

LET'S READ LTD – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

Let's Read Ltd. has applied for revenue support of £11,500 in 2021/22 to assist with the costs of its literacy improvement programme. The Charity was formed to ensure that the project could, over time, cover all schools in the Borough. The funding would be used towards the costs of the Charity, including the purchase of reading books and the training of volunteers. The project provides a book gifting scheme and a reading programme in Schools to help children maximise their start in life, and improve the overall economic wellbeing of the area. Year on year the Charity makes a huge impact in the schools it works in through the provision of 1,000 books each term to their children and the teaching of reading to over 100 children.

During the Covid-19 period Let's Read will not be actively volunteering in schools until it is safe to do so. The wellbeing of volunteers and of partner school communities is of the utmost importance. Therefore, the Reading Tutors have been unable to visit the Schools or work with children during lockdown, though several hundred books were provided to children to read as part of the book gifting project. The effect of the missed schooling on the reading attainment of some children will be noticeable; for six or seven year olds, a gap like this represents a significant proportion of their schooling. Disadvantaged children tend to suffer the most.

The Charity will be exploring with partner schools the use of technology to enable it to continue to support young people with their reading. This approach has its challenges and issues to overcome not least the cost and training necessary. Let's Read is committed to playing its part mending the damage caused by Covid-19 and helping children to be able to read and improve their literacy skills.

It is recommended that Woking Borough Council awards a grant of £10,500 for the 2021/22 financial year, set at the same level as last year.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That , subject to the outcome of the Council's budgetary process, funding of £10,500 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the cost of the literacy improvement programme.
Reason for Decision	To support the Let's Read literacy improvement programme to improve literacy standards in the Borough.
Legal Authority	S19 (Misc. Provisions) Local Government Act 1976 S111 Local Government Act 1972
Confirmation of funding	This award is provisionally made on the expectation that the Council's budgets for revenue and capital projects remain at the same level allocated for the current financial year. The Council's overall budget, including the sums allocated for community grants, will be determined by Council at its meeting on 11 February 2021. In the event the grant budgets are set at the anticipated levels, confirmation of the Council's support will be sent to successful applicants. Groups should not plan

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	<p>for the 2021/22 funding until this confirmation has been received.</p> <p>Should the budgets be reduced as part of the Council's efforts to achieve savings to offset the impact of Covid on the Council's financial position, a special meeting of the Executive will be held to review the provisional awards and allocate the funds available on a priority basis</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<p>Accounts. The Organisation must submit accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years may also be required.</p> <p>Monitoring Information. The Organisation must submit quarterly monitoring information as a measure of its achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award. E-mail requests will be sent to the applicant on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Publicity. Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on websites and literature / leaflets produced.</p> <p>Payments. Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with monitoring information for the previous quarter.</p> <p>Payment Period. Final quarter claims must be made by the second week in April. Unclaimed awards will not be available at a later date unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to the Council before the end of the award year.</p> <p>Joint Working. WBC expects the Organisation to engage positively on health and wellbeing multi-agency joint work affecting Woking. Groups which refuse may place their Council support at risk, e.g. grant, concessionary rent and other assistance.</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Following the introduction of new legislation from April 2018, the Council expects the support of partner agencies in identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible to maximise the opportunities to prevent such. Partner agencies / organisations are expected to be engaged in joint working arrangements to assist in finding suitable housing and support solutions, and where appropriate to undertake and respond to the new 'duty to refer'. Groups which do not support this new legislation and way of working positively may put their Council support at risk.</p>
<p>Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Users. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users.</p> <p>Activities. The Organisation to provide details of activities and events held.</p> <p>Publicity. The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised.</p> <p>Statement of Use. The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>
<p>Future Support</p>	<p>Due to the impact of Covid-19, the financial pressure on the Council's budgets is higher than ever and is expected to continue in the coming years. Accordingly the overall level of support available in future years may be reduced. The applicant is therefore to be advised that</p>

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the award of funding for 2021/22 does not imply that a similar application in 2022/23 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is extremely unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2021/22 levels.

In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2022/23 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2022. All applicants are strongly recommended to pursue alternative sources of funding and are encouraged to approach Woking Borough Council's Community Support Team for advice and support.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2021/22 Application Form.

Reporting Person:

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Date Published:

2 December 2020

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Let's Read Ltd was incorporated the 24th day of October 2008.</p> <p>The Charity seeks to advance the education of children and young people, in particular to promote literacy and develop reading and other literacy skills by collecting and distributing books and other reading materials and promoting or supporting training or other activities which are designed to promote literacy.</p>
1.2 Employees	None
1.3 Volunteers	<p>31. 25 of the volunteers are tutors teaching young people to learn to read using a phonics based method. These are children who cannot read or who have struggled to learn and have fallen behind their peer groups. Identified areas of Woking have real problems with low literacy and so the Charity has targeted primary schools in these areas which highly value our contribution of working one to one with their students during the year.</p> <p>Let's Read has made a significant and measurable difference to many children and their ability to read and access learning. This past academic year nearly 100 children have been taught to read to their chronological age or better. These are students with English as a second language, Travellers and Army children who have had their education disrupted by the number of relocations they have experienced. Work also takes place for young people with learning difficulties who often really struggle to learn to read and so are seriously disadvantaged in later life.</p> <p>The Group notes that 150 young people leave Woking Primary Schools each year unable to read well enough to access learning in their Secondary Schools.</p> <p>5 of the volunteers support and run the book gifting project which each term provides nearly 1,000 books to 12 schools in the Woking area. This project reaches young people many of whom who have no books to read at home.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>1,086, comprising:</p> <p>543 male</p> <p>543 female</p> <p>23 disabled</p> <p>923 ethnic minority</p> <p>1,086 resident in Woking</p> <p>1,006 aged 6-10</p> <p>80 aged 11-18</p>
1.5 Members	N/A
1.6 Sum Requested	£11,500 (Revenue)

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1.7 Project	<p>The purpose of the grant requested by Let's Read is to continue to deliver the outcomes making such a difference to the young people of Woking at a critical stage of their development as citizens of the Borough by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the 25+ volunteers delivering the Reading Project which helps nearly 100 young people each year; • ensuring the tutors are professionally trained, insured appropriately and have all the necessary resources to deliver successfully the Reading Programme in the four local schools supported; and • continuing the Free Book Gifting scheme to the 12 Woking Schools, thereby reaching out to those children who have no books of their own to read at home. 																		
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Training of Volunteers:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Teaching Resources:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Books for Children:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,950</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Insurance:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Postage & stationery:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,260</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Telephony & IT:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management & Admin of Reading Project:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£4,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management & Admin of Book Project:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£22,010</td> </tr> </table>	Training of Volunteers:	£1,500	Teaching Resources:	£1,200	Books for Children:	£5,950	Insurance:	£300	Postage & stationery:	£1,260	Telephony & IT:	£1,800	Management & Admin of Reading Project:	£4,500	Management & Admin of Book Project:	£5,500	Total	£22,010
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1.9 Community Benefit	<p>Each year over 100 young people who could not read are taught to read and access learning.</p> <p>Poor literacy skills seriously disadvantage young people, greatly increasing their risk of under-achievement at school, truancy and social exclusion. Poor literacy in adults has been linked to unemployment, poverty, financial exclusion and offending behaviour.</p> <p>A lack of basic literacy skills can lead to low esteem, academic failure, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, unemployment, low productivity and welfare dependence</p> <p>Let's Read has demonstrated that by intervening and tackling this challenge to improve literacy amongst young people, it can help to deliver far-reaching benefits across the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a increase of 100+ young people entering Secondary education who are able to access learning and improve their life chances and economic well being. • a reduction of the number of young people leaving schools identified as NEET. • raised awareness of the importance of literacy and the significant impact it has in reducing social deprivation and crime. <p>Over 1,000 young people will be given a free book each term. The book gifting scheme reaches those children who have no books of their own to read at home. Research by Nevada University has found that having just 20 books at home makes a significant difference to a child's life opportunities.</p>																		
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>During the Covid-19 outbreak Let's Read will not be actively volunteering in schools until it is safe to do so. The wellbeing of</p>																		

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	<p>volunteers and of partner school communities is of the utmost importance. Whilst Reading Tutors have been unable to visit the Schools or work with children during lockdown, several hundred books have been provided to children as part of the book gifting project.</p> <p>The effect of the missed schooling on the reading attainment of some children will be noticeable; for six or seven year olds, a gap like this represents a significant proportion of their schooling.</p> <p>While lots of children will have been enjoying quality time learning from their parents and carers, there will be many whose main carers lack the time, confidence, skills or motivation to step in where teachers have had to stand back. Disadvantaged children tend to suffer the most.</p> <p>The Group will be exploring with partner schools the use of technology i.e. Zoom or Microsoft Teams to enable it to continue to support young people with their reading. This approach has its challenges and issues to overcome not least the cost and training necessary.</p> <p>Let's Read is committed to playing its part mending the damage caused by Covid-19 and helping children to be able to read and improve their literacy skills.</p>
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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £51,686 in the bank. All donations for the purchase of books are reserved for this activity and not used for the purpose of running the Charity.</p> <p>The Group has submitted budgets for the books project and the reading project for 2020/21. The books budget for the coming year indicates a deficit of £880 based on an income of £12,538 against an expenditure of £13,418. The reading project indicates a deficit of £810 based on an income of £11,038 against an expenditure of £11,848.</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20 which show an income of £22,909 (£15,844 in 2018/19) against expenditure of £18,995 (£15,178 in 2018/19), resulting in a surplus of £3,914 (a surplus of £666 in 2018/19). The sum of £56,370 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2020/21 – £10,500 2019/20 – £10,500 2018/19 – £10,500 2017/18 – £10,500 2016/17 – £9,500</p>

3.0 Assessment of Application					
3.1 Key Information	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px dashed black;">○ Constitution</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px dashed black;">○ Registered Charity</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Yes</td> </tr> </table>	○ Constitution	Yes	○ Registered Charity	Yes
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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>* mandatory rate relief, discretionary rate relief, concessionary rent.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes *</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>3.2 Consultee Comments</p>	<p><u>Sandie Bolger, Youth Development Officer</u></p> <p>Let's Read Ltd aims to promote literacy and develop literacy skills by collecting and distributing books and other reading materials to vulnerable young people. The Group runs a book gifting scheme and a reading project to assist young children in primary schools to learn to read.</p> <p>A request of £11,500 of Revenue Funding has been made to cover the operational and training costs of the group, as well as the cost of buying new books to support the Free Book Gifting Scheme.</p> <p>Given the huge disadvantages that young people with poor literacy skills face, and the excellent outcomes Let's Read provide, I would be supportive of the continued funding of this Project. For the sustainability of the project going forward it would be positive to see funding applications made, by the charity, to the identified potential funders as laid out in the application form.</p> <p>There is a real need for this Charity and moving to use online tools during COVID is a positive one to continue engaging with organisations and young people.</p>	
<p>3.3 Assessment</p>	<p>Let's Read Ltd emerged from an initiative undertaken by the Sheerwater/Maybury Partnership which focussed on literacy levels in the Sheerwater and Maybury areas. In 2009, the project became an independent organisation in order to enable the literacy projects to be promoted throughout the Borough. The Group runs a book gifting scheme and a reading project to assist young children in primary schools learn to read.</p> <p>The Group aims to make every child a reader but it is a published fact that 1,500 children leave Surrey primary schools each year unable to read or with a reading age significantly below their chronological age of 11. This has a large economic cost and makes many of these children subsequently unemployable when leaving education, also adversely affecting the overall economic wellbeing of the area. The Group's intervention over the past ten years has significantly reduced what would have been a much greater and more serious problem of low literacy amongst the targeted young people of Woking. Let's Read could only operate with the support of Woking Borough Council.</p>	

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The book gifting project targets selected schools to ensure that children are reached who have no books at home. A free book is provided each term to a selected year group in 12 schools in the Woking area, gifting nearly 1,000 books each term and therefore over 3,000 each year.

Currently the reading project is not being held due to Covid-19 but will continue when it is safe to do so. The project involves working with the Head Teacher and the Literacy Co-ordinator to identify children in four targeted primary schools who are unable to read, or whose reading and comprehension is significantly behind their peer group. The four primary schools are assessed on need and reviewed on an annual basis. Requests are received to support other schools although the Group does not have sufficient resources to do so.

Each child is assessed by the Charity and an individual learning programme is followed by its tutors working one to one with these young people. Each week progress is monitored and each term the young people are reassessed. The Group also matches tutor skill sets to young people's needs, as many of the tutors have specialist skills which can achieve excellent results.

A number of identified areas in Woking are stated to have issues with low literacy, including parts of Sheerwater, Maybury, Goldsworth Park, Old Woking, Knaphill and Brookwood. The primary schools in these areas struggle when class sizes of 30 plus have a population of more than 65% of children who struggle to read English. These schools highly value the contribution that Let's Read makes by working one to one with their students each academic year. The support to these schools has made a measurable difference to the schools achievements in English Stages 1 & 2.

The Book Gifting Scheme and Reading Programme are considered vital to help children maximise their start in life, and improve the overall economic wellbeing of the area. Year on year the Charity makes a huge impact in the schools it works in through the provision of books and the teaching of reading. During the Covid-19 period the Group has been able to donate books to the children and is looking at how the reading project could take place by connecting a volunteer and a child remotely, noting that the tuition that the children have missed out on is significant.

The Group has put together a funding strategy to target appropriate organisations for grants and donations. During the year ahead the Group intends to apply for funds from organisations including Surrey County Council, Woking Rotary, Surrey Community Foundation and The Lottery.

It is recommended that Woking Borough Council awards a grant of £10,500 for 2021/22, set at the same level as last year.

REPORT ENDS