

WOKING PEOPLE OF FAITH – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

Woking People of Faith is a multi-faith organisation providing a platform for people to get together and gain an understanding of each other. Since its inception, Woking People of Faith has been supported by the Council, through the Community Support Scheme and previously through community cohesion funding received from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

The Group has applied to extend its funding at the level of £15,000 for 2021/22 towards the salary of its part-time consultant Co-ordinator and a contribution towards its running costs. The Co-ordinator post is necessary to maintain the programme of events and meetings held each year. The activities previously held include the annual football tournament, Refugee Week and an event to mark the International Day of Peace.

Due to Covid-19, planned events had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, such as Byfleet Walking Pilgrimage, Interfaith Football Tournament, Refugee Week event; Interfaith Last Post Service; and Visit to Eco-Mosque. Instead, the Group has been working remotely where possible and has provided a regular online events, including thought for the week from different faiths, interfaith online Women’s coffee mornings, and talks for local schools from the many different faith groups. Where possible, outdoor events such as the inter-faith cricket tournament and the inter-faith Horsell common woodland clearing session are maintained.

Woking Borough Council has recognised the importance of the role played by the Group and the difficulties faced in raising funds, having been centrally involved in establishing the Group in 2009. However, the Council’s grants budget is facing far greater constraints than in previous years. In light of the supportive consultee comments along with the unique and important work undertaken by the Group in the Borough, whilst noting that a number of the events this year have been cancelled and a bank balance of circa £25,000, it is recommended that a reduced revenue grant of £5,000 should be awarded for the 2021/22 financial year, a reduction of £10,000 from the previous year.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That , subject to the outcome of the Council’s budgetary process, a grant of £5,000 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the core costs of the Group.
Reason for Decision	To enable the Group to continue to build strong relationships between people of different faiths and culture in the Borough.
Legal Authority	S19 (Misc. Provisions) Local Government Act 1976
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

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	<p>support will be sent to successful applicants. Groups should not plan 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>
Conditions	<p>Accounts. The Organisation must submit audited 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 all literature and leaflets produced.</p> <p>Payments. Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with details of the costs incurred and monitoring information for the previous quarter.</p> <p>Payment Period. Final quarter claims must be made by the second week in March. 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. With the introduction of new legislation from April 2018, the council will expect 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 will be 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>Venue Hire. Woking Borough Council has a duty to ensure that publicly-owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This duty extends to organisations that work with the local authority so this includes recipients of any grants from Woking Borough Council. If you hire out your venue/s you should ensure you have good processes in place for record keeping and checking if they are an appropriate group to be making the hire arrangements. The following are some of what should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic details should be recorded to include speakers address, mobile phone number & organisation details.• Has the identity of the speaker been confirmed & is their

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	<p>organisation bona fide? Are they known to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the speaker from the area? Are they UK citizens or from overseas & will they travel specifically for this event?• Consider checks on the internet to confirm the status of speaker to include website, YouTube or social media sites.• How many people are likely to attend (check previous or similar events either locally or online).
Performance Indicators	<p>Users. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users in the past quarter.</p> <p>Activities. The Organisation to provide details of activities and events held during the last quarter.</p> <p>Publicity. The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised over the last quarter.</p> <p>Statement of Use. The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>
Future Support	<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 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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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>The organisation was formed in 2006 under the guidance of Woking Borough Council. The aim is to promote religious harmony for the benefit of the public in Woking and environs and the objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote knowledge, mutual understanding and respect of the beliefs and practices of different faiths; • advance the education and understanding of different beliefs including an awareness of their distinctive features and their common ground; • promote good relations between people of different faiths; • seek to secure a more prominent role for faith organisations in their communities; and • celebrate the important contribution that religious faith makes to the lives of the local community. <p>The main activities include delivering public meetings; and developing programmes such as educational visits, sport events and community service.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>None. The Group hires a part-time Administrator on a consultancy basis for 15 hours a week.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>16, whose activities include overseeing the business and activities of the Charity.</p> <p>All the Trustees are volunteers and form the Management Committee. They are also responsible for holding at least one event per year which follows the Group's aims of improving understanding between people of different faith and cultures, such as debates from different faith perspectives to an audience of various faith and ethnic backgrounds, inter-faith sports events, religious education support in schools and coffee mornings with no fixed agendas.</p> <p>The Trustees are voted in each year at the AGM and abide by the Constitution. Trustees include Imams from both the Shia and Sunni communities, Christians, a Jew, a Baha'i and a Hindu.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>Around 1,000 people are stated to benefit from the work of the Group each year. No charge is made to its users.</p> <p>The Group states that members of the public in Woking are invited to attend its community initiatives and highlights that its new constitution encourages faith establishments to join as institutional members.</p> <p>Schools use the Forum's services to educate their pupils about multi-faith issues; work takes place with Woking Borough Council to co-host their Annual Refugee Week Event; Faith Institutions use the Forum to run events such as talks and pilgrimage walks; Brookwood Cemetery use its services to hold an annual multi-faith service; and work takes place with Horsell Common Preservation Society each year to run two environmental clean-up events.</p>

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1.5 Members	13, all based in Woking. Members per £15 per year and are faith institutions such as Churches, Mosques and Temples which nominate representatives from their organisations onto the Management Committee.
1.6 Sum Requested	£15,000 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	The funding would be used to continue the employment of an Administrator on a part-time basis (12 hours per week), along with making a contribution towards the costs of holding events such as hall hire, equipment and prizes for children and inter-faith sports competitions.
1.8 Cost breakdown:	A budget for the Group is set out in section 2.1 below.
1.9 Community Benefit	In the last year the events reached around 176 people which included a variety of different ages and cultures. Its activities are completely voluntarily attended, which shows that people enjoy attending them and that there is a need for different cultures to interact together in positive situations and learning environments.
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>Woking People of Faith had to cancel its planned events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byfleet Walking Pilgrimage • Horsell Common Environmental Working Party • Interfaith Football Tournament • Refugee Week Event • Stall at Party in the Park • Interfaith Last Post Service • Visit to Eco-Mosque <p>Instead, the Group has adapted and restructured its events to be held online via Zoom, for example Trustee, Events, and Officers meetings as well as Events Committee Meetings to cater for the change and keeping up with the latest developments around Covid-19. Online meetings is something that the Group will keep going forward to cut out unnecessary travel and the impact on the environment. It will also consider keeping a link once events go back to being live for people who aren't able to always attend, due to health or mobility issues, as they have felt more included via Zoom.</p> <p>The Trustees have written a 'Thought for the Week' and posted it on its website and Facebook page. This varies from each faith denomination with the aim of keeping members positive. It has advertised how to access different faith institutions' online services whilst their buildings are closed.</p>

2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £25,131 in the bank.</p> <p>The Group has submitted its planned expenditure budget for 2021/22, totalling £15,400, with no income identified.</p> <p>Items of expenditure include Co-ordinator (£9,700), Events (£4,000),</p>

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	Telephone / Stationery (£830), Insurance (£550) and Website (£320).
2.2 Accounts	The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20 which show an income of £15,496 (£15,996 in 2018/19) against expenditure of £11,267 (£16,076 in 2018/19), resulting in a surplus of £4,220 (a deficit of £80 in 2018/19). The sum of £20,773 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.
2.3 Support over the past five years	2020/21 – £15,000 2019/20 – £15,000 2018/19 – £15,000 2017/18 – £15,000 2016/17 – £15,000

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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes No Yes No Yes N/A Yes
3.2 Consultee Comments	<p><u>Councillor Louise Morales</u></p> <p>I support the application from Woking People of Faith which provides a unique service to the people of Woking in promoting a greater understanding and recognition of the breadth and diversity of the many different faith groups within Woking, striving to increase community cohesion with this greater understanding.</p> <p>While many larger events were cancelled this year due to Covid-19, Woking People of Faith has ensured that their many events evolved and adapted to work online including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular thought for the week from different faiths on their website; • online “doing God together”; • regular interfaith online Women’s coffee mornings; • strengthening links with schools offering online talks from the many different faith groups who are members of Woking People of Faith; and • keeping those outdoor events that they were able to such as the interfaith cricket tournament and interfaith Horsell common woodland clearing session to attempt to engage many different 	

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	<p>sectors of the community in common events so as to help break down barriers.</p> <p>The costs have reduced slightly due to the cancellation of many the larger events, though not all and the administration costs remain the same and will be ongoing in the year to come.</p> <p><u>Zafar Iqbal, Senior Policy Officer</u></p> <p>As per last year I am the nominated WBC officer and Cllr Louise Morales is the Council's designated Trustee on the Woking People of Faith (WPOF) board.</p> <p>WPOF was established in 2006 with the support and encouragement of WBC and over the years has contributed significantly in the area of inter-faith collaboration and this work has improved relationships between the different faiths institutions as well as people of faith and those of no faith and this work to promote better understanding between people is on-going and beneficial from WBC's Health and wellbeing agenda.</p> <p>My recommendation is to continue to support the group.</p>
3.3 Assessment	<p>The Woking People of Faith is a multi-faith organisation providing a platform for people to get together and gain an understanding of each other. Since its inception Woking People of Faith has been supported by the Council, through the Community Support Scheme and previously through community cohesion funding received from the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Group has representatives from faiths including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i, Quaker, Sikh and Hindu.</p> <p>The central objective of Woking People of Faith is to build and strengthen relationships between people of different faiths and cultures for the good of the whole of the Borough. It works hard to challenge prejudice and to facilitate understanding between different faith and culture groups in Woking, which is an important contributor to a healthy society. Donations are invited at every event held and some events receive sponsorship from the local community and businesses.</p> <p>The Charity intends to continue with, and extend their engagement with local people, promoting cross-cultural and faith dialogue, facilitate working together and creating opportunities for the strengthening of relationships.</p> <p>Since 2009, the Charity has engaged with numerous local faith groups to try to establish core funding. The Charity has found that, as inter-faith work is secondary to the core objectives of most faith institutions, direct funding is not provided by the different partners. However, faith groups and businesses do contribute to specific events when invited to do so, though this is not sufficient to support the part-time worker. Consequently, the Group considers it vital to secure core funding from Woking Borough Council to drive and develop this work for the benefit of the community.</p> <p>The services provided are within the aims set out in its Constitution which have been accepted and supported by Woking Borough Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The International Day of Peace Competition brings children of all backgrounds together to consider how the world's communities

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can work together in peaceful ways.

- ‘Who Do We Think We Are?’ provided interesting discussions on people’s journeys to Woking.
- The sports events enable people of different faiths to compete against and with each other (players often help opposing teams with injuries by donating players);
- The Horsell Common Protection Society events have different religious community members working alongside each other to improve the environment – a common aim which builds friendships.
- The Interfaith Prayer Vigil to take place via Zoom, which has given an opportunity for Leaders from different faiths to pray in their own tradition and create a sense of community.
- Ladies’ Zoom Coffee Mornings are an informal way of learning about each other’s lives and there is a need for these to run monthly.
- Virtual cooking sessions, virtual tours of faith institutions and virtual ‘In Conversation With ...’ (Q&A’s with people of different faiths) are being set up.

All the events build greater understanding and cordial relations between people of different communities. Woking is one of the most diverse boroughs and planned events had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, such as Byfleet Walking Pilgrimage; Horsell Common Environmental Working Party; Interfaith Football Tournament; Refugee Week Event; Stall at Party in the Park; Interfaith Last Post Service; and Visit to Eco-Mosque. The Group looks forward to reinstating them as and when it is safe to do so.

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Woking Borough Council has recognised the importance of the role played by the Group and the difficulties faced in raising funds, having been centrally involved in establishing the Group in 2009. However, the Council’s grants budget is facing far greater constraints than in previous years. In light of the supportive consultee comments along with the unique and important work undertaken by the Group in the Borough, whilst noting that a number of the events this year have been cancelled and a bank balance of circa £25,000, it is recommended that a reduced revenue grant of £5,000 should be awarded for the 2021/22 financial year, a reduction of £10,000 from the previous year.

REPORT ENDS