

ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBER UNDER DELEGATED POWERS (EXECUTIVE FUNCTION)

Subject: **Big Society Innovation Bank Micro Fund Application**

Cabinet Member: Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships

Date of decision: 25 February 2014

Date decision comes into effect: 25 February 2014

Summary:	<p>This report is an application for a grant for decision under delegated powers in accordance with the procedure for approving voluntary and community sector grants of up to £20,000.</p> <p>The proposal is for an £870 grant from the BSIB Micro Fund to support the Comic Project, a pilot intended to improve the core literacy skills and creative ability of 11-12 year olds through a short story writing and comic illustration workshop delivered in Friern Barnet Community Library.</p>
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Officer Contributors: Dion Watts, Policy Officer, Commissioning Group

Status: Public

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: None

Reason for exemption from call-in (if appropriate): Not applicable

Contact for further information Dion Watts, Policy Officer, Commissioning Group, ext. 2001

1. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 1.1 Cabinet, 21 May 2001 (Decision item 6) - adoption of scheme of delegated powers, vesting authority in the appropriate Cabinet Member to approve grants of up to £20,000.
- 1.2 Cabinet Resources Committee, 22 July 2008 (Decision item 11): approval of a Third Sector Commissioning Framework.
- 1.3 Council 5 March 2013: approval of corporate grants budget for 2013/14.

2 CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 The Corporate Plan for 2013/14-2015/16 includes the following strategic objectives:

- Creation of the right environment to promote responsible growth, development and success across the borough
- Supporting families and individuals that need it – promoting independence, learning and well-being
- Improving the satisfaction of residents and businesses with the London Borough of Barnet as a place to live, work and study

2.2 Delivery of these objectives is prioritised around the following outcomes:

- To maintain Barnet as a well-designed, attractive and accessible place with sustainable infrastructure – such as by way of improving parks and green spaces
- To maintain the right environment for a strong and diverse local economy – including regeneration of priority areas and improvements in skills and employment opportunities, especially for young people
- To create better life chances for children and young people – support for families with the greatest needs / those on the cusp of becoming vulnerable and early intervention in the lives of young people most at risk of not achieving their potential
- To sustain a strong partnership with the local NHS so that families and individuals can maintain and improve their physical and mental health – encouragement for people to keep well and take responsibility for their own health; new integrated responses to the health and social care needs of residents; and new ways of reducing risk-taking amongst children and young people
- To promote a healthy, active, independent and informed over-55 population and to encourage and support residents to age well – such as by way of closer collaboration of health and social care services and support for those with a caring role when they most need it
- To promote family and community well-being and encourage engaged, cohesive and safe communities – support for children and young people who are most vulnerable / at risk; strengthened safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults at risk of harm; and action to address anti-social behaviour and crime.

2.3 The council is seeking to develop new and effective partnerships to deliver high quality public services having regard to the significant reduction in government funding, investing in early intervention and prevention models of service where there is a clear cost benefit. The voluntary and community sector has a significant role to play in this strategy, especially by increasing choice, accessibility and value for money, leading on innovative solutions and improving customers' perception of public services.

- 2.4 A Third Sector Commissioning Framework, approved by the Cabinet Resources Committee in July 2008 and consistent with the Voluntary Sector Compact agreed by Cabinet on 3 April 2008, sets out guidelines to:
- bring consistency to the council's financial arrangements with the voluntary and community sector; and
 - bring procurement from, and grants to, the sector into a single framework consistent with the council's procurement rules.
- 2.5 Following the transfer of responsibility for the community advice contract to the Adults and Communities Directorate, the renewal of annual revenue funding from the corporate grants budget in 2013/14 is now restricted to:
- the provision of selected infrastructure services for the voluntary and community sector and civil society through a two-year funding agreement with Community Barnet;
 - community arts courses for older and disabled people on a performance-by-results basis.
- 2.6 The balance of the grants programme in 2013/14 focuses on one-off awards towards helping voluntary and community groups (a) develop new services and activities and (b) run specific events or meet certain non-recurring items of expenditure.
- 2.7 The Big Society Innovation Bank has helped kick-start new citizen and community-led projects over the last three years, rewarding the development of innovative solutions to local challenges. Awards from round 3 of the scheme were made by the Cabinet Resources Committee on 4 November 2013.
- 2.8 While the Main Fund of the Big Society Innovation Bank has come to a planned close after 3 annual rounds of funding, the £25,000 Micro Fund remains until 31 March 2014 and any unspent funds will be rolled over into the next financial year.

3 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 3.1 All grants are made subject to the council's Standard Conditions of Grant Aid, with which applicants are required to signify their compliance by signing a written undertaking. Amongst other things, the conditions cover how awards are spent, allowing council officers a right of access to proof thereof, and requiring notification of any change in an organisation's circumstances which significantly affect its finances, operations or grant entitlement. The council reserves the right to withhold payment of any approved grant, or to demand full or partial repayment, if it appears that an organisation has failed to comply with any of the conditions attached to the award.
- 3.2 The shift towards greater community-led involvement in the delivery of services has involved some relaxation in the attitude traditionally taken to compliance with eligibility criteria before an award is recommended. Whilst all applicants are expected to satisfy basic governance requirements, such as having an independent management committee, it is accepted that community-led and self-help groups often require the support of a parent organisation or other agency. In cases such as these, account is taken of other relevant factors, such as knowledge of a supporting agency and

mechanisms to manage an applicant's financial affairs. All applicants are expected to work towards full independence within a reasonable period.

4 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

4.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the council and all other organisations exercising public functions on its behalf must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between those with protected characteristics and those without;
- foster good relations between those with protected characteristics and those without

The protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

4.2 All voluntary and community organisations grant-aided by the council are required to demonstrate that they have an equal opportunities policy covering users, staff and volunteers, which promotes equal treatment for all, irrespective of their age, disability, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, faith, health, language or social and economic background. Scrutiny of compliance with these considerations, and how they contribute to promoting good relations between people and communities, forms part of the standard procedure for assessing all applications and is reflected in the assessments herewith.

4.3 As the council moves towards a greater emphasis on commissioning and awarding of contracts, voluntary and community organisations are required to demonstrate how their activities support the council in meeting its equalities obligations.

5 USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance and Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.1 The provision for making start-up and one-off grants in 2013/14 is comprised of funds deriving to the council from the Big Society Innovation Bank Micro Fund.

5.2 Set out below is the current position on the 2013/14 budget, of which any unspent funds will be rolled over into the next financial year:

Budget item	2013/14 budget	Approvals to date	Funds available	Recommended herewith
Big Society Innovation Bank Micro Fund	£25,000	0	£25,000	£870

6. LEGAL ISSUES

- 6.1 The council has power to make the grant awards under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The awards will be subject to the council's Standard Conditions of Grant Aid, as approved by Legal Services

7. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 7.1 Council Constitution: section 3 (Responsibility for Functions) – paragraph 4.2 enables the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships to approve grants to voluntary and community organisations up to the value of £20,000 per annum.

8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 8.1 An application for funding to support the Comic Project, a pilot intended to improve the core literacy skills and creative ability of 11-12 year olds through a short story writing and comic illustration workshop delivered in Friern Barnet Community Library, was received on 10 January 2014.
- 8.2 Specific objectives of the project were listed as follows:
- Give young people one-to-one attention, not normally possible through conventional school classroom learning.
 - Use local volunteers and professionals as an educational resource for supporting young people's learning.
 - Create an unconventional and creative environment, which encourages original thinking and inspires young people to develop a passion for writing.
 - Provide a tangible 'real product' output in the form of published short story books, which are publicly displayed within a community setting.
- 8.3 Proposed benefits of the project were listed as follows:
- Develop core literacy skills and creative ability in local young people.
 - Engage the local community (volunteers and professionals) in actively improving the attainment and aspirations of these young people.
 - Make use of the library as a platform for young people to get creative and produce lasting products, which will be publicly displayed and appreciated by the community.
- 8.4 An initial assessment of the application was made by officers in the Commissioning Group, who concluded that the sustainability element of the project needed further consideration. It was not clear from the application and breakdown of the funds being requested that the project approach, a workshop model based in Friern Barnet Community Library, would be repeatable after the initial pilot. This was because the proposal included high costs for things like printing, which would need to be repeated with each workshop, and did not identify any other sources of funding for the future.
- 8.5 Officers provided feedback to the applicant on the sustainability issues outlined above, encouraging them to address the issues and reapply as the application showed promise. The applicant then followed up with an amended proposal with revised financials and more robust sustainability arguments. Officers were satisfied with the changes and therefore recommended that the application be awarded funds in the amount requested.

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Grant application and related correspondence.

9.2 Any person wishing to inspect these papers should telephone Dion Watts on 020 8359 2001.

10. DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER

10.1 I authorise the awards recommended below, subject to the council's Standard Conditions of Grant Aid.

Signed Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships

Date 25 February 2014

DPR 7 (13/14)

Please indicate your decision by placing an 'X' under the relevant column

<u>SUMMARY OF GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS</u> <u>- DELEGATED POWERS REPORT NO. 7 (13/14)</u>				
<u>Ref</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Grant Recommended</u>	<u>Agreed</u>	<u>Not Agreed</u>
	Friern Barnet Community Library Ltd	£870 CP		
		TOTAL: £870 CP		

[Key: CP = Comic Project]

Signed: Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships
Date: 25 February 2014