

Part A

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 23rd July 2020

Report author: Head of Leisure & Environmental Services

Title: Mayor's Small Grants Fund Review Year 1 (2019 – 2020)

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Mayor's Small Grant budget forms part of the Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework which covers the period from April 2019 to March 2023.

1.2 The attached appendices set out the following information that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information to support the scrutiny of the Mayor's Small Grants Fund:

1. MSGF – GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2019 -2020
2. MSGF – Award Table 2019 - 2020
3. MSGF – Equalities Data 2019 - 2020
4. MSGF – Case Studies 2019 - 2020

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 MSGF.	Council funds are awarded to organisations who are not eligible to apply or meet the MSGF 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	Council funds are misused and do not benefit the borough or	As above Follow up meetings/site visit held with	Tolerate	Unlikely (2) x Unlikely (2) = rating of 4

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
items or activities not specified in the application form.	residents as detailed in the application.	successful applicant/ organisations to ensure that the grant has been spent in-line with original intentions.		
Negative press/social media coverage and reputational risk/damage to the council from a MSGF 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 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 make any recommendations to cabinet.

Further information:

Chris Fennell – Head of Leisure & Environmental Services

Chris.fennell@watford.gov.uk,

Tel: 01923 - 278317

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

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 In Year 1 (2019 – 2020), the Small Grants Fund became the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund and the decision making process was delegated to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Mayor Peter Taylor.
- 4.2 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 Mayor’s Small Grants Fund (MSGF) programme to allow local sector groups the opportunity to apply for 100% one-off grants to support their organisations.
 - 4.2.1 An objective of the Mayor’s 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 £3000 towards a community initiative/project or items of equipment.
 - 4.2.2 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 was allocated for sports club equipment. Sports Clubs could apply for a maximum of £1000 towards sports equipment.
 - 4.2.3 In 2019-2020 the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund received an additional amount of £8,409.00 revenue support from the Sports Development budget specifically to be used to support applications from sports clubs.
 - 4.2.4 An aim of the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund is to begin to encourage applications from organisations keen to undertake environmental projects.

4.3 Governance Arrangements

The decision making process of the MSGF during 2019 – 2020 was delegated to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Mayor Peter Taylor and delegated decision meetings were taking place on a bi monthly basis throughout the Year from April 2019 – January 2020.

- 4.3.1 The approved criteria for the MSGF 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

Year 1 (2019 – 2020) Mayor's Small Grants Fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awarded £54,194.38 to 26 voluntary and community organisations• 11 applications were rejected or deferred for not fully meeting the fund criteria• £112,076 match funding was requested for the different projects• 3 applications from informal groups received funding• Organisations requested a total amount of £89, 556.67 for projects

4.5 Networking and raising the profile of the grants scheme

As part of the Mayor's 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 Plans for 2020 - 2021

A considerable amount of work was completed with the Watford 2020 Team and Officers to ensure the new Firmstep online application process was ready for the 2020-21 programme. Testing of the new online process both internally and by external partner organisations took place to ensure any teething problems were dealt with before the system was due to go live on the Council website.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was necessary to adapt the 2020-21 Mayor's Small Grants Fund Programme to become an Emergency Support Programme. The current application process and criteria were amended to meet the immediate needs of community organisations and charities facing difficulties due to the impact of Covid-19. It was also agreed that the new online application system would be put on hold until 2021-22 so that applications could be dealt with as quickly as possible.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 There are no financial implications or issues identified in this report. The Mayor's Small Grants Fund 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 Small Grants Fund 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 Due to restructures taking place during 2019-20, the Mayor's Small Grants Fund is now managed by one Officer.

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. MSGF – GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2019 – 2020
2. MSGF - Award Table 2019 – 2020
3. MSGF – Equalities Data 2019 – 2020
4. MSGF - Case Studies 2019 – 2020

Background papers/information

- MSGF - Award Table 2019 – 2020
- MSGF - Process Flow Chart 2019 – 2020