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| Item No. 9 | Classification: Open | Date: 8 March 2021 | Meeting Name: West Central Multi-Ward Forum |
| Report title: | | Neighbourhoods Fund (NsF) 2021/22 | |
| Ward(s) or groups affected: | | Camberwell Green, Faraday, Newington, North Walworth, St Giles. | |
| From: | | Director of Communities | |

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the West Central Multi-ward Forum allocate a total of £150,000 of the Neighbourhoods Fund 2021-22 to the list of applications outlined in Appendix 1 subject to this funding being approved in the 2021-22 budget. This consists of £150,000 for 2021/22 and unallocated amount of £30,797 for 2020/21.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Neighbourhoods Fund (NsF) was introduced in 2015 by merging two former revenue programmes known as Cleaner, Greener, Safer revenue (CGS) and Community Council Fund (CCF). The cabinet member for communities, employment and business authorised the amalgamation of the CGS revenue fund and community council fund into a single funding programme to create a new Neighbourhoods Fund for the 2015-16 round and onwards. This decision was taken on 12 December 2014.
3. The NsF has a borough-wide funding budget of £630,000 with an allocation of £10,000 per Councillor, for each ward. This is subject to the annual budget setting process.
4. The purpose of introducing the NsF was to give local areas decision-making powers over significant amounts of revenue funding that they could allocate to meet locally determined priorities.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Each ward will have £10,000 per Councillor of revenue grants to allocate and it is proposed that any unallocated funds from the previous rounds (years) are to be carried forward and added to the financial year commencing 1 April 2021.
6. The Multi-ward forums will use the criteria set out below for the allocation of this funding:
 - a. Creating opportunities for people from different backgrounds to get on well together; (e.g. community cohesion);

- b. Establishing projects which encourage people to treat each other with respect and consideration (e.g. being a good neighbour, inter-generational contacts);
 - c. Encouraging residents to be responsible for their own neighbourhood (e.g. community clean-ups; volunteering initiatives); and
 - d. Specific measures to enhance a neighbourhood's environment (e.g. increased cleaning).
7. A Multi-ward forum may choose to allocate some of their NsF resources to their CGS capital allocations.
 8. Subject to the availability of resources, the NsF may be used to 'buy' services from the council.
 9. As with any executive decision taken by Multi-ward forums, this is subject to the council's existing scrutiny arrangements.

Community impact statement

10. The roles and functions of Multi-ward forums include the promotion of involving local people in the democratic process. Multi-ward forums take decisions on local matters, including environmental improvement and community safety, as well as consultation on a wide range of policies and strategies that affect the area.
11. An explicit objective within the Empowering Communities Programme (ward and Multi-ward forums) is that they be used to actively engage as widely as possible with, and bring together, Southwark's diverse local communities on issues of shared mutual interest.
12. The allocation of the 2021-22 NsF West Central Multi-ward forum budget will in the main affect the people living in the North West area. However, in making the area a better place to live and improving life chances for local people, West Central Multi-ward forum NsF activities will have an impact on the whole of Southwark.
13. The NsF is an important tool in achieving community participation and cohesion.
14. In fulfilling the above objectives that Multi-ward forums have of bringing together and involving Southwark's diverse local communities, consideration has also been given to the council's duty under s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires the council to have due regard when taking decisions to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;

- b. Advance of equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
 - c. Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
 - d. The 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
15. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it is further defined in s.149 as having due regard to the need to:
- Remove or minimise disadvantages connected with a relevant protected characteristic;
 - Take steps to meet the different needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic; and
 - Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or any other activity in which they are under-represented.

Due consideration was given to an equalities impact assessment during the design of this awards process and no adverse impact was evident.

16. When undertaking the duties under section 149 the council must ensure:
- The duty must be fulfilled before the decision in question is enacted;
 - The duty must be exercised in substance with 'rigour and an open mind'; it is not a matter of 'ticking boxes'; and
 - The duty is continuing; it does not end with the completion of any equality impact assessment, and due regard must be had as policy evolves and is implemented.

Resource implications

17. There are no resource implications.

Consultation

18. The NsF projects may require consultation with stakeholders, including the project applicant, local residents and tenants and residents associations where applicable.

Financial implications

19. The West Central Multi-ward forum NsF has been allocated a total of £150,000 for 2021-22. The unallocated amount of £30,797 for 2020/21
20. It is recommended that Multi-ward forums set aside some unallocated funds from previous years in order to prevent an over-allocation of funds, as well as to act as a contingency from which urgent or incidental requests can be funded throughout the year. It must also be noted that the unallocated figures reported in the previous paragraph represent current best estimates as the 2020-21 funding round is only finally over on 31 March 2021.
21. Due to the impact of COVID-19, there are some projects that will not be completed within the 2020-21 financial year. These projects have been reported to the West Central Multi-ward and any available funding will be allocated to other projects or carried over to the following financial year.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Governance

22. The Local Government Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”) gives the Leader the power to delegate any executive function to area committees. The allocation of the neighbourhoods fund is an executive function.
23. Multi Ward Forums are ‘area committees’ within the meaning of the 2000 Act.
24. The delegation can be found in Part 3H of the Constitution, which enables Multi Ward Forums to “approve the allocation of neighbourhood funds [to] cleaner, greener, safer and devolved highway capital schemes of a local nature using the resources and criteria identified by the cabinet.”. This is therefore a decision that the Multi-ward Forum is empowered to take.
25. The Localism Act 2011 gives councils a general power of competence whereby they have power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This power can be used even if legislation already exists that allows a local authority to do the same thing. However the general power of competence does not enable a local authority to do anything which it was restricted or prevented from doing under the previous legislation.
26. The general power of competence includes the power to:
 - (a) incur expenditure;
 - (b) give financial assistance to any person;
 - (c) enter into arrangements or agreements with any person;
 - (d) co-operate with or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of any person;
 - (e) exercise on behalf of any person any functions of that person; and
 - (f) provide staff, goods, services or accommodation to any person.

27. The provision of funding under the NsF falls within the scope of the kind of activities the council can undertake under the general power of competence as this includes the power to give financial assistance to any person.
28. In allocating funding under the NsF, multi-ward forums must have regard to the council's equality duties set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The report author has demonstrated how those duties have been considered in the body of the report at paragraphs 14, 15, and 16 of the report.
29. This report is recommending that the multi-ward forum approve the allocation of monies from the NsF 2021-22 as specified at Appendix 1.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FIN1241 – JB)

30. The 2021-22 budget allocation for the neighbourhoods fund will be agreed by council assembly as part of the budget setting process. The report notes the allocation is £10,000 per councillor by ward and thus £150,000 should be awarded to the West Central Multi Ward. The report allocates a further £30,797 from prior year allocations, this being the current estimate of the funds available at the conclusion of 2020-21.
31. Paragraph 19 notes the need to maintain a contingency element from the funding available for urgent or incidental requests. This is a prudent measure to assist in the effective running of the Neighbourhoods Fund. Paragraph 20 notes the likelihood of an increase in projects unable to complete in the current financial year and the options of carrying forward the funding or reallocation.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Papers | Held At | Contact |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| West Central Multi-ward area Neighbourhoods Fund 2020-21 Awards | Environment & Leisure, Communities 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Grace Semakula, ECPO 0207 525 4928 |

APPENDICES

| No. | Title |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | West Central Multi Ward NsF Applications 2021-22 |

AUDIT TRAIL

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Lead Officer | Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure | |
| Report Author | Grace Semakula - Empowering Communities Programme Officer | |
| Version | Final | |
| Dated | 22 February 2021 | |
| Key Decision | Yes | |
| CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER | | |
| Officer Title | Comments Sought | Comments included |
| Director of Law and Governance | Yes | Yes |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Governance | Yes | Yes |
| Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure | No | No |
| Cabinet member | No | No |
| Date final report sent to Constitutional Team | | 24 February 2021 |