



Cabinet
25 July 2016

**Report from Director of
Performance, Policy and
Partnerships**

For Action

Wards Affected: All

Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund (VSIF) – Local Grants 2016/18

Appendix A is “Not for Publication”

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Following assessment of 43 applications to the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants scheme, this report seeks agreement to grant fund 11 projects led by voluntary organisations for two years, subject to performance.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 2.1 Agree the grant funding allocations from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants scheme to the voluntary sector led projects set out in paragraph 3.12 of this report which will run between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2018.
- 2.2 Note that all grant funding allocations referred to in 2.1 above will be made subject to the Council's Grant Conditions with the organisation required to sign an agreement with the Council, stating the purpose of the grant and expected outcomes before funding is released.
- 2.3 Agree that for the reasons detailed in paragraph 3.20 in cases where an organisation either declines the grant before or during the funding period or the grant is withdrawn for performance reasons or other breach of grant conditions, that the decision to reallocate the fund is delegated to the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 On 8 February 2016, Cabinet approved the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund (“VSIF”) – Local Grants 2016 – 2018 and agreed for the grants to be 2 year grants with a maximum grant available of £25k per year per project with a total of £462K available for the scheme for the 2 year period.
- 3.2 The VSIF application pack was available on www.brent.gov from 3 March 2016. Organisations could download the application pack which included grant criteria, application form, details of support available, links to key strategies and standard conditions of grant aid (Appendix B). The closing date for emailing completed applications was 10am on Monday 18 April 2016.

- 3.3 The grant was promoted through Brent Council's website, social media channels, at Brent Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum, via press releases to local press, via direct emails to all organisations on the community directory, councillors and relevant council departments, and via CVS Brent's e-newsletter and social media.
- 3.4 Support for applicants was provided at two workshops on 17 and 21 March 2016, run by The Partnerships and Engagement Team, where the funding criteria and process was discussed in detail and where organisations had the opportunity to discuss their proposed projects with officers. CVS Brent's services were promoted within the application pack and applicants were encouraged to contact CVS Brent for support in developing and reviewing applications.
- 3.5 Grants were assessed in line with the grant criteria and standard grant terms and conditions. The assessment looked at both the organisation applying and the project proposal made.
- 3.6 The assessment of the organisation considered the structure, management, track record (where funded before), commitment to equality and diversity and engagement of users in the management and development of projects. All organisations were required to submit referees to verify their experience and ability to provide services within the proposed theme.
- 3.7 All applications were assessed by a management accountant to ascertain the financial viability of the organisation. This process was carried out in accordance with guidance from the Council's contract standing orders. The assessment included detailed financial analysis for each organisation.
- 3.8 The assessment of projects looked at alignment with Borough Plan priorities and statutory service provision in the borough, partnerships with other organisations in the borough and at a regional and national level, any other match funding proposed, the quality of the proposal including how success would be measured and the range of bids received. Officers noted the activities to be provided, their location, links with existing services and the outcomes and outputs to be achieved. Organisations which had previously had VSIF funding were eligible to apply but could not apply for an extension of the previously funded project.
- 3.9 43 applications were received seeking a total of £1,769,675 over the 2 year period.
- 3.10 Funding has been recommended for 11 projects. These projects meet the funding criteria, offer value for money, align with the council's priorities and associated statutory service provision in the borough and provide a range of projects across geographical areas and community needs. A summary of recommendations for all the projects can be found in Appendix A: Recommendations Report.
- 3.11 The total funding requested by the 11 recommended projects is £505,453. The total VSIF grants budget is £462,000. It is therefore recommended that the 11 projects are funded but with a 10% reduction of funding given against the funding requested to each project. Where needed, organisations will be allowed to amend their outcomes accordingly, in agreement with officers.
- 3.12 Details of the recommended projects, including funding requested and funding recommended is outlined in Figure 1 overleaf:

Figure 1 - VSIF – Local Grants 2016/8 : Recommended Projects

Organisation	Project	Total Funding Requested	90% Funding Recommended
Ashford Place	Run a range of activities to enable vulnerable & isolated people to be fitter, healthier and part of the community by taking control of their own health and well-being	£50,000	£45,000
Asian Women Resource Centre	Provide direct services to women and girls affected by Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Faith Based Abuse.	£49,537	£44,584
Brent Adolescence Centre	Provide group therapy linked to sport to support vulnerable adolescent boys with violent or aggressive behaviour in school or who have already offended.	£30,215	£27,194
Crisis UK (formerly LIFT)	Build the resilience of homeless and vulnerably housed residents in Harlesden through art based activities and showcase events in partnership with Central Saint Martins the largest arts college in the UK.	£48,910	£44,019
Elders Voice	Provide a bespoke (local and home visits) computer training service for older isolated people who find it hard to get out.	£38,391	£34,552
Friends of Barham	Provide a part time professional librarian to support and train volunteers to manage 4 community libraries	£50,000	£45,000
Greenleaf Trust	Deliver education, prevention workshops, mentoring to young people at risk of crime and supporting existing gang members to exit gang and criminal lifestyles in Church End.	£38,400	£34,560
Oxford Kilburn Youth Trust	Provide a range of physical activity sessions to improve the health of young people (with a specific programme for young people with disabilities) in South Kilburn, train youth coaches and set up a youth enterprise related to healthy eating.	£50,000	£45,000
PLIAS Resettlement Ltd.	Provide holistic support services for Brent offenders and ex-offenders to reintegrate, rehabilitate and resettle into Brent.	£50,000	£45,000
Society for the Advancement of Black Arts (SABA)	Provide employment support for the long term unemployed, those with mental health needs, returnees to work with childcare needs and assistance for enterprise start-ups.	£50,000	£45,000
Sufra NW London	Create St. Raphael's Edible Garden – an outdoor community space with a range of social activities and learning opportunities that improve the life chances, skills development and employability of local residents.	£50,000	£45,000
Total		£505,453	£454,909

- 3.13 Each funded organisation will be issued with a written grant agreement clearly stating the activities to be provided and the outputs to be achieved in line with their application and any special conditions will be included in this.
- 3.14 Officers in the Partnerships and Engagement Team will monitor each organisation's performance against the outputs and outcomes set out in their grant agreement on a quarterly basis. As part of this process the team will also have on-site meetings with organisations to view the delivery of projects. Officers will work closely with each organisation to ensure links with appropriate council departments are established and maintained.
- 3.15 The original timescales for the grants as detailed in the 8 May 2016 Cabinet report were for the grants to be approved in June 2016 with projects commencing 1 July 2016. These timescales had not taken into account the time needed for Cabinet approval. All organisations who submitted applications have been written to and informed of the new timetable. The new timetable will allow more planning time for the successful projects. The new start date is to ensure that the projects are aligned within standard financial reporting quarters. The updated timescales for the grants are detailed in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Summary of Updated VSIF - Local Grants Timetable:

25 July 2016	Cabinet meeting
1 August 2016	Deadline for Cabinet call-in period
2 August 2016	Outcome of grants communicated to all organisations
2 – 5 August 2016	Feedback given to all unsuccessful organisations
August / September 2016	Grant agreements put in place for successful organisations
1 October 2016	Funded projects commence

- 3.16 The competition for funding was high and so the need for high quality responses in line with the stated criteria was very important for success. The assessment of bids highlighted a number of aspects which need to be developed further by organisations in order to enhance their chances of success in obtaining funding. These aspects included better understanding of what others in the voluntary sector and statutory sector are already providing in the borough, a stronger evidencing of need and partnerships which enhance projects, detailed budgets and stronger linkages between activities and proposed measures of success.
- 3.17 A number of organisations applied for funding for services which are already being delivered, funded or provided directly by the council and these organisations will be linked to the appropriate services such as Brent Start to ensure that the organisations' users are able to access the services already in place.
- 3.18 The council recognises the importance of giving feedback to those organisations who were not successful in this round. Feedback will be given to all unsuccessful applicants on their bid. Meetings will be offered with CVS Brent for all applicants identified as needing capacity building or grant writing support.
- 3.19 An event will be held for all successful organisations in August / September 2016 which will enable all successful organisations to network and develop links whilst also going through all the monitoring conditions and processes related to the grants.
- 3.20 As indicated in paragraph 3.11, it is recommended to fund 11 projects but with a 10% reduction in funding against that requested and, if required, agree amended outcomes. If it is not possible to agree such amended outcomes, then it may be necessary to reallocate grant funding. Similarly, if an organisation declines its grant during the funding period or the grant is withdrawn for performance reasons or other breach of grant conditions, it may be necessary to reallocate grant

funding. In order to deal with such situations, approval is sought to delegate to the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships the authority to reallocate such funding.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants budget allocation for 2016/18 is £462,000.

4.2 The recommendations made in this report can be implemented within the available budget.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Under S1 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a general power of competence to do anything which an individual may do unless it is expressly prohibited.

5.2 The giving of grants to voluntary organisations is a discretionary power which must be exercised reasonably taking into account all relevant considerations and ignoring irrelevant considerations.

5.3 The decision to award a grant is discretionary. The Council's discretion must not be fettered by previous commitments they may have given and it should make its decision in the light of present circumstances.

5.4 Under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999, Brent Council, as a "best value authority" is under general duty of best value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". Under the duty of best value, the Council should consider overall value, including environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision.

5.5 Before deciding how to fulfil their best value duty, local authorities are required to consult a wide range of local persons, including voluntary and community sector organisations and businesses as set out in section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999.

5.6 In March 2015, the Government circulated revised Best Value Statutory Guidance. According to that Guidance, local authorities should be sensitive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations and should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts.

5.7 The Guidance also advises that a local authority intending to reduce or end grant funding or other support to a voluntary or community organisation that will materially threaten the viability of the organisation or service it provides should give at least three months' notice to both the organisation involved and the public/service users. The Guidance also advises that a local authority should actively engage the organisation as early as possible on the future of the service, any knock-on effect on assets used to provide this service and the wider impact both on service users and the local community. It should be noted that all previous grant funding from VSIF (2013-2016) ended on 31 March 2016.

5.8 The Guidance also advises that where appropriate, local authorities should make provision for an affected organisation or wider community to put forward options on how to reshape the service or project and local authorities should assist this by making available all appropriate information.

The full guidance is available here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418505/Revised_Best_Value_Statutory_Guidance_final.pdf

5.9 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

5.10 In the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

5.11 The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Council, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

5.12 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-actcodes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>

5.13 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
- Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
- Engagement and the equality duty
- Equality objectives and the equality duty
- Equality information and the equality duty

5.14 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sectorequalityduty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 Applicants were required to outline equality and diversity implications as part of their bid and this was taken into account as part of the assessment.

- 6.2 11 projects led by voluntary organisations have been shortlisted for funding for two years, subject to performance, following assessment of 43 applications to the VSIF – Local Grants scheme. This investment is aligned to corporate priorities and benefits a wide range of residents in the borough. These projects will be monitored to ensure that the projects and initiatives developed meet the changing needs of local residents. Brent Council has a thriving local environment which is changing, e.g. regeneration in the borough will mean that we need to respond to evolving needs of our residents and sustain an inclusive approach.
- 6.3 Each of the projects will be monitored against the framework of Brent’s equality analysis template and an equalities action plan will be produced. The template examines the equalities impact for all nine protected characteristics.
- 6.4 The Partnerships and Engagement Team are working alongside CVS Brent to encourage all organisations to access the free support they provide including sharing of data and skills, governance, bid writing advice, training and expertise. CVS Brent facilitate a range of networking opportunities and have a diverse team who can provide support for these organisations.
- 6.5 The grant funding will promote greater community cohesion and help improve resident’s wellbeing. The majority of the projects will benefit the following groups in particular: BME and Asian communities, disabled residents, those aged 25-65+, young people and those in social economic groups facing barriers to employment. The Equality Analysis Report can be found at Appendix C.

7.0 Background Documents

- Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants 2016-2018 – Cabinet Report 8 February 2016

8.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Recommendations Report

Appendix B: Standard Conditions of Grant Aid

Appendix C: Equality Analysis Report

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