works before payment could be made.
- The provision of a plaque referencing the funding arrangements.
- The provision of advice to the business owners in a maintenance manual about the repair works and the upkeep of the building.

The Sub – Committee noted the questions submitted on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the following:

- The cost of the refurbishment works and the contribution from the landlord/tenant. It was confirmed that the cost would solely be met from two sources identified above rather than from a contribution for the landlord/tenants- given the affordability issues.
- In addition, It was also noted that the business owners had already contributed to previous works, so overall it was felt that they had already contributed enough to the improvement works, without making any further contributions to this project.

The Committee discussed a number of issues as set out below:

- Responsibility for the repairs works in the long term and upkeep of the building and landlords contributions for this. It was noted that Officers were mindful of these issues and undertook to consider this further with the Town Centre and High Street Team. It was noted that the maintenance manual should also provide advice and guidance covering such issues. It was also noted that since this was a listed building, any changes to the building would require planning permission.
- Members noted the importance of protecting heritage assets and welcomed the proposals.

RESOLVED:

1. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to issue a formal offer of Historic Buildings Grant, subject to conditions, of £10,000 to Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane, towards the cost of shopfront improvements on the Fournier Street elevation.
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.

6.2 Shopfront Improvements Grants – Middlesex Street Regeneration Programme

Ross Hughes (Programme Manager, High Streets & Town Centres Team) provided an overview of the proposals. This report seeks approval to set-up a grant scheme under the Middlesex Street and High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) regeneration programmes, to carry out shopfront and façade improvements to high street properties in the Middlesex Street area.

The Committee were advised of the work to identify suitable shop fronts which if improved, would have the greatest affect, including the appointment of design architects to carry out asset valuation and begin survey work of the properties.

It was also noted that the Council had carried out engagement with the businesses regarding the proposals and it would deliver a number of benefits, such as improving the visual appearance of the high street, by enhancing the shop fronts. This in turn should help improve foot fall and help business recovery.

Due to a number of reasons, including the impact of Covid on local businesses, it was proposed that the business owners should contribute 10% of the costs

The Sub – Committee noted the questions submitted on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the following issues:

- The historic decrease in footfall in town centres and how the proposals should improve footfall as well as support recovery. In response, Officers undertook to provide more detailed data on the footfall to the Committee. It was also confirmed that this project formed part of the wider programme of improvements to increase footfall and enhance the appearance of town centres. The budget totalled £705,000 with £405,000 from Middlesex Street Regeneration Programme and £240,000 from the High Street Heritage Action Programme, with the contribution from businesses.
- The risk of demand outstripping supply - should more applications come forward for works to shop fronts – (in addition to the 22 properties identified in the report). Officers advised of the reasons for identifying these buildings. It was also noted that should the demand exceed supply that it may be necessary to look at the need to prioritise properties and follow their plans for such a scenario.
- The safeguards in place in relation to collecting instalments from business and managing any shortfall. Officers confirmed that deposits would be sought and that they had developed contingency plans to manage any shortfall issues should the need arise.

The Committee discussed a number of issues as set out below:

Members further discussed how the improvements (and similar improvements) should help the high street recover and increase footfall to markets and town centres. In response Officers noted the significance of such projects in achieving these aims and how this project should help with this, for

by example bringing stakeholders together to facilitate the project. It was also emphasised that the proposals should deliver a number of positive outcomes - both in terms of enhancing the buildings themselves and bringing in more business to the area, which should in turn help regenerate the area and help with such things as filling any empty shops for example.

RESOLVED:

1. Approve the shopfront improvement grant scheme for the Middlesex Street area.
2. To approve the cost and funding of the project, as set out in the Committee report.
3. To note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4

6.3 VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority

Awo Ahmed–(Programme Assessment and Monitoring Officer) introduced the report. This report and appendices provides an update on funding awarded to voluntary and community sector organisations under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee

In relation to the Community Benefit Rent Reduction – it was noted that it would be helpful to see the figures for the existing annual rental charge. Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED:

1. Note the update on funding awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since their last meeting.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

There were none

The meeting ended at 2.10 p.m.

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