

Date of meeting: 16 January 2025

Title	<i>Grant Application by the Spelthorne Business Forum</i>
Purpose of the report	To make a recommendation.
Report Author	<i>Chris Norrington, Economic Development Manager</i>
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Resilience
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <i>To recommend to Council to approve a grant application made by the Spelthorne Business Forum.</i>
Reason for Recommendation	This application for a grant is from a business group and not from a community group, therefore the Business Infrastructure & Growth Committee is the recommended committee to consider the request and recommend to Council to approve the application.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Spelthorne Business Forum has received grants from the Economic Development Budget which were previously approved by Council as part of the Growth Bid and Service Plan process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To align the approval of business grants as per community grants which are currently approved by committee.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the application or the Committee can reject the application.

- 1.1 This report seeks to present an application by The Spelthorne Business Forum (Appendix A) that recommends approval by Council. The amount applied for is £10,000 for the financial year 2025- 2026. The amount is currently accounted for in Economic Development's Service Plan and therefore subject to Council approval as a part of the budget approval process.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The Council has supported the Spelthorne Business Forum in the past as it provided businesses with a representative body as there is not a Chamber of Commerce or similar business group in Spelthorne. Further information can be found on the [Spelthorne Business Forum website](#).
- 2.2 The Spelthorne Business Forum provides networking events, an online business directory and communications to the business community.
- 2.3 The grant will specifically be used to cover the employee cost of two persons who manage the events, finances and communications.
- 2.4 To continue to provide the services, the Spelthorne Business Forum requires a grant until it establishes alternative income streams in the future. It does not have any other ways of obtaining a grant other than through Spelthorne Borough Council. Spelthorne Business Forum does intend to raise sponsorship from its events and the Business Plan Competition to increase income and potentially reduce the need to request a grant.
- 2.5 The Spelthorne Business Forum regularly sends business communications via its newsletter to business contacts. Its activities include 10 networking events, 2 social events including the Riverboat Cruise which Council employees attend.
- 2.6 The Spelthorne Business Forum is also focussing on developing a [business directory](#) which will connect business services in the borough. Please refer to appendix A – the application for more detail.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1 and preferred recommendation:** To recommend to Council that it approves the application for a grant of £10,000 to be awarded to The Spelthorne Business Forum which will ensure that activities in the application are carried out in the interests of the Council and the business community. This decision is subject to Council approving the Economic Development budget for 2025-26.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** To recommend to Council that the application of a grant of £10,000 to The Spelthorne Business Forum is denied. The consequence of this action will likely force the Spelthorne Business Forum to stop all activity in the short-term until alternative income streams are identified. The Economic Development Team have capacity to fulfil some of the functions but not all.

4. Financial management comments

- 4.1 If **option 1** is preferred, provision for a grant of £10,000 is included in Economic Development's 2025/26 Growth Bid and Service Plan. This has already been approved by this committee subject to Council approving the Budget on 27 February 2025.
- 4.2 If **option 2** is preferred, the Economic Development Team will use the £10,000 to carry out the activities if the Spelthorne Business Forum is unable to.

5. Risk management comments

- 5.1 If **option 1** is preferred, the Spelthorne Business Forum will continue to provide activities in collaboration with the Economic Development team.

There is a risk that the grant funding objectives may not be met by the Spelthorne Business Forum.

It is a requirement of the awarding of the grant to have an agreement between Spelthorne Borough Council and The Spelthorne Business Forum in place. This will ensure that bi-annual reports will be submitted for this Committee's information and review. This will also provide overview and scrutiny of the Spelthorne Business Forum's objectives and success in respect of the grant awarded. This will ensure the Council provides value for money and good practise in providing this grant.

- 5.2 If **option 2** is preferred, the Economic Development Team will conduct most of the activities instead of the Spelthorne Business Forum. The current team does not have capacity to manage an extra ten networking events, nor does it have the capacity to manage the Forum's Wayfinder directory as it stands as it is a commercial exercise.

6. Procurement comments

- 6.1 None arising from this report.

7. Legal comments

- 7.1 The Council has the powers to award grants to organisations using its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 7.2 Grant funding criteria and objectives must be met in order for the Council to evidence compliance with the statutory duty to deliver best value under the Local Government Act 1999.

8. Other considerations

- 8.1 N/A

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 No impact

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 No impact

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1 The grant will be paid in the financial year 2025-26.

12. Contact

- 12.1 Chris Norrington: c.norrington@spelthorne.gov.uk

**Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer
Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.**

**Background papers:
There are none.**

**Appendices:
Appendix A – Spelthorne Business Forum Grant Application**