

Council



Date of meeting **19 October 2023**

Title	Grant Funding Panel & Terms of Reference
Purpose of the report	To agree that the Grants Panel and its Terms of Reference be written into the Council's Constitution
Report Author	Lisa Stonehouse Community Development Manager
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	n/a
Corporate Priority	Community
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve the inclusion of the Grants Panel with the Terms of Reference agreed by the Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee (Option 3) into the Council's Constitution, and• Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to agree the names of those members on the Grants Panel
Reason for Recommendation	<p>The adoption of new terms of reference is needed to appoint members to the Council Grants Panel in order that funding applications in 2023/24 can be considered.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Terms of Reference referred to in Option 1 are adopted as the Grants Panel would have representatives from several committees and political groups. It is also recommended that the Grants Panel is established at this meeting in order that the 2023/2024 grants process can begin.</p> <p>The terms of reference for the Grants Panel must also be adopted into the Council Constitution.</p>

1. Summary of the report

1.1 This report seeks agreement for the adoption of proposed new Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Council Grants Panel. The Grants Panel are an advisory group who consider and make recommendations about grant applications to the Council. The Grants Panel TOR need to be incorporated into the constitution as this was an outstanding item when the committee system was introduced. Amendments to the constitution will go to the Standards Committee and Council in October. There are three options for the proposed TOR; Option 1 (**Appendix B**), option 2 (**Appendix C**) or option 3 (**Appendix D**) Option 1 is the recommended option.

2. Key issues

2.1 The Grants Panel and TOR must be adopted as part of the Council constitution.

2.2 The Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee agreed to establish the Grants Panel in order that the 2023/2024 grants process can begin. **The Committee decided upon option 3**

2.3 The Council has historically appointed a Grants Panel to consider applications for its revenue grants scheme, making recommendations by way of a report at the annual budget setting meeting in the first months of each year. The copy of the historic TOR is outlined in **Appendix A**.

2.4 The Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) submit applications to the Grants Panel each year. Spelthorne Borough Council regard the VCS as a key driver of services to address unmet needs in the community. Several charities provide crucial services that are essential to residents. Greater demands for VCS services have arisen due to the rising cost of living and the recent Covid pandemic.

2.5 Financial support for this sector is essential. The Council allocates a budget for grant funding on an annual basis to fund initiatives that support the Council's corporate objectives and complement our services. The VCS sector offers services to a diverse range of communities. It can deliver outcomes that 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.

2.6 Annual grants are also made to arts, sports, and cultural bodies to enhance active lifestyle, health, and wellbeing opportunities for our residents, and by organisations advocating for minority groups, user groups, and faith communities.

2.7 Other public bodies such as the North-West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership and Surrey County Council also see the voluntary sector as important providers and, in some cases, fund them separately or as part of a joint funding partnership.

2.8 The Grants Budget is allocated on an annual cycle. The opportunity is promoted in September each year when organisations are invited to apply for funding for the subsequent financial year.

2.9 **Terms of Reference Option 1** (recommended option). There are 5 suggested changes that could be implemented as outlined below. The full TOR are outlined in **Appendix B**

- It is proposed that the composition of the Grants Panel could change from 3 councillors and 3 officers to 5 councillors with 2 officers attending in an advisory capacity.
- The Chair **or** the Vice Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee (CWHC) will be Chair of the Grants Panel.
- The remaining four positions on the Panel will be filled by Councillors with relevant skills or knowledge. They will be nominated by the four political group leaders of the political parties not represented on the Panel (ie not from the same political party as the Chair). This will ensure that there is a cross party and cross committee approach to the constitution of the Panel.
- The Chair of the Grants Panel will be nominated at the first CWHC of the municipal year. Nominations for the Panel membership will be made by political group leaders in advance of the meeting.
- The quorum shall be 3 Councillors. (2 officers will be present in an advisory capacity).

2.10 **Terms of Reference Option 2.** There are 5 suggested changes that could be implemented as outlined below. The full TOR are outlined in **Appendix C.**

- It is proposed that the composition of the Grant Panel could change from 3 councillors and 3 officers to 5 councillors with 2 officers attending in an advisory capacity. (this point is the same as for Option 1)
- The Chair **and** Vice Chair of the CWHC will fill two of the posts with the Chair of the CWHC also acting as the Chair of the Grants Panel.
- The CWHC will nominate the remaining 3 Panel members which should reflect a cross party approach to the constitution of the Panel.
- The nominations will be made by the Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee at their first meeting of the municipal year.
- The quorum shall be 3 Councillors. (2 officers will be present in an advisory capacity).

2.10 **Terms of Reference Option 3** - Keep the historic Terms of Reference with two essential minor amendments to reflect the Committee Process. Eg the change from Cabinet to CWHC. The full TOR are outlined in **Appendix D.** The amendments to reflect the CWHC are in red.

- A minimum of 3 elected members and three officers with relevant skills or knowledge will comprise the panel.
- These will be appointed to the panel by being proposed and seconded by existing panel members and following a vote of existing members. Members should be nominated on the basis of specific skills that they will bring to the panel.
- A quorum shall be four members
- The chair must be an elected member and will be elected by majority vote.

- All decisions will be made by a majority vote and in instances of there being no majority, the chair will gain the power to make one casting vote.

- 2.11 It should be noted that the basis for the Grants Panel remain unchanged in that they are an advisory group. The Panel's recommendations will be presented to CWHC for initial approval and then to full Council at its annual budget setting meeting.
- 2.12 In recent years the Chair of the Grants Panel adopted a cross-party approach to the constitution of the group. This approach has worked well, and it is proposed that it should be continued. As such, it has been incorporated into the proposed TOR.
- 2.13 Any surplus as decided by Council will be ring fenced for requests arising during the year.
- 2.14 Approaches to the Council to access this funding after the main grants meetings in November/December will be considered by an extra ordinary meeting of the Grants Panel and their recommendations taken to CWHC to be determined.
- 2.15 A quorum of 6 of the 11 members of the CWHC (the majority) must agree with each allocation.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1** Agree the recommended proposals for the new TOR set out in Appendix B.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** Agree the alternative proposal for the new TOR set out in Appendix C.
- 3.3 **Option 3:** Keep the existing historic TOR with two essential minor amendments to reflect the Committee Process. Eg change Cabinet to CWHC.
- 3.4 The adoption of the TOR is needed to appoint members to the Grants Panel in order that applications seeking funding in 2023/24 can be considered.
- 3.5 If the TOR are not adopted, the Panel will not be able to meet and in the absence of alternative arrangements the assessment of allocations will be delayed which will impact on the determination of the awards for 23/24 and decisions regarding the 23/24 budget.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The determination of the Terms of Reference for the Grant Funding Panel has no direct financial implications.
- 4.2 The budget for the 2023/24 grants allocation was maintained at £215,900. In addition, there was also a carry forward from 2022/23 of £24,331 from the main grants budget and a carry forward from the Councillors Better Neighbourhood Grant Budget of £1,450. **This provides a total budget of £241,681.**

5. Risk considerations

- 5.1 If the TOR are not adopted the Panel will not be able to meet. In the absence of alternative arrangements, the assessment of allocations will be delayed. A delay would have an impact on the ability to award funding in a timely manner at the start of the financial year and would have repercussions for the VCS. This would have a negative effect on the council relationship with this sector as well as impacting on the reputation of the Council.
- 5.2 If option 2 is favoured, all Panel members would be from the CWHC. This would mean that these Panel members cannot vote at CWHC. This would enable only 7 members to vote on the Committee. As a result there is a risk of not achieving a quorum at CWHC.
- 5.3 If option 3 is favoured, the Grants Panel membership would be based on the existing membership of the 2023/2024 panel. Additional members would be invited to join the panel based on specific skills that they will bring to the panel. There is a risk that the Panel may not be politically representative. There is also a risk of criticism If the membership does not change from year to year as this may lead to bias.

6. Procurement considerations

- 6.1 N/A

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 Legal have been consulted.

8. Other considerations

- 8.1 Councillors on the Panel will be asked to register/declare any interests before considering the applications and making any recommendations. This will be added to the Terms of Reference.
- 8.2 In addition to the recommendations to the CWHC re grant allocations the panel will also detail the Council support given to agencies eg accommodation at a reduced rent, parking permits and officer support. The panel will also provide information regarding other funds that recipients receive from other sources.
- 8.2 The VCS in Spelthorne provides services to a diverse range of people from families and young people to older residents. They offer crucial services to those who are experiencing hardship or are vulnerable or marginalised. This sector also promotes the benefits of volunteering and community engagement and the positive impact that volunteering can have on individuals and the community.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 The Grant funding programme is open to all sections of the community, minority groups, user groups, and faith communities. The Panel take care when reviewing applications to ensure that a fair mix of organisations supporting all aspects of our communities will benefit.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 Grant recipients will be encouraged to engage with the council's Climate Change and Sustainability specialists to explore ways of adopting sustainable working practices and supporting climate change issues.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1 The Grants Panel TOR will need to be added to the Council Constitution. The recommendation from CWHC regarding the TOR will go to Standards Committee on 4 October. Council will then consider this on 19 October.

12. Contact

12.1 Lisa Stonehouse L.stonehouse@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A Grants Panel Historic Terms of Reference

**Appendix B Grants Panel Proposed Terms of Reference- Option 1
(Recommended Option)**

Appendix C Grants Panel Proposed Terms of Reference – Option 2

Appendix D Grants Panel Proposed Terms of Reference - Option 3