

	Cabinet 15 July 2019
	Report from the Assistant Chief Executive
Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants 2019 - 2020	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report seeks agreement for the approach to the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants funding stream 2019-2020.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

Cabinet are asked to:

2.1 agree to the continuation of the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants funding for 2019 – 2020.

2.2 agree the approach set out in a-e for the Local Grants Programme which consists of:

- a) aligning the priorities of the Local Grants Programme to the priorities of the Borough Plan for 2019-2023.
- b) retaining the current geographical priority areas.
- c) agreeing that the term of grant funding will be one year.

- d) maintaining the maximum grant available at £25k per year, per project.
- e) maintaining the grant condition that all staff funded through the Local Grants Programme are paid the London Living Wage.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund (VSIF) – Local Grants Programme was created in 2012 from the previous Main Programme Grant and Advice budgets and was the result of extensive public consultation with voluntary sector organisations. The 2016-2018 funding stream was aligned to the previous borough plan. The budget for 2019/20 is £232k as presented at the 15 April 2019 Cabinet. It is proposed that the term of grant funding is 1 year a maximum grant available of £25k per project. It is recommended that this maximum amount is maintained. If this amount is increased the number of organisations who are able to access the funding will be decreased. If the amount is reduced the ability of organisations to deliver meaningful projects will be decreased. The average grant given out to date for this fund was £21,525 per funded group.

It is also proposed that the grant condition of paying all staff funded through the grant the London Living wage continues. This is in line with Brent's London Living Wage Accreditation ethos.

Alignment to the Borough Plan

- 3.2 The Building a Better Brent vision for 2023 is to make Brent a borough of culture, empathy and shared prosperity. The priorities for the VSIF Local Grants will align to the Borough Plan 2019 -2023 priorities. All grant documentation, guidance and publicity will be updated to reflect this.
- 3.3 The Borough Plan sets out five strategic themes, each of which include a number of high-level desired outcomes:

Every opportunity to succeed – working in partnership to support children and young people's educational attainment and training.

A future built for everyone, an economy fit for all – regenerating our borough to grow the local economy and provide the jobs, homes and transport that people need.

A cleaner, more considerate Brent – improving air quality and keeping our environment clean and pleasant.

A borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy – building stronger, safer and healthier communities, with opportunities to enjoy Brent's unique cultural heritage, and support for vulnerable children and adults to be as independent as possible.

Strong foundations – ensuring that the council and its partners are structured and equipped to secure the best possible outcomes for local people, within a context of diminishing resources.

It is also proposed that the current geographical priority areas are retained as these areas continue to be priorities for the council and its partners:

- Chalkhill
- Church End and Roundwood

- Harlesden
- South Kilburn
- St Raphael's
- Stonebridge

Brent's Community Hub model

- 3.4 The roll-out of Brent's Community Hub model will play an increasingly key role in ensuring that local services are effectively coordinated and delivered across the borough. By April 2020 there will be a Hub in all five of Brent's localities, each with a service offer that is tailored to local needs and is jointly delivered by council officers and partner organisations.
- 3.5 The hub model recognises the important role of local community and voluntary organisations in ensuring people can access information and advice and the support they need to help themselves. The Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Local Grants 2019-2020 is open to the voluntary and community sector and this includes local community and voluntary organisations that operate from the Hubs.

Timetable for VSIF Local Grants 2019-2020

- 3.6 The timetable outlines how the Local Grants Programme will be approached:
- **September 2019** – Local Grants Programme (and fund) 2019 launched and advertised.
 - **October 2019** – Grant appraisals and approvals undertaken.
 - **November 2019** – Grants awarded and contracts signed.
 - **December 2019** – Projects commence.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Local Grants Programme budget was presented to Cabinet on 15 April 2019. By aligning with the new Borough Plan, the project priorities delivery will be focused on the areas that matter most to local people. The budget for 2019/20 is £232k.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council is a Best Value Authority in accordance with s 1(1) of the Local Government Act 1999. It is required to make "arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness pursuant to s3 of the Local Government Act 1999. In accordance with the duty of best value, the Council should consider overall value, including environmental and social value when reviewing service provision. Pursuant to 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999, and 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 organisations.
- 5.2 Pursuant to s1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the power to do anything which an individual can do unless it is expressly prohibited (the power of general competence).

- 5.3 The giving of grants to community or voluntary organisation is a discretionary power which must be exercised reasonably taking into account all relevant considerations and ignoring irrelevant considerations. Further legal advice will be sought as and when required as the grant process progresses.
- 5.4 The Council must have due regard under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (also known as the Public Sector Equality Duty) to the need to:
(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment or other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”),
(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic under the 2010 Act and persons who do not share it, and
(c) foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.5 The s149, Public Sector Equality Duty (outlined above) covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 Brent is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion; the council is determined to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights and it is our policy to treat everyone fairly and with respect. We aim to ensure that all our current and future residents, staff and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services, and fair and equal opportunities.
- 6.2 This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes and that our policies are fully compliant with the duties placed on us as a public sector body by the Equality Act 2010. Equality Analyses (EAs) ensure that we follow through on our commitment to equality and they provide a method for clearly demonstrating the necessary legal compliance.
- 6.3 The council has undertaken an Equality Analysis for this local grants programme and no adverse impacts have been identified.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The local grants programme was presented to Cabinet on 15 April 2019 as part of the VCS review report. The Lead Member has been consulted on the approach outlined in this paper.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 8.1 The programme does not have human resources/property implications.

Report sign off:

PETER GADSDON
Assistant Chief Executive