

Grants Determination Sub Committee

9th November 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	
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.

Guidance Documents

Further details on the procedure for Urgent Decisions can be found in the [Intranet Library](#) and the Guide to Report Writing [guidance note](#).

Specific Issues for Pre-Decision Meetings

(Officers may use the following table to add points of note for internal meetings such as CLT, MAB or DMTs. Content can be deleted at any stage and, in any case, will be before publication for the decision making meeting.)

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 delegated authority by officers following evaluation of applications by Council officers or the East End Community Foundation on the Council's behalf.. These decisions are presented to the Sub-Committee for noting in line with the Sub-committee's terms of reference.

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 conducted a grants application process for Round 3 of Small Grants Programme 2021-2022 in March-April 2022. Funding has been approved for the following projects:

- Small Grants Fund Themes 1 to 5: 16 projects with total grant award of £63,509
- Theme 6 Loneliness: 4 projects with a total grant award of £18,559
- Theme 7 Access and Participation: 3 projects with total value of £15,000
- Theme 9 Cohesion Events: 10 projects with total value of £45,414

(e) Please see **Appendix A – Small Grants Programme Grants Awarded Round 3 2021-2022** for information on individual Small Grants Programme projects approved in Round 3 2021-2022.

(f) EECF has conducted further rounds of applications for Small Grants Programme in 2022-2023:

- Round 1 between May-June 2022. EECF will be notifying organisations in August 2022 of the outcomes of their applications for the above funding round.
- Round 2 between July-August 2022. Organisations applying for funding for this round are scheduled to be notified about their applications by EECF in October 2022.

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 2023 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 there have been no additional awards of funding from the Innovation Fund under delegated authority.

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 there have been no additional awards of funding from the Emergency Fund under delegated authority.

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 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 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.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report notes the update on funding awarded to voluntary and community sector (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 grants and information noted in this report are in line with approvals previously made and the terms of reference for this sub-committee. There are no other legal implications in this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

Appendix A – Small Grants Programme Grants Awarded Round 3 2021-2022

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

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A