

## Part A

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 29 November 2018

**Report author:** Head of Community and Environmental Services

**Title:** Small Grants Fund Review 2017 – 2018

### 1.0 Summary

1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing those services delivered by Watford Borough Council. The Small Grant budget forms part of the Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework and covers the period from April 2017 to March 2018.

1.2 The attached appendices set out the following information that provides non-executive elected members the with background information to support the scrutiny of the Small Grants Fund:

1. GIS map of grant locations across the borough
2. SGF - award table 2017-18
3. SGF – satisfaction survey results (July 2018)
4. SGF – equalities data 2017-18

### 2.0 Risks

#### 2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Officers and Cllrs fail to follow agreed systems and procedures for the SGF	Council funds are awarded to organisations who are not eligible to apply or meet the SGF criteria	Officers review application and procedures before a grant is considered and funds sent to bank account	Treat	Unlikely (2) x Unlikely (2) = rating of 4
Successful applicants spend	Council funds are misused and do	As above	Tolerate	Unlikely (2) x

the funds/grant on self, other items or activities not specified in the application form	not benefit the borough or residents as detailed in the application	Follow up meetings/site visit held with successful applicant/ organisation to ensure that the grant has been sent in-line with original intentions		Unlikely (2) = rating of 4
Negative press/social media coverage and reputational risk/damage to the council from a SGF funded project	Negative press/social media coverage	Officers to review application for any negative or reputational impact on council	Treat	Unlikely (2) x High (3) = rating of 6
Applicants personal data/information from application form are published on the internet or via social media platforms	Applicant details are made public and they incur financial, personal or reputational loss  WBC are fined for break of data protection	Officers to review application and follow agreed procedure or handling personal data	Treat	Unlikely (2) x High (3) = rating of 6

### 3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 To review the report and supporting information and consider whether any further action is required.

#### Further information:

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**Report approved by:** Alan Gough Head of Community & Environmental Services

### 4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Watford has a large and active voluntary sector with organisations providing a diverse range of services often to those who are most vulnerable. The current Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework recognises the importance of

maintaining a Small Grants Fund (SGF) programme to allow local sector groups the opportunity to apply for 100% one-off grants to support their organisations.

- 4.2 A key objective of the small grant fund is to encourage small, grassroots organisations to apply for a grant to enable them to engage with their communities across the borough. Applicants can apply for grants up to £2000 towards:

- a community initiative or project
- items of equipment

#### 4.3 **Governance arrangements**

The decision process of the SGF was delegated to the Head of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the then Portfolio Holder Councillor Karen Collett and delegated decision meetings would take place on a monthly basis throughout the year from April – February.

- 4.3.1 The approved criteria for the SGF is that an application should:

1. Demonstrate need for the community initiative, project and/or item(s) of equipment
2. Demonstrable future benefit for the people of Watford

- 4.3.2 During July 2018 the Small Grants Fund was subject to an audit by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS). The audit report stated that the service provided a 'Good' level of assurance and that they were 'effective' controls in place.

*The audit further noted 'Procedures in place for the SGF ensure that grant applicants are educated about the conditions and responsibilities of the funding at the same time as they are informed about the success of their grant application. The Council ensures clear deadline dates are issued to all applicants and that successful applicants are provided with guidance notes to explain what is required from them in regards to the monitoring arrangements of the grant'.*

#### 4.4 **Headline statistics**

During 2017 – 2018 the small grants fund:

- Awarded £49,180.38 to:
- 32 voluntary and community sector organisations were successful in their application, 7 applications were rejected or deferred
- £26,899 match funding was generated for the different projects
- Online satisfaction survey conducted in June/July 2018 - 23 organisations out of 39 responded, 58% response rate.
- 71% of responders were Very Satisfied with the application processes and how WBC dealt with applications

#### **4.5 Working with non-constituted groups**

During a recent review, officers identified that improvements could be made to our processes for making payments to non-constituted organisations and reduce the barriers to allow them to access funding. The council developed a Volunteer Partnership Agreement which would satisfy the council audit and financial processes for non-constituted organisations. They also provided a link for small organisations in the borough to benefit from the protection of working under the umbrella of an infrastructure organisation like W3RT to:

- The agreements provide a legal framework within which W3RT could support the volunteer partners to deliver their activities
- W3RT can provide the volunteer partners with support, advice and guidance to develop their organisation to become constituted

#### **4.6 Networking and raising the profile of the grants scheme**

As part of the small grants fund function, officers have created positive working relationships with our neighbouring local authorities and other organisations that provide funding for local voluntary and community sector organisations. Networking meetings take place 2-3 times per year and cover agenda items linked to best practice and lessons learnt.

### **5.0 Implications**

#### **5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1 There are no financial implications or issues identified in this report. The SGF budget will be subject to the council's annual budget setting process and any requirements to make savings or provide growth will be dealt with as part of this process. The SGF has an annual budget of £50,000

#### **5.2 Legal Issues**

- 5.2.1 There are no legal implications or issues identified in this report. The Head of Democracy and Governance states that the Council has a number of different powers it can use to fund grants of this nature.

#### **5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

- 5.3.1 There are no Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection implications or issues identified in this report

## **5.4 Staffing**

5.4.1 There are no changes to WBC staffing arrangements identified in this report

## **5.5 Accommodation**

5.5.1 There are no changes identified in this report relating to WBC office/town hall accommodation.

## **5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 There are no Community Safety/Crime and Disorder implications or issues identified in this report

## **Appendices**

1. GIS map of grant locations across the borough
2. SGF - award table 2017-18
3. GF – satisfaction survey results
4. SGF – equalities data

## **Background papers/information**

1. SGF - case studies leaflet
2. SIAS - SFG audit report July 2018
3. SGF - Success stories newsletter
4. SGF - Process flow chart
5. SGF - Funding surgery leaflet/poster