

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 September 2020	Meeting Name: Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation
Report title:		Resident Participation Fund 2020-21	
Wards or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Communities	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet member for housing management and modernisation approves the proposed 2020/21 budget expenditure for the newly established £930k Resident Participation Fund. (See Appendix 1.)
2. That the cabinet member for housing and modernisation notes and approves the grant budget for Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations (SGTO) of £228k for April 2020 to March 2021, attached as Appendix 2, and the KPIs, attached as Appendix 3 and notes that this is a departure of what was agreed by Cabinet in February 2020 in response to the current pandemic situation. As part of its condition of grant funding, SGTO will be expected to produce a programme of work for the year 2020-21, indicating the activities it intends undertaking in respect of the grant funding, and the outcomes it aims to achieve through this expenditure.
3. That the Cabinet member for housing and modernisation notes and approves the grant budget for Citizens Advice Bureau - independent Leaseholder Advice of £90k from April 2020 to March 2021 - attached as Appendix 4 and notes that this is a departure of what was agreed by Cabinet in February 2020 in response to the current pandemic situation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. On 4 February 2020 Cabinet approved a new Residents Participation Fund (RPF), with an annual budget of £900,000 and a clear set of guidelines on how that funding would be allocated. By the beginning of April 2020, the entire country had gone into 'lockdown', in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The latter has impacted upon the original proposals for the Resident Participation Fund approved by Cabinet in February. This report outlines some of the implications of the current situation for the newly established Resident Participation Fund and seeks approval for the detailed proposals on how that fund is to be allocated.
5. The new Resident Participation Fund replaces the previous Tenant Fund, Homeowner Fund and TRISG grant stream. The total funding has been increased from £860,000 in 2019/20 to £930,000 in 2020/21. This is in order to direct more resources to grassroots resident involvement activities that benefit people living in council homes. This is a variation of the figure agreed by Cabinet of £900,000. The final figure includes an additional one-off sum of £30,000 funded by a cumulative surplus in the now-defunct Homeowner Fund. This is a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic and is to be used to fund an additional 0.5 FTE CAB advisor post for homeowners.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The activities that the Resident Participation Fund will support were set out in the report approved by Cabinet in February. Below are each of the headings and proposed allocations:
7. Half (£450,000) will fund grassroots activities:
8. **Core Grants for TRAs** (currently £178,000): These are grants paid annually to all fully established TRAs covering council homes. The amount TRAs receive will be unchanged. TRAs covering 240 or less tenancies will continue to receive £1,300, with TRAs covering more than 240 tenancies continuing to receive an additional £5.50 per tenancy, as is currently the case.
9. **Resident Participation Small Grants** (£272,000): In February 2020 Cabinet approved this allocation for small grants of up to £5,000 to support projects and activities that bring tenants and residents together and improve their wellbeing. The intent was for these grants to fund projects and activities that primarily benefit people who live in council owned homes. The application period was launched in March 2020 just before the lock down started but has since been put on hold given that TRAs won't be in a position for some time to be able to deliver the sort of projects intended for these grants. Instead, this report seeks retrospective approval for half of this funding (£136,000) to be re-profiled for a special COVID support community grants scheme to assist TRAs actively involved in responding to urgent help requirements from neighbours arising from the current Coronavirus pandemic.
10. Half (£450,000) will cover Southwark wide activity as set out in the previous Cabinet report with slight variations on the profiled allocations as follows.
11. **Independent Support and Advice Services** (£318,000): This will fund Southwark wide independent support and advice services for council tenants and resident homeowners, including those provided by Southwark Group of Tenant Organisations as well as other advice services (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau). This is a variation of +£58,000 from the figures outlined in the February Cabinet paper (£260,000). The February Cabinet paper assumed cost savings from the procurement of a contract, to be let – it was intended – in October 2020. This process of resident consultation and contract procurement has not yet started given the current pandemic situation, and so it is being proposed to fund both SGTO and CAB for a full financial year, on the same grant funding basis as they were in 2019/20. Detailed proposed budgets for both these grants are shown in Appendices 2 and 4 respectively.
12. **Training** (£100,000), to support the active participation of tenants and residents in their local community, including training that support people to set up and run all aspects of TRAs.
13. **Other resident participation activities** (£22,000), including meetings, conferences and travel and other activities that support effective resident participation. Cabinet had originally approved £50,000 for this purpose, the proposal is to reduce it to £28,000 to make up for the increase in independent advice services cost. A breakdown of how it is proposed this £22,000 is spent can be found in appendix 1.
14. **Administration** of the above grants/contracts (£40,000)

15. To provide time for the commissioning of contracts for independent support and advice services, the current grants for these services from the tenants and homeowners funds to the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations and Citizens Advice Bureau will be extended to 31st March 2021, with funding from the new Resident Participation Fund.
16. Currently the formula for TRA Core Grants requires a budget of £178,000. If more homes are to be covered by TRAs in the future, funding for the Resident Participation Small Grants will need to be reduced to cover this cost.
17. The TRA grant payable in 2020-21 will remain at the level set in 2018/19 when it was increased. The basic level is £1,300 for estates where the property count does not exceed 240 tenancies. For estates where there are more than 240 tenancies an additional amount of £5.50 per tenancy is allowed. The previous increase was in 2015/16 which was the first increase since 2006. The current TRA grant allocation is available to meet the costs that TRAs need to function, with TRAs being responsible for determining how the grant is spent, and being accountable to their members for this.
18. TRAs will continue to be supported by the council to apply for funds from other sources, where such funding aligns to their constitutional objectives. Some such sources are those offered by the council, including the following:
 - Neighbourhood Fund grants
 - Getting Involved Grants
 - Cleaner Greener Safer grants
 - Democracy Fund
 - Positive Futures Fund
 - Funding from independent funders such as United St Saviours
19. TRAs that manage halls were previously generating income by hall hire. In the current situation that is not possible however the council has placed a freeze on TRA halls rent accounts to cover the period April to September 2020.
20. The principal purpose of the Resident Participation Fund is to support the effective operation of the council's new Resident Participation Framework, which was approved by Cabinet on 4 February 2020. Tenant and resident associations continue to be a key part of the council's resident participation structures. In order to ensure that the funding provided by the council to TRAs does in fact support the new Resident Participation Framework, officers will be working with residents to develop a TRA support offer. This will set out service standards in TRA support, covering areas such as constitution and governance, financial management, safeguarding, and (where appropriate) TRA halls management.
21. The council continues to fund a number of TRAs in sheltered housing units (there are currently 13 such active TRAs), and is committed to exploring the feasibility of setting up more such structures, where these are welcomed by residents. Such associations bring people together for events and help to reduce isolation.
27. Use of the resource centre at Taplow still remains low, with little more than a handful of residents per week visiting the centre for copying and printing purposes. Officers have agreed with colleagues in libraries a system whereby residents from TRAs can use copying and printing facilities in local libraries at no cost to TRAs, but with libraries issuing quarterly statements of such expenditure to Resident Involvement, and the latter reimbursing libraries through internal transfers. In the meantime,

officers will review the position of the Taplow Resource Centre within the Resident Participation Framework.

28. A review of the resident training service was undertaken last Autumn. As a result of this, it was agreed by the then TFMC (supported by officers) that a focus group (involving staff, residents and external partners) will be set up in 2020-21, with a view to developing a business plan for the resident training service.

Policy implications

29. There are no specific policy implications relevant to the Resident Participation Fund budget for 2020/21 specifically, as it is a yearly budget for the purposes described.
30. TRAs are an important part of the fabric of the borough. The Resident Participation Fund provides resources to enable TRAs to operate and to manage themselves.
31. TRA grants ensure that associations are able to hold and service meetings and meet the basic costs of doing so. In addition they enable TRAs to organize activities and social events that are open to all tenants and residents on an estate. Recognised TRAs are entitled to be consulted on matters affecting their community and are also a part of the council's engagement structure with residents. Getting involved in a TRA is a good way for residents to meet their neighbours and to take an active part in the life of the estate.

Community impact statement

32. The Resident Participation Fund supports tenant and resident associations and related support services including training, two resource centres, and SGTO.
33. SGTO convenes regular group meetings for TRAs across the borough. These are well attended and provide a participatory forum for involvement and community activity.
34. Services provided through the resource centres in the form of access to IT and printing facilities as well as the training offer, have the objective of promoting TRA member involvement. This is to support the development of engaged and inclusive tenant and resident communities across the borough by providing opportunities for participation that reduces exclusion and inactivity.
35. A known gap is that of young people, who are under-represented within TRAs. In the last year, officers from the Resident Involvement team worked with staff from Southwark Young Advisors, in order to hear their voice in relation to the proposals for resident involvement. This proved a successful undertaking, with some 50-plus young people submitting their views to the consultation exercise relating to the resident involvement proposals. The council proposes to undertake further work with the Young Advisors and younger residents in 2020-21, supported by the Resident Participation Fund.

Consultation

36. Consultation on the key elements of this budget has been carried out in parallel with consultations undertaken on the Cabinet paper proposals for Resident Involvement. However, due to the nature of the coronavirus pandemic (lockdown, specifically) the scope for consultation on the budget now proposed has been limited. Nevertheless, in respect of the re-profiling of some of the Getting Involved Grants as Covid-19

Support Grants, this action was undertaken following informal consultation with a number of tenant and resident associations, who expressed a wish to help the council's newly-created Community Hub with its Covid-19 response effort, and required resources to do so.

37. This is a new budget, merging several previous budgets into one. However, as far as possible, historic costs have been used to form the basis of budget entries.

Equalities impacts

38. The equalities impacts of the Resident Participation Fund have been considered. The re-profiling of a proportion of the Getting Involved Grants as Covid-19 Support Grants advances the public sector equality duty, because resources will be focused on the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic, many of whom will be elderly and/or disabled.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

39. Under the council's constitution an individual cabinet member has delegated authority to approve grants in excess of £2,500 and so is authorised to make the decisions recommended in this report.
40. The report to cabinet in February 2020 set out the extensive consultation which gave rise to the proposed budget for the Resident Participation Fund, which was approved. The report notes that the proposed allocation of the Fund has been changed in response to the covid-19 pandemic: the scope of the duty to consult on such changes is constrained by the practicalities and urgency of the situation. The report explains that, whilst a formal consultation was impractical in the circumstances, discussions were held with some tenants' and residents' associations, who would be the bodies primarily affected by the re-profiling of the Getting Involved Grants, and had requested urgent funding in order to support the Community Hub.
41. In the exercise of all its functions, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Specifically to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The relevant protected characteristics for this purpose are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. This is considered in paragraph 38 of the report.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

42. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the recommendations for the proposed 2020/21 budget expenditure of £930,000 for the Resident Participation Fund and changes due to the current pandemic.
43. The assumed cost savings through letting the independent support and advice service as a single supplier contract part way through the year has been delayed, however, other resident participation activities will be reduced to remain within the overall budget.

44. It is also noted retrospective approval is being sought for half of the Resident Participation Small Grants (£136,000) funding to be re-profiled for a special COVID support community grants scheme to assist TRAs actively involved in responding to current pandemic.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet Report -	Communities Division, 160 Tooley Street, SE1P 5LQ	John McCormack Tel: 020 7525 7648

APPENDICES

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Resident Participation Fund Proposed Budget 2020-21
Appendix 2	SGTO Proposed Budget, April 2020 – March 2021
Appendix 3	SGTO KPIs and Outcomes 2020-2021
Appendix 4	CAB proposed budget, April 2020 – March 2021

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities	
Report Author	John McCormack, Resident Involvement	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 September 2020	
Key Decision	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		7 September 2020