

Community Wellbeing and Housing

1st February 2022



Title	Annual Grant Awards 2022/23
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Jayne Brownlow, Deputy Head Community Wellbeing
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	n/a
Corporate Priority	Community
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. agree the grants awards for 2022/23.2. note all other support Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector.3. consider the proposal that unallocated Councillors' Better Neighbourhood Grant monies for 2022/23 are transferred to the Grants Panel for allocation.
Reason for Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seeking agreement to award grants for 2022/2023 to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• enable several existing charities and voluntary organisations to continue to provide support, assistance, and other essential services for Borough residents.• enable new organisations to begin to provide services that are needed.2. Transferring unallocated Councillors' Better Neighbourhood Grants will allow this funding to be assigned to local organisations

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the allocation of the proposed grant awards to charities, voluntary sector, community, and sports/art organisations who operate within Spelthorne and provide services for Spelthorne residents.
- 1.2 The Council has sought to maintain its funding again this year, subject to confirmation, this makes £209,600 available for allocation. A carry forward of £24,200 unspent grant from the previous year has also been applied, making a total budget of £233,800
- 1.3 Applications for grant funding opened in mid-October 2021 and remained open for just over a month. There was extensive publicity for the grants to ensure as many organisations as possible were aware and how to apply. In total 46 applications were received.

- 1.4 The cross-party Grants Panel met in December 2020 to assess the applications received. This report contains the list of organisations proposed by the panel to receive grant funding for 2022/23. See Appendix A – Proposed Annual Grant Awards 2022/23
- 1.5 £218,850 in grant funding has been allocated and, if approved, will be paid in April 2022. The surplus of £14,950 will be ring-fenced for projects which arise during the course of the year.
- 1.6 The report also proposes that unallocated Councillors Better Neighbourhood Grant monies be transferred into the grant budget at the end of the year.
- 1.7 The report also details various benefits in kind awarded to voluntary organisations such as business rate relief, free use of facilities, free storage or use of office space for specific projects.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 Applications for Council Grants are welcomed on an annual cycle. This year grant applications were open from 18th of October to 22nd November 2021, for grants awarded for the financial year 2022/2023.
- 2.2 A total of 46 applications were received, with partial or full funding being awarded to 32 of these organisations. Other than 2019/20, this is the highest number of applications received as far as records go back, being reflective of the current community need.
- 2.3 To ensure the panel had sufficient information to make an informed decision, applicants were asked to provide evidence of the need that their service fulfils, to explain why their organisations were best placed to meet that need, and to outline how the grant would be used. Additionally, applicants were asked about their approach to safeguarding and how they had adapted to changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.4 Prior to opening, the grants application timeline was publicised widely using social media, the Council website and by contacting local organisations directly. In addition, the timeline was shared by Voluntary Services North Surrey and other community organisations to ensure maximum publicity.
- 2.5 As well as voluntary organisations and charities, provision continues to be made for annual grants to arts, sports, and cultural bodies to enhance active lifestyle, health, and wellbeing opportunities for our residents.
- 2.6 Regular monitoring of the top 5 funded organisations (listed in 3.4) continues with quarterly monitoring meetings to measure performance against their service level agreements (SLA's). Independent feedback from partners and service users was also sought for our top funded organisations to ensure the service they were providing was effective and to ensure the grant funding is being used as it was intended.
- 2.7 Housing Options have recently changed their operating model with Rentstart, moving across to a commissioning model. The award for 2022/23 will be fully funded from the Housing budget. As a result, Rentstart were not part of the grant application process this year.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 The grants panel met on the 7th, 8th and 20th December 2021 to consider the applications received and finalise the proposed 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 all options. These were discussed fully during the panel meetings
- 3.2 This year again, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the panel chose not to meet individually with the top 5 funded organisations. The panel reviewed the information supplied and decided they had sufficient assurance to enable an informed award decision for the coming year.
- 3.3 Following the review session, the proposed grant support for the top 5 funded organisations was agreed and is listed below. The level of funding has either been maintained or increased.

Organisation	Primary Focus	Award for 2022/23
Citizens Advice R&S	To ensure the citizens of Spelthorne have access to free, independent, confidential advice and information	£60,000 Plus £35,000 direct funding from Housing Budget
AGE UK	Befriending and Information and Advice service.	£30,000
Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS)	To support a stronger and more sustainable voluntary sector in Spelthorne, in response to COVID-19.	£35,000
Homestart	To support parents and their children through difficult times.	£24,150
Shopmobility	To provide an equality of opportunity for people with limited mobility or visual impairment, wishing to visit Staines town centre.	£15,000
Total		£164,150

- 3.4 Citizens Advice Runnymede & Spelthorne also receive additional funding from Housing Options. This is to reflect the amount of specialist assistance provided, and the increased demand for housing, debt and welfare support advice.
- 3.5 Subsequent consideration was given by the grants panel to the remaining 27 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 Awards 2022/23.
- 3.6 Several actions for officers were agreed as part of the panel's deliberations relating to improvements in partnership working with the successful organisations.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The budget for the 2022/23 grants allocation, subject to confirmation, has been maintained at £209,600. Along with a carry forward of £24,200 from 2021/22, a total of £233,800 was available to be allocated
- 4.2 During the application review process a total of £218,850 in grants was assigned.
- 4.3 The surplus of £14,950 will be ring fenced for requests arising during the year as decided by the grants panel.
- 4.4 The panel introduced a mid-year review for all beneficiaries of grant awards in September 2021. A report will be produced for the panel again this year, detailing how organisations have used their allocations against their stated aims. This introduces an element of quality control over the use of grant money, to allow the Council to ensure stated outcomes are being achieved. The agreement states that if grant awards are not spent, the Council can ask for the grant (or part of it) to be returned.
- 4.5 Councillors Better Neighbourhood Grants for 2021/22 amount to £78,000. At the end of the financial year, it is proposed that any unspent grant money be transferred into the Council grant budget. Last year a total of £15,000 was transferred across. The amount available for virement will be determined by how much individual Councillors allocate within their wards and will not be known until April 2022.
- 4.6 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,

5. Other considerations

- 5.1 Spelthorne Council support 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.

6. Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 Some providers supported by grant funding represent or advocate for minority groups, user groups, and faith communities. Care was taken by the panel when reviewing applications to ensure a fair mix of organisations supporting all aspects of our communities benefited.

- 6.2 To encourage applications from all sectors of the community, a word version of the form was made available on the Council's website so those not able to apply online were not excluded. A number of applicants took advantage of this when applying. Hard copies were available but not requested this year.

7. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 7.1 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

8. Timetable for implementation

- 8.1 Following agreement by Committee, individually tailored letters will be sent to applicants advising them of the outcome of their applications. This will be completed by early March. Personalised signposting to other avenues of fundraising will also be included in the letters
- 8.2 All qualifying grants will be paid in April 2022

9. Contact

- 9.1 The contact for queries relating to this report is Jayne Brownlow.
J.brownlow@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers:

There are None

Appendices:

Appendix A - Proposed Annual Grants Allocation 2022/23 V1

Appendix B - Other support for Charities and Voluntary Organisations