

Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.

Stage 1

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Yes / No	Date
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing	Yes	21/11/25
Commissioner engagement (if report focused on issues of concern to Commissioners such as Finance, Assets etc)	Sent on 03/12/25	
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	21/11/25
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	24/11/25
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments (circulate to Finance)	Sent 24/11/25	
Risk comments (circulate to Lee O'Neil)	Sent 24/11/25	
Legal comments (circulate to Legal team)	JC	26/11/25
HR comments (if applicable)	n/a	

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Completed by	Date
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	L Heron	05/12/25
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T. Collier	24/11/25
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee

13 January 2026

Title	Annual Grant Awards for the financial year 2026/2027
Purpose of the report	To make a decision and a recommendation to Council
Report Author	<i>Lisa Stonehouse, Community Development Manager</i>
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	Report & Appendix B– No Appendix A - Yes
Exemption Reason	Appendix A contains exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information
Corporate Priority	Community
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recommend to Council to agree to the recommendations of the Grants Panel regarding the proposed recipients of the 2026/2027 community grants.2. Note the significant decrease in grant budget for 2026/2027.3. Note the other support that Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector.4. Note that any underspend from the Council Grants budget and Better Neighbourhood Grants will not be carried forward to the next financial year.5. Note that the Panel have recommended that there will be no award to sport and arts agencies due to the budget cut.6. Recommend that the underspend in 2025/2026 is awarded in 2025/2026 to a charity offering mental health support to young people.
Reason for Recommendation	Agreement to award grants for 2026/2027 is sought to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enable several charities, voluntary organisations and small groups to continue to provide support, assistance, and other essential services for Borough residents.• enable new organisations to begin to provide services that are required in the Borough.

1. Executive summary of the report (expand detail in Key Issues section below)

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has a community grants budget. Grants are allocated annually to charities and voluntary groups. Due to the budget constraints the Council is facing the Council needs to make choices within the budget available and prioritise which voluntary groups and charities it can support. The cross-party Councillor Grants Panel have reviewed the applications and have made a recommendation to Committee regarding the agencies that should receive grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charities and voluntary organisations/small groups have a crucial role within the borough. Some are fulfilling roles that were previously provided by statutory services. They provide services to improve every aspect of resident's lives, especially in the current cost of living crisis. Our community grants are essential to enable these groups to operate.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decision from Committee to recommend to Council is required to determine which agencies should receive a grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the Committee has made the decision, a recommendation will be made to Council. The final awards will be subject to the Council budget setting meeting on 26 February 2026

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The Council has a community grants budget. Applications are welcomed annually from charities and community groups. There are always more applications than available budget. This report outlines the recommendations of the cross-party Grants Panel who carefully considered the applications and have prioritised which groups to support.
- 2.2 Charities and voluntary groups play a crucial role in Spelthorne, some are fulfilling roles that were previously provided by statutory services to improve various aspects of resident's lives and enhance wellbeing, especially in the current cost of living crisis.
- 2.3 Subject to confirmation by Council at the budget setting meeting in February, the baseline grant funding budget for 2026/2027 is **£170,000**. Due to the current financial situation, this was significantly reduced in December 2025 from the previous baseline budget of £231,300 (a reduction of £61k or

26.4%). All figures are subject to further change following the budget Corporate Policy and Resources and Council meetings in February.

- 2.4 The allocation of grants is a discretionary activity. It is however acknowledged that grants support for some of the core grant recipients such as Citizens Advice and several others help to divert workload pressure away from some of our statutory services such as Housing Options and Housing Benefits.
- 2.5 The Quarter 2 monitoring report for 2025-26, is highlighting, that after taking into account the impact of the new minimum revenue provision policy and re-financing, a projected overspend of £14.7m for 2026-27. The current budget gap for 2026-27 is currently £6.6m and with no savings we would not be able to balance the Spelthorne element of the new West Surrey Council over the medium term as the budget gap would exceed usable reserves in 2028/29. Bench marking is showing that our overall service costs are approximately 30% higher than comparative districts and boroughs.
- 2.6 Linked to the above, one of the statutory Best Value directions states that the Council should produce “A plan to reconfigure the Authority’s services commensurate with the Authority’s available financial resources.” which the council must comply with. The Council also do not want to be seen to be using all of our reserves up to 31 March 2028.
- 2.7 External experts, Peopletoo, have been commissioned to provide an analysis of where our spending is above statutory levels and options for potential savings. In this context officers are suggesting, following discussions with Commissioners, that the Grants Panel should reduce its budget for 2025/2027 from £231k to £170k. This will make a contribution towards the savings target which the Council will need to build into the 2026/2027 budget to ensure that not all of the £6.6m budget gap is met from reserves.
- 2.8 Contrary to previous years, any underspend from the grant budget at the end of the financial year 2025/2026 will not be carried forward to 2026/2027 as there is a large overspend projected for the overall Budget. There is currently an underspend of £5,400 on the Grants budget.
- 2.9 The grants application process was open from 3 September – 3 October 2025. It was promoted on the website and social media and also via councillors, community groups, previous applicants and Voluntary Support North Surrey.
- 2.10 As agreed by Council on 18 July 2024, the five core funded organisations (Voluntary Support North Surrey, Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne, Homestart, Age UK and Shopmobility) were initially given an indication of proposed funding for the financial year 2026/2027 in February 2025. Unfortunately, the financial climate has changed since this time and the grant to these charities has been reduced by 25%.
- 2.11 Demand for funding far outstripped the available budget. 34 applications were received with funding requests totalling **£415,969**, exceeding the revised budget by **£245,969**. The finance team reviewed the accounts of all applicants and the Grants Panel met on 4 and 11 November to consider the applications. They then met again on 2 January due to the reduction in budget. Of the 34

that submitted applications the Grants Panel initially recommended that 24 applicants should receive either partial or full funding. The reduction in budget meant that this recommendation reduced to 14. Two applicants (both scout groups) were advised to apply for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding as their applications related to making improvements to community buildings. **The recommended awards are listed in appendix A.**

- 2.12 To ensure that the Panel had sufficient information to make an informed decision, applicants were asked to provide evidence of the need that their service fulfils in Spelthorne. They were also asked to explain why their organisation was best placed to meet that need, and to outline how the grant would be used. Additionally, applicants were asked to confirm that they had safeguarding children and adults at risk policies and procedures.
- 2.13 Due to the demand on grants funding this year from several good causes, the panel were unfortunately unable to recommend that any sports or arts projects to receive grant. (A Committee decision on 11/06/2024 approved that sports and arts organisations should receive £3,000 in grants each year).
- 2.14 Appendix B details the voluntary organisations that have free use/low-cost use of Council owned buildings.
- 2.15 Regular monitoring of the top 5 core funded organisations listed in 2.10 ensures that they continue to provide an effective service and the funding is being used as intended. All grant recipients are asked to provide feedback on how the grant has been spent.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1 (proposed option)** is to approve the recommendations of the Grants Panel.
- 3.2 Advantages of option 1
 - The recommendations that have been made by the Panel are based on extensive discussion. The recommendations ensure that several sections of the community will receive grants, eg groups working with adults, children and those with disabilities
- 3.3 Disadvantages of option 1
 - Due to budget constraints, some applicants have been unsuccessful.
- 3.4 **Option 2 is to not approve the recommendations for the Grants Panel**
- 3.5 Advantages of option 2
 - The committee may prefer to propose an alternative allocation of grants.
- 3.6 Disadvantage of option 2
 - This could lead to potential delays to the grants being awarded and may lead to reductions in the service provided to the public.

4. Risk implications

- 4.1 Council may decide in February 2026 that the grant budget will be further reduced. This would result in approving a reduced number of grants and could result in community services being cut. This would have a huge impact on the community and could also impact the Council, especially in areas such as housing, housing benefits and independent living, due to a lack of voluntary sector support. It could also damage the reputation of the Council.
- 4.1 The grant support may not be effectively utilised for the intended purpose i.e. to address those community needs set out at application stage. Organisations are aware that the grant must be spent in accordance with what they specified in the grant application

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 Subject to confirmation by Corporate Policy and Resources and Council at the budget setting meeting in February, the baseline grant funding budget for 2026/2027 has now reduced to £170,000.
- 5.2 The underspend of £5,400 in the 2025/2026 budget could be used immediately in 2025/2026 by awarding it to a charity offering mental health support to young people in an area of greater deprivation. (Listed in Appendix A highlighted in yellow).
- 5.3 **These figures are subject to change following the budget meeting in February.**

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Successful charities and voluntary organisations are to enter into grant agreements and in certain cases service level agreements. Legal services support will be required.
- 6.2 None of the proposed grants amount to unlawful subsidies under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Corporate implications

7. S151 Officer comments

- 7.1 The S151 Officer confirm that all financial implications have been taken into account and that the recommendations are fully funded from within the current and future years budget, and recognises the significant contribution being made to closing the Budget gap.

8. Monitoring Officer comments

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

9. Procurement comments

There are no procurement implications in this report.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1 Many of the 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. Given the budget reductions an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken.
- 10.2 To encourage applications from all sectors of the community, a word version of the form and hard copies were available upon request. No hard copies were requested this year. Everyone submitted an e form

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

The Grant Panel's aim is to support a cross section of voluntary organisations. This includes organisations committed to sustainable practices. Successful applicants are asked to engage with the council's Climate Change & Sustainability specialist where appropriate to ensure that they receive information and advice about energy conservation projects and funding.

12. Other considerations

Not applicable

13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1 Following agreement by Committee, and subject to final confirmation of the budget by the Council on 26 February 2026 (provisional date), personalised letters will be sent to applicants advising them of the outcome of their applications. This will be completed by early March 2025. Signposting to other avenues of fundraising will also be included in the correspondence where appropriate.

14. Contact

Lisa Stonehouse (Community Development Manager)

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

Background papers: Committee decision 11/06/2024 [Decision - Spelthorne Annual Grants 2025/26 - Spelthorne Borough Council](#)

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Confidential) Grant Panel Recommendations

Appendix B - Details of the voluntary organisations that have free use/low-cost use of council owned buildings.