

Part A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 26 September 2019

Report author: Head of Leisure & Environmental Services

Title: Small Grants Fund Review Year 3 2018 – 2019 and period 2016 – 2019

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Portfolio Holder and Group Heads of Service are 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 2016 to March 2019.

1.2 The attached appendices set out the following information that provides Portfolio Holders and Group Heads of Service the with background information to support the scrutiny of the Small Grants Fund:

1. GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2018 -2019
2. SGF – award table 2018 - 2019
3. SGF – satisfaction survey result 2018 - 2019
4. SGF – headline and equalities data 2018 - 2019
5. SGF – Case studies 2018 - 2019

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 the funds/grant on self, other items or activities not specified in the application form.	Council funds are misused and do not benefit the borough or residents as detailed in the application.	As above Follow up meetings/site visit held with successful applicant/ organisations to ensure that the grant has been spent in-line with original intentions.	Tolerate	Unlikely (2) x 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 for 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 Group 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/project or items of equipment.

4.3 Governance Arrangements

The decision making process of the SGF during 2016 – 2019 was delegated to the Group 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 bi monthly basis throughout the Year 3 period from April 2018 – February 2019.

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

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

4.4 Headline statistics

2016 – 2017 the Small Grants Fund	2017 – 2018 the Small Grants Fund	2018 – 2019 the Small Grants Fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded £50,010 to 32 voluntary and community organisations • 29 applications were rejected or deferred • £720,044 match funding was requested for the different projects • Online satisfaction survey conducted in June/July 2017 – 22 organisations out of 59 responded, 37% response rate. • 84% of responders were Very Satisfied with the application processes and how WBC dealt with applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded £49,180.38 to 32 voluntary and community sector organisations • 8 applications were rejected or deferred • £26,899 match funding was requested 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded £49,591 to 35 voluntary and community organisations • 11 applications were rejected or deferred • £149,835.29 match funding was requested for the different projects • Online satisfaction survey conducted in July/Aug 2019 – 31 organisations out of 46 responded, 67% response rate. • 73% of responders were Very Satisfied with the application processes and how WBC dealt with applications

4.5 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 times per year and cover agenda items linked to best practice and lessons learnt.

4.6 Rebranding Mayor's Small Grant Fund

In 2019 - 2020, the Small Grants Fund became the Mayor's Small Grants Fund and the decision process is now delegated to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Mayor Peter Taylor. Delegated decision meetings continue to take place on a bi monthly basis throughout the year from April 2019 – February 2020.

4.7 Plans for 2019 - 2020

A considerable amount of work has taken place with the Watford 2020 Team and Officers to ensure the new Firmstep online application process is ready for the 2020-21 programme. Testing of the new online process both internally and by external partner organisations is taking place to ensure any teething problems are dealt with before the system goes live on the website.

The 2019 - 2020 Mayor's Small Grants Fund widened its application criteria to include applications from Sports Clubs looking for funding specifically for sports equipment. £10,000 of the total grant budget has been allocated for sports club equipment. Sports Clubs can apply for a maximum of £1000 towards sports equipment.

Another aim of the Mayor's Small Grants Fund is to receive more applications from organisations keen to undertake environmental projects.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 There are no financial implications or issues identified in this report. The Mayor's 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 Mayor's 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 Group 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.

5.7 Sustainability

5.7.1 There are no Sustainability issues associated with this report.

Appendices

1. GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2018 - 2019 & 2016 - 2019
2. SGF - Award table 2018 - 2019
3. SGF – Survey results 2018 - 2019
4. SGF – Headline and Equalities data 2017 - 2019
5. SGF - Case studies 2018 - 2019

Background papers/information

- SGF - Award Data Table 2016 - 2019
- SGF - Success stories newsletters 2016 - 2017 and 2017 - 2018
- SGF - Process flow chart 2018 - 2019
- SGF – Poster and Event Stand Photo