


Grants Determination Sub Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
Wednesday 6 July 2022	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
VCS Funding Awarded Under Delegated Authority	

Lead Member	Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities Mark Waterman, Senior VCS Development Officer
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	N/A
Forward Plan Notice Published	30 th May 2022
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on funding awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Recommendations:

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee is recommended to:

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

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There are a number of funding programmes to support VCS organisations in the borough where decisions are made under either delegated authority 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.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Council could decide not to provide funding to VCS organisations through its various programmes. However, to do this would be contrary to the agreed policy to support VCS activities in the borough set out in the VCS Strategy 2020-2024.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Small Grants Programme and Older People's Services Fund

- (a) The Small Grants Programme was established to ensure that local people and community groups will continue to be able to get funding to support community initiatives – people getting together to get things done. The programme is intended to make funds available to support grass roots activity in local communities that will help make life better in Tower Hamlets and achieve the changes set out in the Tower Hamlets Plan and the Strategic Plan. By establishing a single grants programme with different themes or activities to be funded, the Council is trying to make sure local groups seeking funds will have a one stop shop to get to the funds best suited to their needs.
- (b) The programme has five themes that constitute the main programme and four that are focused themes as detailed below:

Main themes

1. **Innovation** - to encourage innovation or pilot something new, especially where there is a gap;
2. **Prevention** - to promote grass roots activity to reduce the need for statutory services;
3. **Neighbourhood action** - to promote local neighbourhood initiatives
4. **Community cohesion** - to develop community resilience, promote cultural opportunities and reduce social isolation, and
5. **Partnership working** - making the sector more effective through closer partnership working within the sector and across sectors.

Focussed Themes

6. **Loneliness** - Reducing the impact of loneliness and isolation.
7. **Access and Participation** – to establishing access and participation schemes to provide referral gateways for people from BAME communities.
8. **Community Support Services for Older People** – to combat social isolation of older people through the provision of community based support services. This theme is administered separately from the other Small Grants Programme themes as an **Older People’s Services Fund**.
9. **Cohesion Events** – to fund street parties and other events focusing on community cohesion and bringing communities together to address issues of loneliness and isolation – This is one off funded by the Covid Recovery Funding the Council established in 2021.

(c) The Council conducted tender exercises in:

- January-February 2022 for the Management of the Small Grants Programme 2022-2023. This contract was awarded to East End Community Foundation (EECF).
- April 2022 for the Administration of the Older People’s Services Fund. This contract was also awarded to EECF.

(d) EECF has conducted a grants round for Theme 9 of the Small Grants Programme – Cohesion Events in March-April 2022. Funding has been recommended for 9 projects. EECF is in the process of negotiating grant agreements with successful applicants.

(e) EECF has also conducted a grants round for Themes 1 to 7 of the Small Grants Programme in May 2022. Its recommendations for funding in response to applications are being considered. Details of both these programmes will be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

3.2 Jubilee Celebration Events Fund

- (a) Tower Hamlets established the Jubilee Celebration Events Fund to award grants of up to £500 to organisations delivering events and street parties to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Jubilee Celebration Events Fund focused on community cohesion and re-connecting communities who have been most affected by the pandemic. The Fund opened for applications on 3rd December 2021, with £10,000 of funding being made available. The Fund was managed by EECF.
- (b) Jubilee Celebration Events Fund awards of £500 each have been approved for 24 organisations since the last Sub-Committee meeting. These grants supported Jubilee Fund Events that took place over the bank holiday weekend (between Thursday 2nd June and Sunday 5th June 2022). The awards are outlined in Appendix A.
- (c) Two organisations who were recommended for funding decided to pull out of their planned events due to operational challenges in relation to holding their proposed events.

3.3 Innovation Fund

- (a) The Council is keen to encourage and support innovation in the sector and acknowledged that this would require some funding to enable the sector to pilot new initiatives and approaches to service delivery and support.
- (b) The Innovation Fund supports VCS organisations to "test and learn" new ways of working, new initiatives and new delivery models that if successful could be scaled up and commissioned more formally.
- (c) Decisions on the awarding of the Innovation Fund have been made by the Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation in consultation with the Cabinet Member, based on recommendations of an advisory panel which consists of the Chief Executive of the East End Community Foundation, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities and officers from within that service.
- (d) The Council has an agreement with the crowdfunding portal, Spacehive, to support local VCS organisations to crowdfund for projects. This contract was renewed with Spacehive for May 2022-September following a council tender that was conducted in March-April 2022. The Innovation Fund budget is £60,000 per annum with a total budget to date of £240,000. Total awards to date are £155,437 with a remaining balance of £84,563.
- (e) VCS organisations that crowdfund through the Our Tower Hamlets page of the Spacehive portal have an opportunity to pitch for up to £10,000 (or a

maximum of 50 per cent of an organisation's crowdfunding target) in match funding for their projects.

- (f) Further details can be found on the [Spacehive Tower Hamlets](#) and the [Tower Hamlets Innovation Fund](#) web pages with more information available in the [factsheet](#).
- (g) Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee one organisation has been assessed and awarded funding from the Innovation Fund under delegated authority.

Organisation	Project	Total Innovation Fund Pledge	Total Crowdfunding Target
Onelab CIC	Neurodiversity In Tower Hamlets	£9,589	£19,147

- (h) Further details of the pledge and organisation awarded are set out in Appendix B.

3.4 Emergency Funding

- (a) The Emergency Funding is grant support from the Council to local VCS organisations based in Tower Hamlets who are facing a significant loss of council funding. Organisations can apply for one-off grants up to £10,000. Applicants must clearly demonstrate the need for the funding and the fact that they are facing an unforeseen emergency.
- (b) Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee two organisations have been assessed and awarded funding from the Emergency Funding budget for April 2021-March 2022, under delegated authority:

Organisation	Total Emergency Funding Approved
Weavers Adventure Playground Associations	£9,722
Account3	£10,000

- (c) Further details of the organisations awarded are set out in Appendix C.

3.5 Community Benefit Rent Reduction

- (a) The Community Benefit Rent Reduction (CBRR) scheme was set up by the Council to acknowledge the value of the work carried out by voluntary and community organisations leasing its premises through a reduction in the rent payable. The council charges an appropriate 'market' level rent for its

premises and organisations can apply for up to 80% of this as a rent reduction.

- (b) CBRR is only available for short leases of three to five years. To qualify, organisations need to meet a number of criteria relating to governance, management and quality standards. Full details of the scheme are set out on the council's website at the [CBRR page](#).
- (c) Decisions are made by the Director of Strategy Improvement and Transformation in consultation with the Cabinet Member based on recommendations of an advisory panel which consists of the Head of Revenues (Chair), Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities y and the Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service.
- (d) CBRR has been approved to 12 VCS organisations and the funding is subject to the completion of their leases and an annual review. There have been no further leases agreed since the last Sub-Committee meeting.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All grants awarded need to demonstrate how they meet the needs of our diverse communities and support the council's Public Sector Equality Duty. Equalities data is collected as part of the monitoring process and this will be reported as part of the annual reporting process.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Best Value

Recent legislation, particularly the Localism Act 2010, has emphasised the role of communities working in partnership with local authorities to help achieve more effective and less costly services to local people. The process of co-production of services delivered by local voluntary and community organisations is a tool now widely recognised as a means to achieving this outcome.

5.2 Risk Management

There is a risk that, by not publishing details of funding awarded to VCS organisations, the council could leave itself open to challenge that it is not fulfilling previous commitments to openness and transparency. This report is one of a series that will provide updates on funding decisions made under delegated authority and the VCS Annual Report will provide more detailed analysis.

5.3 Crime Reduction

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

5.4 Safeguarding

There are no specific safeguarding implications arising from this report. However, ensuring appropriate consideration is given to safeguarding will be addressed in the development of the Small Grants Programme, both through governance requirements and in the capacity building programme for the sector.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report notes the update on funding awarded to voluntary and community (VCS) organisations under delegated authority. The total of grants awarded and agreed rent reductions are contained within approved budgets.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The terms of reference of this sub-committee require a noting report to be made detailing the award of grants where the award was made under a general delegation by the sub-committee. This complies with this requirement
- 7.2 The grants and information noted in this report are in line with approvals previously made. There are no other significant legal implications in this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix A - Organisations approved for London Borough of Tower Hamlets Jubilee Fund Event Celebration Award Grants for Events Taking Place from 2nd to 5th June 2022
- Appendix B Innovation Fund Award
- Appendix C - Emergency Funding Awards

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

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:
Or state N/A