


Cabinet Grants Determination Cabinet Sub-Committee 12 th January	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Ann Sutcliffe	Classification: Unrestricted
Community Gardens Programme	

Lead Member	John Biggs the Mayor Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector.
Originating Officer(s)	Adam Richards – Project Manager, Regeneration
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	Significant impact on wards
Forward Plan Notice Published	[Insert date notice was published – see forthcoming decisions webpage]
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 2: A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People live in a borough that is clean and green. • People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods.

Executive Summary

The Community Gardens Programme will deliver food growing, allotments and other forms of green community infrastructure at specific locations in LIF Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4.

This report presents the approach to distribute Local Infrastructure Funding via a grants process to community groups and other organisations to enable them to deliver community gardens across the Borough.

Recommendations:

The Grant Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the availability of funding for the project.

2. Approve the process for inviting application for the Community Gardens Programme.
3. Agree the process for awarding grant funding, and subsequent monitoring arrangements
4. Agree to delegate responsibly for approving the awards of grant to the appointed grant giving organisation.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To deliver a borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in by providing grant funding to a range of community groups and other organisations that will enable them to deliver community gardens across the Borough.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Council explored directly delivering or directly awarding funding to sites and community groups and other organisations rather than organising a grants process, however this option was discounted because an appraisal of the 30 community garden sites that were nominated via the 2019 Local Infrastructure Fund consultation, and a soft market testing exercise involving community groups and other organisations indicated that there were only 9 viable sites i.e. the sites had a viable site ownership and community group attached. The total cost of delivering these 9 sites will only require up to one third of the project's £437,500 total budget, therefore an alternative (grants) process to distribute the remaining budget is required.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 This report presents the approach for a new funding programme, the Community Gardens Programme, to distribute funding via a grants process to community groups and other organisations to enable them to deliver community gardens across the Borough.
- 3.2 With funding coming from the Local Infrastructure Fund, the programme scope will be centred upon the delivery of the mandate provided through the consultation exercise held in 2019: *Community Gardens Programme; to include food growing, allotments and others forms of green community infrastructure, that was agreed at Cabinet on 25th November 2020.*
- 3.3 A breakdown of the geographical spread of the Community Gardens Programme budget is shown below.

Community Gardens Programme	LIF Area 1	LIF Area 2	LIF Area 3	LIF Area 4
Budget Allocation	£100,000	£37,500	£200,000	£100,000

- 3.4 Up to £170,000 will be required for the direct delivery of funding for the 9 Phase 1 sites, and an amount less than £267,500 will be required for Phase 2.
- 3.5 Delivery will be phased, with Phase 1 placing emphasis on the sites nominated during the 2019 LIF consultation that are deemed viable for delivery through direct delivery or the direct award of funding. Phase 2, which is the purpose of this report, will be via grant process open to community groups and other organisations that may or not have responded to the consultation exercise in 2019.
- 3.6 The principles for the approach for Phase 2 of the Community Gardens Programme described below were developed following the soft market testing exercise involving possible project beneficiaries and consultation with internal Council teams.
- 3.7 The Council will carry out a competitive procurement process to appoint a third-party grant giving organisation who will be responsible for the administration of grants to community groups and other organisations. The procurement process will ensure the grant giving organisation has grant making experience and specialist expertise in the design and delivery of similar capital projects and ensure they have developed local networks that will help maximise the number and quality of application received.
- 3.8 The cost of the grant giving organisations' services is typically between 8% and 12% of the value of the grants distributed, depending on the scope of services provided. For Phase 2 of the Community Gardens Programme this cost will be around £25,000.
- 3.9 The grant giving organisation will contribute towards the design of the grants programme including objectives and desired outcomes, criteria, timelines, budget, monitoring and locations.
- 3.10 The project will seek to measure the following outcomes resulting from the improvements:
- Improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue, and enhanced quality of life for both children and adults.
 - Promote healthy behaviours, such as engaging in physical activity and food growing to support healthy lifestyle.
 - Promote community cohesion, support people foster a sense of belonging, reduce isolation and loneliness and encourage a connection to nature.

- Deliver cleaner, greener communities where people wish to live and work.
 - Support leisure and outdoor recreation- provide a space for retreat, enjoyment and self-expression.
 - Support the development of skills and capabilities, particularly for young people.
 - Support environmental sustainability, reduce exposure to air pollution, mitigate the urban heat island effect and create a positive biodiversity net gain.
- 3.11 The grant giving organisation will work alongside the Council to create awareness and interest of the funding opportunity with hard to reach and disadvantaged communities to widen participation. They will also carry out capacity building and grant support services to share best-practice and learning and encourage high quality applications.
- 3.12 There is no restriction on the size or number of the grants distributed, but it is anticipated the grant sizes will typically range from £5,000 - £25,000 which is based on the soft market testing exercise and a review of similar projects.
- 3.13 The grant giving organisation will make an initial recommendation of projects to fund based on the agreed criteria which will be reviewed by a steering group of Council Officers chaired by the Head of Regeneration. The final recommendation will be presented to the Grants Determination Sub-Committee and will be from the grant giving organisation Chief Executive on behalf of the directors/trustees.
- 3.14 As part of the grant agreement, grant recipients will be required to submit evidence that that the grant has been spent as outlined in their application and submit both qualitative and quantitative feedback to help the Council determine the impact that the grant has had on beneficiaries

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery of the Community Gardens Programme will positively impact residents across the Borough, particularly grant recipients and project beneficiaries.
- 4.2 An Equality Impact Analysis will be carried out to supplement the final recommendation of grant recipients made the to Grant Determination Sub Committee in due course.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Best Value Implications

Achieving best value is a criterion that grant applications will be assessed upon.

5.2 Consultations

There are no specific consultation considerations arising from this report.

5.3 **Environmental (including air quality)**

The project will support environmental sustainability, reduce exposure to air pollution, mitigate the urban heat island effect and create a positive biodiversity net gain and support the delivery of the Council's Air Quality and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Environmental impacts is a criterion that grant applications will be assessed upon.

5.4 **Risk Management**

The following risks have been identified:

Risk	Mitigation Action
Suitable third-party grant giving organisation cannot be appointed	Carry out informal conversations and agree appropriate scope of services on a mutual basis in advance of appointment
Lack of appetite from community groups and other organisations to take part	Carry out informal conversations with potential project beneficiaries and capacity building and grant support services to encourage and support applications
The number and location of sites put forward by grant recipients does not match the budget distribution across the Borough	Develop funding criteria to ensure equitable and impactful distribution of funding on a 'Whole-Borough' basis
The funding criteria and successful grant recipients attract criticism	Funding criteria developed with grant giving organisation and distributed in a transparent manner

5.5 **Crime Reduction**

There are no specific crime reduction considerations arising from this report.

5.6 **Safeguarding**

There are no specific safeguarding considerations arising from this report.

5.7 **Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment**

There are no specific data protection/privacy impact assessment considerations arising from this report.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 This report seeks approval to present the approach for a new funding programme, the Community Gardens Programme, to distribute funding via a grants process to community groups and other organisations to enable them to deliver community gardens across the Borough.

6.2 Community Garden's project have a total approved budget of £437k and is funded by Community Infrastructure Levy Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF).

6.3 This project delivers Community Gardens Programme; to include food growing, allotments and others forms of green community infrastructure, that was agreed at Cabinet on 25th November 2020 and the funding is considered to be discretionary and a grant.

6.4 This project is included as part of the existing council approved capital programme and all project costs must be contained within the budget.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The grants sub-committee has the authority to approve the grant described in this report.

7.2 The grant approval is sought in compliance with the Community Garden Infrastructure Programme and the Council will monitor the grant to ensure that the grant is applied in accordance with the programme's criteria.

7.3 The grant monitoring will be supported by appropriate agreement terms. The agreement will ensure that the funding is used in compliance with the purposes stated in the grant application and the conditions highlighted in this report. This will assist the Council achieving Best Value in line with the law.

7.4 There are no immediate legal equality issues arising from this report. However, the grant monitoring process will assess any equalities issues that may arise and ensure that these are addressed appropriately.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- NONE

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A