

**ROC WOKING (TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Executive Summary**

The Trinity Methodist Church has submitted an application for funding on behalf of ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) Woking, a collaborative initiative between churches and voluntary groups in Woking. While it applies for its Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status, it is being supported by Trinity Methodist Church, which has made this application.

The application has been submitted to enable the Church to establish a programme of volunteer management to support a wide range of Woking-based voluntary groups which manage volunteers. The project would seek to capitalise on the momentum created by Covid-19 for volunteering. The Church has applied for funding of £40,961 comprising £22,363 of capital funding and £18,598 of revenue funding, which would be held by the Church until such time that ROC Woking has been established as a CIO.

The project would:

- Support voluntary groups which currently use paper-based systems to move into the digital age to access younger, more flexibly oriented volunteers.
- Build on the trend towards flexible volunteering which has increased significantly as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.
- enable voluntary organisations to transfer jobs between them, enabling better matching of the supply of volunteers with the need in a local area.
- Lead to better information about the number and activity of volunteers, and the groups they belong to, across Woking.

The ambition of ROC Woking is to be welcomed, although the Council is not in a position to meet the costs of establishing the new service in the Borough. Whilst the applicant is confident that the ongoing costs would be met through support from local businesses, fundraising and grants, to-date no funds have been sought. The possibility that sufficient funds would not be raised to maintain the system should also therefore be taken into consideration.

It is therefore recommended that, in view of the limited funds available through the Community Grants Scheme, the comments of the consultee and the uncertainty of future funding for the project, the application is not supported. However, noting the Council's work in developing Volunteer Woking, the Family and Community Services Manager and the Volunteer Development Officer will liaise with the Group to assist it with achieving its proposed outcomes for local groups in the Borough.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is requested to:

**RESOLVE That** no grant be awarded.

Reason for Decision

The Council is not in a position to commit significant funding to establish a new project in the Borough for which ongoing funding is yet to be secured.

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**The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendation.**

### **Background Papers:**

2021/22 Application Form.

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### **Date Published:**

2 December 2020

## ROC Woking (Trinity Methodist Church) – Application For Financial Assistance

<b>1.0 Summary of Application</b>	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) Woking is a newly established community initiative in the Borough, growing out of the Woking ROC Conversation held at Trinity Methodist Church in March 2020. Its aim is to improve the well-being of communities by facilitating effective co-operation between faith groups, the charitable sector and government agencies. This is achieved through setting up action groups to identify areas of need and opportunity, and to develop initiatives that deliver community improvement. Current action groups work in the areas of Youth, Social Isolation and Loneliness, and Mental Health.</p> <p>ROC Woking is not yet a legal entity, though an application to become a Charitable Investment Organisation is in progress. This grant application has therefore been submitted by Trinity Methodist Church, on behalf of ROC Woking. The grant will be held by the Church and will be ring fenced and auditable.</p> <p>The Church sponsored the ROC Conversation, and employs two lay staff who are working on ROC projects. A member of the Trinity leadership team chairs the ROC Steering Group.</p> <p>Trinity Methodist Church Woking is a registered charity. It has been established in the Town for over 140 years. Trinity's Foundry Project is a vision to re-imagine the Church to meet the needs of a fast-changing suburban town.</p> <p><u>Background Information</u></p> <p>Redeeming Our Communities (ROC) is a UK-based charity, founded in 2004.</p> <p>ROC's main aim is to bring about community transformation by creating strategic partnerships between statutory agencies, voluntary groups and churches. These partnerships form new volunteer-led projects that address a variety of social needs. Their activities include partnerships with community groups, churches, police, fire service, local authorities and voluntary agencies. They currently run over 220 active partnership projects throughout the UK targeting a variety of social needs.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>6.</p> <p>The authorising body is the Church Council. Church Council members are voted in at an AGM. The Church Council is chaired by the Minister and the members are the Church trustees. Certain members are appointed by the AGM to become Stewards. The Church Council cedes day to day decisions to a leadership team comprising of the Minister and Stewards. All lay employees report directly to a member of the leadership team.</p> <p>Minister 0.6 FTE, 24 hours per week</p> <p>Church Administrator and Foundry Centre Coordinator 1 FTE, 35 hours per week.</p> <p>Foundry Missioner 0.8 FTE, 30 hours per week</p> <p>Families Worker, 0.8 FTE, 28 hrs per week</p> <p>Pastoral Workers x2, 0.2 FTE each, 0.4 FTE total, 14 hrs per week.</p>

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1.3 Volunteers	<p>39, whose activities include Church Leadership, accounting, book-keeping, finance, property maintenance, worship functions, pastoral visiting, families &amp; children groups, young people’s work, drama and music, digital and media, liaising with users of premises, neighbourhood parties; coffee and chat groups for isolated people.</p> <p>ROC Woking has about 50 people currently involved. These are a combination of volunteers and people contributing as part of their jobs. ROC Woking has a Steering Group comprised of 7 people, overseeing three action groups in the areas of Youth, Social Isolation and Loneliness, and Mental Health. About 2/3rds of Action Group members are volunteers. The gender balance is approx. 50:50. There are a few BAME Action Group members. It is not known whether any volunteers are disabled.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>300, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30-40 aged 0-5</li> <li>50-60 aged 6-10</li> <li>50 aged 11-18</li> <li>80-100 aged 19-65</li> <li>50 aged 65+</li> </ul> <p>Fitness classes and commercials bookings are charged full room rate. Charities, not for profits, and faith groups are charged nominal room rate – to cover light and heat. No charge is made for uniformed groups and groups run by the Church.</p> <p>The facilities are accessible to community groups across the Borough, both multi-faith and secular. Trinity Methodist Church is a large, well-used community space with regular activities spanning all age ranges from Toddlers to Over 65 groups, and activities, from Chair Yoga, Lace Making, Physiotherapy, Dance for Parkinsons, Citizens Advice Woking, to uniformed groups (Rainbows, Beavers, Brownies, Cubs, Guides and Scouts). A Friday Fun Club is offered weekly to low income and single parent families, and includes a hot meal. This is offered in liaison with local authority services.</p>
1.5 Members	<p>133, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>49 male</li> <li>84 female</li> <li>10 ethnic minority</li> <li>133 resident in Woking</li> </ul> <p>Age breakdown not known.</p> <p>No charges apply to the Members of the Church.</p>
1.6 Sum Requested	<p>£22,363 (Capital) and £18,598 (Revenue)</p>
1.7 Project	<p>The application has been submitted to allow the Church to roll out common technology (a volunteer management platform) and operating processes across a wide range of Woking-based voluntary groups which manage volunteers to do tasks, including those started during Covid-19 as Mutual Aid groups. The project would capitalise</p>

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on the momentum created by Covid-19 casual volunteering, enabling it to continue.

Implementing a common platform would help all groups that use volunteers (existing and new), both in improving their efficient independent operations and in co-ordinating much better with each other.

The applicant has advised that the system would address GDPR issues, be resilient in terms of data security and, by being a common technology, enable neutral data to be processed across a range of organisations to inform future decisions by organisers and funders alike. The system would leverage Safeguarding Passporting should a viable system be developed.

The Church would target onboarding to the platform a minimum of 10 local voluntary organisations and a stretch target of 25, to include mutual aid organisations, 'good neighbour' schemes, churches, and community transport. With an average number of volunteers of about 100, this gives a target of 1,000-2,500 volunteers using the platform. By March 2022 the Church would aim to be at the lower end of the range (1,000). Though not entirely in the Church's control, the aim would be to have 25% of volunteers to be 'regularly active', not just names on a database.

The number of jobs carried out using the platform would also be monitored from a starting point, and it would be hoped that this number would increase due to the platform increasing local capacity to carry out job requests.

Through promotion to the general public, the Church would also target the recruitment of 200 additional volunteers through the system (i.e., as opposed to transfers of existing volunteers). These may be recruited to an existing group, have no group affiliation (i.e., be 'floating' volunteers) or be affiliated to new groups set-up to use the platform.

The Church would promote the system to organisations that are not obvious adopters of the platform, encouraging them to think innovatively about their approach to volunteering. The aim would be that, by March 2022, there would be at least 2 such organisations managing volunteers through the platform.

Part of the specification for the platform would be statistical reporting of these numbers, therefore monitoring is a core part of the proposals, and will form a part of the value of the work. At the moment there is a lack of visibility of the number of voluntary jobs done for those in need, across Woking Borough, and this project will allow much of this activity to be seen.

One of the fundamental objectives of ROC Woking is to 'partner' with any and all of such organisations in order to identify community needs and encourage/facilitate new initiatives for the benefit of all. Working relationships are informal, cemented by mutual interest in positive outcomes.

A particularly relevant 'partner' for this application is Horsell Prepared (part of Horsell Residents' Association) - a large (450+ volunteers) organisation in Horsell which has been very active as a mutual aid organisation through Covid-19 and grew its volunteers from 100 to 450, helping about 300 households in Horsell and carrying out 1000+

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	<p>jobs in a few months. The Association has defined much of the requirements specification for the new platform we are proposing.</p>
<p>1.8 Cost breakdown:</p>	<p>£40,961 comprising:</p> <p>£22,363 of Capital funding is required to customise the configuration of the platform (£5,000), to purchase equipment (1 computer @ £1,000), to purchase promotional material (£2,000) and to fund a fixed-term contractor (0.5 FTE) for 12 months (at the cost of £14,363) to promote to local voluntary groups, bring voluntary groups onboard and train them.</p> <p>£18,598 of Revenue funding is required to fund a fixed-term contractor (0.5 FTE for 12 months at the cost of £14,363) who would perform system administration, support Woking's voluntary groups in their use of the platform, and carry out project administration such as fundraising/grant applications, acquiring sponsorship, compliance, GDPR, and council liaison. Other revenue funding of £4,235 is required for ongoing software subscriptions, insurance, office costs (working from home), stationery, printing and basic accounting.</p>
<p>1.9 Community Benefit</p>	<p>The applicant has advised that both volunteers and 'clients' would benefit from the proposals. The platform is intended to help grow a flexible volunteering culture and the target would be to develop an active flexible volunteer base of 1,000+. Much volunteering will be about helping those with needs and the applicant anticipates that, for each volunteer, one other person would be helped. There would therefore be the potential to improve the well-being of circa 2,000 people (1,000 volunteers and 1,000 clients).</p> <p>The applicant has advised that some of this would have happened without the platform, but based on the observation of the different ways of managing volunteers during Covid-19, it is anticipated that a significant percentage (25%+) are individuals with a level of need who would otherwise not have benefitted (approximately 500 people).</p> <p>The development of the platform, actively used and maintained in normal times, would ensure that, in the event of another crisis, there would be a robust system in place to rapidly mobilise large numbers of volunteers.</p>
<p>1.10 Covid-19 Impact</p>	<p>(i) ROC Woking Action Groups, from which this project springs, only started in May 2020, hence there is no pre-Covid experience</p> <p>(ii) Covid-19 has profoundly impacted most of the voluntary organisations that this project seeks to help. Some have come into being, or sprung into action, as a result of Covid-19 (for instance, Woking Mutual Aid did not exist before, and Horsell Prepared had not activated volunteers for a significant emergency before Covid-19). Others, which existed but which followed paper processes and used predominantly elderly volunteers, had to put their activities on hold during Covid-19 (e.g. 'good neighbour scheme' Horsell Care, which passed its activities and clients across to Horsell Prepared). In summary, those organisations which were not digital relied on the organisations that were digital. This proved the need for digital infrastructure to support ALL these organisations.</p>

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<b>2.0 Financial Background</b>	
2.1 Budget	<p>ROC Woking is a new entity in the process of becoming legally incorporated. At present ROC Woking has no money in the bank. ROC Woking to date has been sponsored, amongst others, by Trinity Methodist Church. The Church is solvent and will manage the grant until ROC Woking's legal status is completed. Funds would be ring-fenced and auditable. It is anticipated that ROC Woking will be incorporated before grant payment is due.</p> <p>The budget for the creation of a volunteer management platform is set out earlier in this report. The anticipated revenue costs for the subsequent year are:</p> <p>Contractor - £14,363            Software - £5,200            Insurance - £1,000            Data protection/ICO - £35            Office costs - £750            Printer, stationery costs - £500            Accounting and governance - £1,000            Total Costs – £22,848</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The applicant has submitted accounts for the Church for the 2018/19 financial year which show an income of £186,378 (£196,529 in 2017/18) against expenditure of £231,849 (£191,985 in 2017/18), resulting in a deficit of £45,471 (a surplus of £4,544 in 2017/18). The sum of £223,023 was carried forward at the end of the 2018/19 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>New application.</p>

<b>3.0 Assessment of Application</b>		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Constitution</li> <li>○ Registered Charity</li> <li>○ VAT Registered</li> <li>○ Equal Opportunities Policy</li> <li>○ Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>○ Reserves Policy</li> <li>○ Quality Mark</li> <li>○ Other funding sources pursued</li> <li>○ Other support by the Council</li> <li>○ Fundraising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> <li>No</li> <li>No</li> <li>No</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Two quotes</li> <li>○ Regular monitoring provided previously</li> </ul>	<p>No</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>3.2 Consultee Comments</p>	<p><u>Liz Macintyre, Funding Officer</u></p> <p>£22,363 Capital and £18,595 revenue funding is requested to buy, set up and run a volunteer management platform for Woking-based voluntary groups.</p> <p>Trinity Methodist Church is in regular contact with Volunteer Woking. Officers attended the initial ROC event and a Council Officer sits on one of the working groups.</p> <p>This project, which has come out of one of the ROC working groups, is designed to provide a common digital platform for managing volunteers across all voluntary groups in Woking. The intention is applauded but the legal implications of sharing volunteers, and their data, between organisations is likely to raise complex issues and there is no reference to this having been investigated. The application envisages onboarding a minimum of 10 local voluntary groups and a stretch target of 25 but notes that the only groups to sign up so far are Trinity Methodist Church and Christ Church. The stated target to have at least 2 organisations managing volunteers through the platform by March 2022 links to this statement.</p> <p>The largest Mutual Aid groups in Woking, which formed as a result of the pandemic, are already operating on newly set up digital platforms whilst some of the more longstanding voluntary organisations can be reluctant to adopt new ways of working. Although Horsell Prepared is quoted as a “...particularly relevant partner...” for the application, there is no mention of the organisation having signed up to use this platform. In fact, the comments on the application would suggest that they have recently purchased another platform.</p> <p>Digital systems tend to involve ongoing costs for maintenance and upgrades. Under “Future support” there is reference to the intention to “...secure local business sponsorship...together with individual donations, public fundraising and grants from other sources.” The alternative would be to charge a subscription to users, but both of these options carry significant risks at a time when money is tight.</p> <p>I recommend that further information be obtained on the reaction of the target groups to the proposal before the grant is considered further.</p>	
<p>3.3 Assessment</p>	<p>ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) Woking is a collaborative initiative between many churches and voluntary groups in Woking. While it applies for its CIO status, it is being supported by Trinity Methodist Church, which is making this application.</p> <p>Most members of ROC Woking action groups represent a charity, organisation or group in their own right. This represents approximately 50 organisations, faith based and secular, voluntary and governmental.</p> <p>The application has been submitted to allow the Church to roll out common technology (a volunteer management platform) and operating processes across a wide range of Woking-based voluntary groups which manage volunteers to do tasks, including those started during Covid-19 as Mutual Aid groups. The project would seek to</p>	

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capitalise on the momentum created by Covid-19 casual volunteering, enabling it to continue.

The Church has applied for funding of £40,961 comprising:

£22,363 of capital funding to customise the configuration of the platform (£5,000), purchase a computer (£1,000), purchase promotional material (£2,000) and to fund a fixed-term (£14,363) to promote to local voluntary groups, bring voluntary groups onboard and train them.

£18,598 of revenue funding for a fixed-term contractor (0.5 FTE for 12 months at the cost of £14,363) to perform system administration, support Woking's voluntary groups in their use of the platform, and carry out project administration. Additional revenue funding of £4,235 has been requested for ongoing software subscriptions, insurance, office costs (working from home), stationery, printing and basic accounting.

In drawing up the proposals, the Church has met with the five Mutual Aid groups set-up across Woking. The applicant has indicated that the groups, including Horsell Prepared and Woking Mutual Aid, are broadly in support of the venture. Several good neighbour schemes have also been contacted, some of which would adopt the platform directly, whilst others had indicated that transitioning to the platform would take time.

Faith based organisations (e.g., Foundry Project at Trinity Methodist, Christ Church Woking) have indicated they would use the platform for managing volunteers for certain community activities.

The applicant has indicated that prospective user feedback indicates a preference for the Flexible Volunteer Management platform to be run independent from, but with the support of, Woking Borough Council.

The following benefits of the project have been highlighted by the applicant:

1. Some of Woking's voluntary groups (e.g. good neighbour schemes) which currently use paper-based systems need to move into the digital age in order to access younger, more flexibly oriented volunteers, and to remain relevant and sustainable.
2. There is a trend towards flexible volunteering (i.e. volunteers who cannot commit to a specific rota or role), which has exploded during Covid-19 with 5-10% of the adult population of some parts of Woking participating in flexible volunteering schemes. This project capitalises on that trend and aims to take advantage of the huge increase in volunteering capacity which Woking could enjoy permanently.
3. This project will enable voluntary organisations to transfer jobs between them (e.g. between a Mutual Aid group and a community transport group or a Foodbank, or between areas), enabling better matching of the supply of volunteers with the need in a local area.
4. Having a common platform would enable Woking Borough Council to have better information about the number and activity of volunteers, and the groups they belong to, across Woking, and to understand the demands on the voluntary sector and voluntary capacity, enabling the Council to better target interventions.

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The benefits of the proposal to establish a standalone organisation to operate a Borough-wide volunteering programme have been set out by the applicant. The Council has been asked to fund the costs of establishing the project in its first year, at an estimated cost of just over £40,000, comprising both capital and revenue funding. The intention is to meet the ongoing costs of the service in subsequent years (at an estimated cost of £22,848 in 2022/23) through local business sponsorship to cover ongoing technology costs, together with individual donations, public fundraising and grants from other sources. At present, the project is being developed by a group of volunteers to ensure that rapid progress will be achieved once funding is received.

The ambition of ROC Woking is to be welcomed. However, the Council is not in a position to meet the costs of establishing a new service in the Borough. Whilst the applicant is confident that the ongoing costs would be met through support from local businesses, fundraising and grants, to-date no funds have been sought. The possibility that sufficient funds would not be raised to maintain the system should also therefore be taken into consideration.

It is therefore recommended that, in view of the limited funds available through the Community Grants Scheme, the comments of the consultee and the uncertainty of future funding for the project, the application is not supported. However, noting the Council's work in developing Volunteer Woking, the Family and Community Services Manager and the Volunteer Development Officer will liaise with the Group to assist it with achieving its proposed outcomes for local groups in the Borough.

REPORT ENDS