

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 (Coronavirus Emergency Support)
Review Year 2 (2020 – 2021)

1.0 Summary

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

1.2 The attached appendices set out information that provides background information to support the scrutiny of the Year 2 2020-21 Mayor's Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) (MSGF CES):

1. MSGF CES – GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2020 -2021
2. MSGF CES – Award Table 2020 - 2021
3. MSGF CES – Equalities Data 2020 - 2021
4. MSGF CES – Case Studies 2020 - 2021

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	Council funds are misused and do not benefit the	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)
on self, other items or activities not specified in the application form.	borough or 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 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 to make any recommendations to cabinet.

Further information:

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

4.0 **Detailed proposal**

- 4.1 In Year 2 (2020 – 2021), the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund became the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) due to the global pandemic Covid-19.
- 4.2 On 23rd March 2020 the Prime Minister advised of the government’s decision to place the country in lockdown to help reduce the spread of the Coronavirus and protect the NHS. Many of the town’s voluntary and community sector organisations and charities were forced to close their doors and stop providing their services to our residents. Furthermore, many feared they would face significant financial difficulties if they were not able to continue to provide their services.
- 4.2.1 The Mayor approved amendments to the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund application criteria in order for it to become a Coronavirus Emergency Support Fund. Applicants were able to apply for grants of up to £3000 for emergency funding as a result of the continuing threat of Coronavirus.
- 4.2.2 The fund criteria stated that applicants needed to demonstrate evidence of need for the service/project/equipment purchase and show how it would benefit Watford residents.
- 4.2.3 A significant change to the application criteria was that applicants could for the first time apply for funding towards core/general running costs as it was felt that some organisations might struggle to pay these overheads when their services had to close and in many cases their income streams had ended.
- 4.2.4 The fund opened for applications on 27th March 2020 and remained open until the budget had been fully allocated. Applications were dealt with on a daily basis and were assessed in order of submission to ensure the process remained fair and transparent.
- 4.2.5 The fund closed for applications on 29th April 2020. At this point, all future funding requests were signposted to the W3RT Community Fund to ensure those organisations seeking funding had another alternative avenue to pursue. The Partnerships & Funding Manager worked in partnership with the Lead for CVS at W3RT to support applications and minimise project duplication.
- 4.3 **Governance Arrangements**
The decision making process of the Mayor’s Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) during 2020 – 2021 was delegated to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Mayor Peter Taylor.

Due to the speed at which applications needed to be processed and the desire to ensure successful applicants received their funding quickly, delegated decisions were made by email and payments were authorised as soon as decisions had been approved. This revised process ensured that applications could be submitted, assessed, approved and payment made in approximately 7 days.

4.3.1 The approved criteria for the Mayor's Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) is that an application should:

1. Demonstrate the need for a service, activity, project and/or item(s) of equipment
2. Demonstrate the benefits for the people of Watford.

4.4 **Headline statistics**

Year 2 (2020 – 2021) Mayor's Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awarded £50,000 to 20 voluntary and community organisations in 35 working days• 10 applications were rejected or deferred for not fully meeting the fund criteria• 3 organisations applied for funding towards core/general running costs• Organisations requested a total amount of £78,244.00

4.5 **Successful Applicant Case Studies**

It is important to understand how the Mayor's Small Grants Fund has benefitted our residents and communities in an exceptionally challenging time, so that we are able to continue to develop this funding programme and ensure our application process is efficient and easy to use, while ensuring our priorities remain current. The Partnerships and Funding Manager encouraged a selection of successful applicants to provide a case study of their experience of applying to the Mayor's Small Grants Fund and these case studies are documented in Appendix 4.

4.6 **Successful Partnership Working**

The council's Partnership and Funding Manager led the coordination of the adapted programme and managed the 2020-21 Mayor's Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) programme using their extensive experience and knowledge of managing previous funding programmes. During this time the officer also worked in close contact with the Lead for CVS at W3RT who was able to provide additional advice and insight into individual organisations and their funding requirements.

4.7 **Future Funding Programme – Looking Ahead to 2021-22**

As part of the review of the Mayor's Small Grants Fund 2020-21 it will be essential to consider what our priorities will be for the coming year and what support organisations will continue to require in 2021-22. We will need to take into account the views of our decision makers and the ongoing impact of Covid-19.

5.0 Implications

5.1.1 Financial

5.1.2 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 There are no staffing implications or issues 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. MSGF CES – GIS map of grant locations across the borough 2020 – 2021
2. MSGF CES – Award Table 2020 – 2021
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Background papers/information

- MSGF CES - Award Table 2020 – 2021