

ENGAGE WOKING SCHOOLS – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary
<p>Woking Borough Council has received an application for funding from Engage Woking Schools, a local charity which seeks to take the Gospel into primary and secondary schools in and around Woking, as well as Woking College. The Charity's mission is to visit the young generation, sharing God's love with 15,000 children and teenagers each year: supporting, and inspiring through faith and hope. The Charity is supported by St Andrew's Church, Goldsworth Park, which provides office accommodation.</p> <p>The Charity has applied to Woking Borough Council for funding of £4,800 to cover the costs of having the Charity's website redesigned. The Charity has approached the Council as it is felt that the Authority should support the project/service as it forms key links with children and young people in the community of Woking.</p> <p>It is recommended that the application is not supported. Whilst the activities of the Charity are welcomed by Schools across the Borough, those activities are primarily to promote Christianity. The Council has always avoided funding Groups which promote a particular religion unless it can be demonstrated that their services or facilities are open to all and do not simply promote a single religion. It is clear, however, that the objective of Engage Woking Schools is to support and inspire young people through the Christian faith.</p>

Recommendations	
The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That no grant be awarded.
Reason for Decision	The Council Grants Scheme does not fund projects which promote a particular religion unless it can be demonstrated that their services or facilities do not simply promote a single religion.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2021/22 Application Form.

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Engage Woking Schools was established as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) on 27 February 2014, and registered with the Charity Commission on 4 March 2014. This work was previously undertaken by Woking Schools Christian Assembly Trust, and this charity was governed by a Trust Deed dated 13 November 1996.</p> <p>The Charity promotes the advancement of Christianity in Woking, and the surrounding areas, and in particular amongst the children and young people in the local Schools and Colleges.</p> <p>Engage Woking Schools are affiliated to the Scripture Union which supports charities such as Engage Woking Schools around the Country. The Union provides guidance and support on governance and good practise.</p> <p>Core to the work of the Group is the wellbeing and support of the children and young adults in local primary and secondary schools. The services are offered free of charge.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>Currently employs the equivalent of one full time member of staff, employed in term time, working 37 hours per week.</p> <p>Hours split as per the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Admin\ Project Manager – 13 hours per week ○ Schools worker – 24 hours per week
1.3 Volunteers	<p>30. The volunteers stage the assemblies in primary schools, and this work includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The designing and making of the costumes, the making of props and the script writing. • Delivery of after school clubs. • Supporting Guest Speaker events. • Annual Christmas Carol events. • Community outreach within Schools. <p>Mainly made up of children’s workers and youth workers from the local Churches, which encourage a building of community links between the Churches & the local educational establishments.</p> <p>The Trustees are all volunteers and each one plays an active part in the running of the organisation, whether in a line management capacity or undertaking a part in the safeguarding, communications or financial aspects of Engage Woking Schools.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>15,000, comprising:</p> <p>7,500 male</p> <p>7,500 female</p> <p>15,000 resident in Woking</p> <p>6,000 aged 0-5</p>

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	<p>7,000 aged 6-10 1,750 aged 11-18 250 aged 19-65 0 aged 65+</p> <p>The majority of our users are the children attending the 30 primary schools, where the assemblies are performed.</p>
1.5 Members	None.
1.6 Sum Requested	£4,800 (Capital)
1.7 Project	<p>Engage Woking Schools provides support in schools and Woking College to deliver a Christian education and have a Christian presence in schools, as well as supporting young children through one to one mentoring and group work. The Charity also offer a listening ear to staff as and when needed.</p> <p>If awarded the grant, Engage would use the monies towards the costs of developing a new website. The applicant has advised that, through Covid 19, it has become apparent that, whilst the current site has been sufficient, it needs to be updated to enable the Charity to continue to reach users and stay connected with supporters.</p> <p>The new website would be a service delivery platform which would enable the Charity’s customers to access lesson resources, assemblies, sign posting to professional support, wellbeing guidance and the services offered. The website would also be linked to all other social media platforms used by Engage Woking Schools. The three key goals would be to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach and expand the current/new users. • Increase website traffic. • Drive up donations. <p>Research for the project has been done by looking at other similar organisations such as Sparkfish* and speaking to the Director about the need for a website that is accessible to the young people supported as well as teachers, parents and supporters. The websites of other organisations such as Scripture Union, Youthscape and Christian Connections in Schools have all been looked at to see where improvements could be made.</p> <p>Some young people between the ages of 12 and 15 have been spoken to, to see if they would use the website as a source for information and signposting. The feedback has generally been to say yes if it was linked to a social media platform such as Instagram which was directly linked making it easier to access.</p> <p><i>*SparkFish is a Christian organisation that aims to inspire and encourage young people in faith, hope and love. They engage with all young people who go to school in Reigate, Redhill and Merstham, offering support across various aspects of the curriculum and school life.</i></p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	The Applicant has provided two quotes for work to improve the existing website. The lower of the two quotes is £4,000 plus VAT.

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1.9 Community Benefit	<p>The applicant had indicated that people who currently use the service would greatly benefit as schools would have access to online resources at any time enabling flexibility in planning. Young people would have access to the information they need anytime, whether to access a particular service or connect with a youth worker or Church in Woking. Parents would be able to access the support offered through the schools and be aware of the things their children are learning in schools too.</p> <p>The Charity hopes that these services would be shared further with schools which aren't aware of the services therefore increasing the range and number of people who would benefit.</p>
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>i) Assemblies - The organisation has been impacted greatly by Covid-19 as it has been unable to go into Primary Schools to deliver assemblies to approximately 30 schools. The Easter assemblies have always been a core part of where the Charity supports the schools in the curriculum.</p> <p>Transition Lessons – The Charity was unable to go into schools to deliver the Transition Lessons for the Year 6 pupils to support them in getting ready to move to Year 7. During this time the Charity would normally reach over 1,000 students. This year a considerable amount of time was spent in the organisation of delivering this resource online and to deliver the supporting books to every school within the Covid-19 guidelines. The books are gifted to children and are normally bought by the local connected church, though due to finances some churches were not able to support. The Charity took on this extra cost so the children did not miss out.</p> <p>Christian Unions – these clubs are run as part of the secondary schools and Woking Colleges enrichment programme where topics are discussed in detail which support and guide children but is also a place for young people to relax and just be. A time to connect with the Charity and Youth Workers. This stopped happening in secondary schools but was continued with Woking College students.</p> <p>Mentoring – mentoring stopped as the Charity was not able to go into schools to support children who were facing various challenges. This was done on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Staff Support – staff were supported at Woking College through prayer or a listening ear and by helping where they needed. This stopped too, though as the summer holidays drew closer the Charity was able to set up a weekly prayer/support meeting.</p> <p>Finance – the funding received is from local churches. This is often based on the activities and on the income they receive from the people attending church. As a consequence the finances have been impacted.</p> <p>Loss of staff – A newly appointed member of staff to work with Primary Schools resigned as a result of the lack of ability to go into schools and the pressure of starting a new job during a pandemic.</p> <p>ii) Covid-19 has effected the people supported by taking away an element of something they looked forward to, an activity which enabled individuals to have a time to share thoughts, feelings,</p>

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	<p>anxieties, ask questions about faith, God’s word and the world. The Charity’s assemblies gave the children and staff a morning assembly where they could let go and enjoy a drama with no preparation just having fun and learning through it.</p> <p>The children who were moving onto Year 7 were impacted because the Charity was not able to be in school and answer the questions which come up year after year about their fears and excitements of moving to a new school.</p>
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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £6,000 in the bank.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2021 which shows an anticipated income of £32,600 against an anticipated expenditure of £27,463, resulting in an anticipated surplus of £5,137.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes gifts from individuals (£6,018), gift aid (£1,384), and gifts from Churches (£25,144), Items of expenditure include staff costs (£24,188), and office and support costs (£3,275).</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20 which show an income of £37,023 against expenditure of £41,475, resulting in a deficit of £4,452. The sum of £7,829 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	New application.

3.0 Assessment of Application		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution ○ Registered Charity ○ VAT Registered ○ Equal Opportunities Policy ○ Safeguarding Policy ○ Reserves Policy ○ Quality Mark ○ Other funding sources pursued ○ Other support by the Council ○ Fundraising ○ Two quotes ○ Regular monitoring provided previously 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p>
3.2 Consultee Comments	None.	

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3.3 Assessment

Engage Woking Schools is a local charity which seeks to take the Gospel into primary and secondary schools in and around Woking, as well as Woking College. The Charity's mission is to visit the young generation, sharing God's love with 15,000 children and teenagers each year: supporting, and inspiring through faith and hope.

The Charity has applied to Woking Borough Council for funding of £4,800 to cover the costs of having the Charity's website redesigned. The Charity has approached the Council as it is felt that the Authority should support the project/service as it forms key links with children and young people in the community of Woking. The Applicant has indicated that not only does the Charity provide a Christian input, it also gives support and relief through creative outlets, a listening ear for staff, mentoring and small group work looking at issues from behaviour management, self-esteem issues and delivery of transition lessons for pupils moving from year 6 to year 7.

In the past all of this has been done face to face, but now this has to be done digitally where possible. To continue to provide these services, the Charity is keen to redesign its website to ensure it is accessible and easy to navigate for the children, young people, teachers and parents. The improved web site would provide Engage Woking Schools a greater profile, with the increased use of social media tools. This raised profile would enable the Charity to further promote its fundraising initiatives to a larger audience.

Whilst the activities of the Charity are welcomed by Schools across the Borough, those activities are primarily to promote Christianity. The Council has always avoided funding Groups which promote a particular religion unless it can be demonstrated that their services or facilities are open to all (such as a Church Hall), and do not simply promote a single religion. It is clear, however, that the objective of Engage Woking Schools is to support and inspire young people through Christian faith. It is therefore recommended that the application is not supported.

REPORT ENDS