

Community Wellbeing and Housing



17 January 2023

Title	Annual Grant Awards 2023/24
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Kamal Mehmood, Strategic Lead Leisure and Community Development
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 2023/24, subject to final determination of the annual budget by Council2. 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 2023/24 are transferred to the Grants budget for allocation.
Reason for Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seeking agreement to award grants for 2023/2024 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 by Council at budget setting meeting in February, the baseline grant funding budget is £215,900. A carry forward of £33,350 unspent grant from the current year has also been applied, making a provisional budget of £249,250.

- 1.3 As in previous years, the report also proposes that unallocated Councillors' Better Neighbourhood Grant monies be transferred into the grant budget at the end of the financial year to meet any requests for support received in year.
- 1.4 Applications for grant funding opened on 1 October 2022 and remained open for a month. The Council grants scheme was advertised widely to ensure that as many organisations as possible were aware and how to apply. In total 30 applications were received.
- 1.5 The cross-party Grants Panel met on 16 December 2022 to assess the applications received. This report contains the list of organisations proposed by the panel to receive grant funding for 2023/24. **Appendix A** sets out an overview of the funding requests and the Grant Panel's recommendations for 2023/24.
- 1.6 Recommendations allocating £209,919 in grant funding have been proposed and, if approved by CWHC and subject to the Council budget setting meeting in February, will be paid in April 2023. Any surplus will be ring-fenced for projects which arise during the course of the year.
- 1.7 **Appendix B** 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 1st to 31st October 2022. Applications are considered for awards granted for the subsequent financial year, in this case 2023/2024.
- 2.2 Demand for funding far outstrips the available budget. A total of 30 applications were received, with funding requests totalling £395,882 exceeding the baseline budget by £180,000, 83% and the provisional budget by £147,000, 59%.
- 2.3 Of the 30 organisations that submitted applications the Grants Panel recommended either partial or full funding being awarded to 18 of them with recommendations on a further 5 bring deferred pending further information.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The grant funding window 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 to ensure maximum publicity.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 Regular monitoring of the top 5 funded organisations (listed in 3.2) continues with quarterly monitoring to measure performance against their service level

agreements (SLA's). Independent feedback 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.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 The Grants Panel met on the 16th December 2022 to consider the applications received and agree recommendations for each award. Information on the applications, financial checks and background on the organisations was circulated in advance to allow panel members time to consider all options. These were discussed fully during the panel meetings.
- 3.2 The Panel's recommendations for the top 5 funded organisations is listed below. The level of funding has either been maintained or increased.

Organisation	Primary Focus	Proposed Award for 2022/23
Citizens Advice R&S	To ensure the citizens of Spelthorne have access to free, independent, confidential advice and information	£70,000 Plus £40,000 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.	£35,000
Home-Start	To support parents and their children through difficult times.	£24,919
Shopmobility	To provide an equality of opportunity for people with limited mobility or visual impairment, wishing to visit Staines town centre.	£15,000
Total		£174,919 plus £40,000 housing payment

- 3.3 Citizens Advice Runnymede & Spelthorne receive additional funding from Housing Options, funded through Homelessness Prevention grant. This is to reflect the demand for specialist assistance in the areas of housing, debt and welfare support advice. In addition, a further £46,000 has been allocated from the Housing budget to fund a case worker specifically to cover Spelthorne for a period of 12 months. Without the financial support, Citizens Advice Runnymede & Spelthorne would not be able to deliver their services to the demand in the community. The demand for their service has now further increased due to the cost-of-living crisis.

- 3.4 Subsequent consideration was given by the grants panel to the remaining 25 smaller grant applications. Particular attention was paid to requests for assistance for those organisations supporting those recovering from the Pandemic as well as the cost-of-living crisis. Where appropriate, organisations were referred to the Spelthorne Hardship Fund and the Spelthorne Healthy Communities Partnership Board to enable organisations to access funding more quickly than having to wait until the next financial year. The list of the Grant Panel's recommendations is itemised in the attached **Appendix A – Overview of Requests and Recommendations 2023/24**.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The budget for the 2023/24 grants allocation, subject to confirmation, has been maintained and an inflation uplift of 3% applied giving a baseline figure of £215,900. Along with a carry forward of £33,350 from 2022/23, a total of £249,250 was available to be allocated.
- 4.2 During the application review process recommendations totalling £209,919 were identified.
- 4.3 The surplus of £39,331 will be ring fenced for requests arising during the year to be decided by the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.
- 4.4 Councillors Better Neighbourhood Grants for 2022/23 amount to £39,000. At the end of the financial year, it is proposed that any unspent grant money be transferred into the Council grant budget. The amount available for virement will be determined by how much individual Councillors allocate within their wards and will not be known until April 2023.
- 4.5 **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,

5. Risk considerations

- 5.1 Identified risks include (i) grant support to the charity and voluntary sector is not in sync with the Council's corporate priorities (ii) grant support is not effectively utilised for intended purpose i.e. to address those community needs set out at application stage (iii) unclear qualifying criteria may result in grants being awarded that fail to adequately target defined community support
- 5.2 Mitigation measures are referred to elsewhere in this report such as monitoring arrangements referred to at para 2.7.

6. Procurement considerations

- 6.1 N/A

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 Further to section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to incur expenditure, which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it to all or some of its residents.

8. Other considerations

- 8.1 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.

- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 To encourage applications from all sectors of the community, a word version of the form was made available on the Council's website and hard copies were available upon request so those not able to apply online were not excluded. However, no hard copies were requested this year.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 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

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1 Following agreement by Committee, and subject to final confirmation of the budget by the Council on 23 February, 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
- 11.2 All qualifying grants will be paid in April 2023

12. Contact

- 12.1 The contact for queries relating to this report is Kamal Mehmood
K.Mehmood@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers:, There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Proposed Overview of requests and Recommendations 2023/24 V3

Appendix B - Other support for Charities and Voluntary Organisations