

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>9 October 2023</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of Janet Fasan Divisional Director Legal and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Call in - Mayor's Community Grants Programme 2023-27</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Thomas French, Democratic Services Officer (Committee)
Wards affected	All

CONSIDERATION OF THE CALL IN

A call in request has been received on the decision of the Chief Executive on 25 September 2023.

In accordance with the Council's call in procedure rules, the matter is referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for its consideration and to decide whether to refer the matter back to Cabinet for further consideration. The following procedure is to be followed by the Committee for consideration of the Call In:

- i. Chair to invite a call-in member to present call-in.
- ii. Chair to invite members of the Committee to ask question.
- iii. Chair to Invite Cabinet Member to respond to the call-in.
- iv. Chair to invite members of the Committee to ask questions.
- v. Followed by a general debate.

It is open to the OSC to either resolve to take no action (which would have the effect of endorsing the original Cabinet decisions), or to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration setting out the nature of its concerns and possibly recommending an alternative course of action.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Overview and Scrutiny considers:

1. The contents of the attached report, review the Cabinet's decision (provisional, subject to call in) arising; and
2. Decide whether to accept the decision or to refer the matter back to the Cabinet with proposals and reasons.

INTRODUCTION

At the 29 March 2023 meeting of Cabinet, the Chief Executive was delegated to make this decision, as a result on 25 September 2023 **APPROVED** the following:

1. Agree the Mayor's Community Grants Programme (MCGP) and funding to individual organisations as set out in Appendix D of this report for the period 1st November 2023- 31st March 2027.
2. Authorise Interim Divisional Director for Strategy, Improvement & Transformation to approve detailed funding agreements setting out the outcomes the projects are expected to achieve for the funding allocated and achievements of any conditions of grant.
3. Note the Equalities Impact Analysis and the specific equalities considerations as set out in paragraphs 4.1-4.8 (of main report) and Appendix A and agree mitigating actions set out in full Equality Impact Analysis.
4. Note the various assurance processes incorporated in the grant making process as summarised in paragraph 3.17 and set out in relevant sections of the report.

The decisions above have been Called-In by Councillors Mufeedah Bustin, Asma Begum, Sirajul Islam, James King, Amy Lee. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution.

In accordance with the OSC Protocols and Guidance adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 4th June 2013, any Member(s) who present(s) the "Call In" is (are) not eligible to participate in the general debate.

REASONS FOR THE CALL IN

The call in requisition from the Councillors noted above has provided reason(s) for the call-in. The reason(s) are replicated below:

The aforementioned Councillors, call in the above decision taken by the Chief Executive on the 25/9/23, they do so on the following grounds:

1. It is in contravention to Part A, Article 3, Section 1, Subsections d and f of the Borough of Tower Hamlets Constitution: 'Principles of Decision-Making':

d) a presumption in favour of openness

The Council has a statutory duty under the CIL Regulations 2010 to set aside 15% of CIL income as NCIL in areas where there is no neighbourhood plan and 25% where there is a neighbourhood plan in place.

NCIL area 3 has a neighbourhood plan in place, however, it is noted that the three wards that make up NCIL 3 (Island Gardens, part of Canary Wharf ward and part of Blackwall & Cubitt Town ward) received the lowest number of submitted bids (para 3.8 of report) and therefore a lower number of awards.

The report does not provide detail on which individual awards are funded by NCIL and lacks transparency on whether NCIL has been correctly allocated to the areas based on.

The geographic maps in Appendix E of the report highlights only 7 projects awarded funding on the Isle of Dogs are ward specific the remainder are borough specific and it is unclear how many beneficiaries from the Isle of Dogs will receive the desired outcomes of the grant awards. However, when reading the details of the 7 projects, it is clear that only 3 of these projects are actually ward specific, and that the remaining 4 either cover "E14" or list almost every other ward in the borough. It is unclear how the "boroughwide" projects will have such a broad reach given the average award is £30,000 and whether NCIL funded projects will actually result in any outcomes for the area in which NCIL should be spent.

It is unclear how Appendix G: Guiding Principles For Use of NCIL was created and how this relates to the projects awarded/

f) take account of all relevant matters

The award to the advice consortium has reduced (when inflation is considered) however the demand for income and benefits advice is crucial to those struggling with the Cost of Living crisis. In addition, the removal of funding to THCAN and THCVS who both support the voluntary sector with training and support is short-sighted and may lead to funded charities becoming unsustainable.

The report has an EQIA Amber rating, with specifically named omissions for projects supporting the safety of residents with disabilities, and LGBTQIA residents. The removal of funding for these projects when hate crime is on the rise is counter-intuitive.

ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION PROPOSED

1. Ask the Mayor to examine whether funding for the Mayor's Community Grants Programme would be better sourced from alternative sources.

2. Allocate more funding to the VCS organisations based in NCIL 3.
 3. Re-examine the grants making process to proportionally allocate by CIL area if funded by CIL.
 4. Allocate more funding to the advice sector and consortiums.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Mayor's Community Grants Programme 2023-27

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended) List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

- None.