

# Cabinet

24 February 2021



<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual Grant Awards 2021/22</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report Author</b>	Jayne Brownlow
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Maureen Attewell
<b>Confidential</b>	No
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Cabinet decision
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Cabinet is asked to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• agree the grants awards for 2021/22.</li><li>• note all other support to the voluntary/charity sector.</li><li>• to agree to donate £3K to the Mayor's Charities from the grant fund.</li><li>• consider the proposal that unallocated Councillors' Better Neighbourhood Grant monies are transferred to the Grants Panel for allocation.</li></ul>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Seeking agreement to award grants for 2021/2022 to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• enable several existing charities and voluntary organisations to continue to provide support, assistance and other essential services for Borough residents.</li><li>• enable new organisations to begin to provide services that are needed.</li></ul></li><li>2. The Grants Panel would like to support the Mayor's charities in a year when fundraising has been difficult.</li><li>3. Transferring unallocated Councillors' Better Neighbourhood Grants will allow this funding to be allocated to local organisations</li></ol>

## 1. Key issues

- 1.1 Applications for Council Grants are welcomed on an annual cycle. This year grant applications were open from the 19th October to the 16th November 2020, for applications for grants for the financial year 2021/2022.
- 1.2 A total of 30 applications for funding were received, with partial or full funding being awarded to 27 of these organisations.
- 1.3 To ensure the panel had sufficient information to make an informed decision, the application form requested applicants to provide evidence of the need that their service fulfils, explain why their organisations were best placed to meet

that need, and outline how the grant monies would be used. Additionally, this year applicants were asked how they had adapted to changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the effect it had on them operating. This information was considered when deliberating this year's awards to individual organisations.

- 1.4 Prior to opening, the grants application timeline was publicised widely using social media and was shared by Voluntary Services North Surrey, who again offered to assist applicants with applications.
- 1.5 As well as voluntary organisations and charities, provision continues to be made for annual grants to arts, sports and cultural bodies to enhance the health and wellbeing opportunities for our residents.
- 1.6 Regular monitoring of the top 6 funded organisations (listed in 2.3) continues with quarterly monitoring meetings to measure performance against service level agreements (SLA's). This ensures our funding is being used as it was intended and that we are getting positive outcomes.
- 1.7 The panel were made aware of a proposal by Housing Options to change their operating model with Rentstart, moving across to a commissioning model which will be funded by Housing. Following officer advice, a decision was made by the panel to adjust the annual award accordingly.

## 2. Options analysis and proposal

- 2.1 The grants panel met on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January to consider the applications received and finalise the awards. Information on the applications, financial checks and background on the organisations was circulated in advance to allow panel members sufficient time to fully consider.
- 2.2 Unlike previous years, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the panel chose not to meet individually with all the top 6 funded organisations. The panel reviewed the information supplied and decided they had sufficient assurance that previous years funding had been used to maximum effect to enable an informed award decision for the coming year.
- 2.3 Following the review session, the proposed grant support for the top 6 funded organisations is listed below. Apart from Rentstart, the level of funding has either been maintained or increased for our top funded organisations.

Organisation	Primary Focus	Award for 2021/22
<b>Citizens Advice R&amp;S</b>	To ensure the citizens of Spelthorne have access to free, independent, confidential advice and information	£60,000
<b>AGE UK</b>	Befriending and Information and Advice service.	£30,000
<b>Rentstart</b>	To assist homeless single and childless couples on low incomes/benefits to access accommodation in the private rented sector.	£5,000
<b>Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS)</b>	To support a stronger and more sustainable voluntary sector in Spelthorne, in response to COVID-19.	£35,000

<b>Homestart</b>	To support parents and their children through difficult times.	£20,000
<b>Shopmobility</b>	To provide an equality of opportunity for people with limited mobility or visual impairment, wishing to visit Staines town centre.	£15,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£165,000</b>

- 2.4 Citizens Advice Runnymede & Spelthorne also receive additional funding from Housing Options. This is due to the amount of specialist assistance provided, and to reflect the increased demand for housing debt and welfare support advice.
- 2.5 Subsequent consideration was given by the grants panel to the remaining 24 smaller grant applications. Particular attention was paid to requests for assistance for those organisations who have struggled during the pandemic, requiring assistance with their recovery. The list of proposed awards is itemised in the attached *Appendix A - Proposed Annual Grants Allocation 2021/22 V1*.
- 2.6 Several actions for officers were agreed as part of the panel's deliberations relating to improvements in partnership working with the successful organisations.
- 3. Financial implications**
- 3.1 The budget for the 2021/22 grants allocation was maintained at £209,600. Along with a carry forward of £34,650 from 2020/21, a total of £244,250 was available to be allocated
- 3.2 During the application review process a total of £228,200 in grants was assigned. This includes a proposed £3,000 to be awarded to the Mayor's Charities to recognise the difficulty this year with fundraising.
- 3.3 The surplus of £16,050 will be ring fenced for requests arising during the year as decided by the grants panel.
- 3.4 The panel have introduced a mid-year review for all beneficiaries of grant awards. A report has been requested, detailing how organisations have used their allocations against their stated aims. This will introduce an element of quality control over the use of grant money, to allow the Council to ensure stated outcomes are being achieved.
- 3.5 *Appendix B – Other support for Charities and Voluntary Organisations* details several additional items of 'support in kind' provided by Spelthorne to voluntary organisations and charities located in the Borough.
- 4. Other considerations**
- 4.1 Spelthorne Council see the voluntary sector as a key driver of services to address the rising unmet need in the community. Financial support for this sector is essential to complement Council services.
- 4.2 This sector offers services to a diverse range of communities. It can deliver outcomes the public sector finds hard to deliver on its own, such as one-to-one support, dedication to a specific group or cause, expert advice, and other non-statutory services.

- 4.3 Some providers supported by grant funding represent or advocate for minority groups, user groups, and faith communities.
- 4.4 Other public bodies such as the NW Surrey CCG and Surrey County Council also see the voluntary sector as important providers and, in some cases, fund them separately. Awareness of these additional funding opportunities for voluntary organisations is growing within the Council.
- 4.5 This year the Chair of the Grants Panel adopted a cross-party approach to the constitution of the group. It was agreed that this approach worked well and should be continued into next year.

## **5. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 5.1 The grants panel's aim is to support a cross section of voluntary organisations to ensure a balanced and diverse presence is maintained locally. This includes encouraging applications from organisations committed to sustainable practices.

## **6. Timetable for implementation**

- 6.1 Following agreement by Council, specifically tailored letters will be sent to applicants advising them of the outcome of their applications by early March.
- 6.2 All qualifying grants will be paid in April 2021

### **Background papers:**

None

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A - Proposed Annual Grants Allocation 2021/22 V1

Appendix B - Other support for Charities and Voluntary Organisations