

CHERRY TREES – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

This application seeks financial support for Cherry Trees, a Surrey-based Charity which supports young people with severe learning and physical disabilities by providing ‘home from home’ short break/respite care. The Charity has applied to extend its grant of £2,000 to cover the costs incurred in providing tea visits for young people living in Woking. Cherry Trees’ main sources of income are care services fees via a Surrey County Council local authority contract along with fundraising activities, both of which have been negatively affected by Covid-19.

The children supported by Cherry Trees are classed as vulnerable, with over 60% having autism. Many of their special schools are closed or, for those that are open, education and support is with a different teacher, at variable times in the week, or even at a different school where they do not know anyone. This can be incredibly stressful for these children, impacting on their mental health and wellbeing. As a result, many parents have withdrawn their children from school even if they have a place, as the significant changes have impacted them adversely. It can affect their anxiety, resulting in challenging behaviour, impacting their appetite and quality of sleep.

Last year the Executive awarded the grant towards tea visits for disabled children based in Woking. During the first six months of the financial year, the Charity has assisted four children from Woking who received short break / respite care, reduced from six prior to the pandemic. The support comprised of six 24 hour visits, six overnight stays (17 hours of care), eight tea visits (two hours of care) and three day care visits (eight hours of care).

In light of the Council’s financial situation, it is recommended that a grant be awarded at the level of last year with a reduction of 10%, equating to £1,800, towards the costs of the tea visits provided to disabled children from Woking over the coming year.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That , subject to the outcome of the Council’s budgetary process, a grant of up to £1,800 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget to cover the costs of providing tea visits to young people living in the Borough of Woking.
Reason for Decision	To support the invaluable work the Charity provides to young people in the Borough with severe learning and physical disabilities.
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 10 February 2022. 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 for the 2022/23 funding until this confirmation has been received.
Conditions	Accounts. The Organisation must submit accounts for the year in

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	<p>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>
Performance Indicators	<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>
Future Support	<p>The financial pressure on the Council's budgets is expected to continue in the coming years and 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 2022/23 does not imply that a similar application in 2023/24 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2022/23 levels.</p> <p>In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2023/24 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2023. All applicants are strongly recommended to pursue alternative sources of funding and are encouraged to approach</p>

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Woking Borough Council's Community Support Team for advice and support.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2022/23 Application Form.

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>For the past 40 years Cherry Trees has been providing short break respite care for children aged 0-19 with severe physical, learning and sensory disabilities.</p> <p>Over 120 children their siblings and extended families benefit from the short break respite care provided. Cherry Trees has remained open at all times during the Covid-19 pandemic and is the only current commissioned provider of short break respite care for families with children with disabilities in Surrey that has remained open since the pandemic begun.</p> <p>The Charity has supported extra day time visits for children who were unable to attend their special school and have offered emergency stays for families who have been at the point of crisis. Other visits continue but at lower capacity levels in line with updated Covid-19 risk assessments. The Charity provides a lifeline for more than 100 families - with parents and siblings this is circa 300-400.</p> <p>The applicant has indicated that its main aim of preventing family breakdown is even more significant now and the Charity provides advice and support even if a child is unable to access the direct services.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>45, comprising CEO, Chief Operating Officer, Head of Care, Head of Fundraising, 2 x Deputy Heads of Care, the Trust Manager, the Community & Events organiser, Fundraising Support and Carers.</p> <p>There are nine Trustees who hold quarterly meetings as well as subcommittees for Management and Finance, and Health and Safety.</p> <p>The Trustees are a team of dedicated professionals and include a GP, Lawyer, successful Business owners, Marketing and Finance specialists, along with a parent. A number of the Trustees have a personal connection with children and young adults with disabilities, which combined with their invaluable professional expertise, creates a very strong Board that leads the strategy of the charity.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>100 regular and 140 ad-hoc, involved in service provision and fundraising.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>73, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51 male 22 female 73 disabled 9 ethnic minority 7 resident in Woking 8 aged 6-10 61 aged 11-18 4 aged 19-65

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	<p>0 aged 65+</p> <p>The Charity voluntarily funds every stay up to 100% through its bursary. Charges for services are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 24 hour visit – The cost to Cherry Trees is £446, the rate charged to Surrey County Council is £320 (with the Charity funding the remaining £126). ○ Overnight Stay (17 hours of care) – The cost to Cherry Trees is £316, the rate charged to Surrey County Council is £118, with the Charity funding the remaining £61. ○ A day visit (8 hours of care) – The cost to Cherry Trees is £148, the rate charged to Surrey County Council is £118 with the Charity funding the remaining £30. ○ A Tea visit (2 hours of care) – The cost to the charity is £37, the rate charged to Surrey County Council is £29 with the Charity funding the remaining £8.
1.5 Members	None
1.6 Sum Requested	£2,000 (Revenue/Capital)
1.7 Project	<p>The applicant has advised that the grant would allow the Charity to continue to provide a high quality service of respite care to children in a relaxed and caring setting. One of the main aims is to prevent family breakdown particularly in the current Covid-19 pandemic and it is keen to provide its services to as many families as possible. In 2020, over 47,000 hours of care were provided and 100% of parents stated in a recent questionnaire that Cherry Trees met the needs of their child.</p> <p>The Charity ensures that children with disabilities can remain in as normal a functioning environment as possible. The children can attend special need schools, live with their parents and siblings, and the short breaks at Cherry Trees prevents children being moved to residential homes or care.</p> <p>The Charity teaches young people social skills in fun ways, allowing them to experience new, exciting opportunities which improve their self-confidence and independence. The children are supported in the development of their social skills, ability to care for themselves and take decisions and learn independence for themselves.</p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<p>The actual cost of a two to one visit (two children to one carer) is £18.61 per hour or for one to one care (one child to one carer) the cost is £32.50 per hour. Parents are offered the chance to pay for breaks for their children at £5.00 per hour.</p> <p>The Charity receives funding from Surrey County Council for care packages for individual children but the Charity financially supports every stay up to 100% through its bursary. The Charity therefore needs to raise £546,000 per annum.</p>
1.9 Community Benefit	<p>In 2020 the Charity supported 81 families and four new children started. The Charity stayed open for those families most at need since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and in doing so reduced daily occupancy to adhere to government guidelines on “social distancing”.</p>

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	<p>The Charity works with five other bodies, mostly companies, that provide short breaks in the region. The Charity also works in collaboration with other charities such as The Jigsaw Trust (specialist autism school) where children attend during the day and stay with Cherry Trees in the evenings, weekends and holidays.</p> <p>The Charity covers the areas of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth, seeking to support as many families as possible. From March to May 2021 the Charity supported seven children from the Borough of Woking by providing 17 overnight one to one stays (1 child to 1 carer), 8 x 24 hour stays with one to one support, 10 x 24 hour stays with two to one support (2 children to 1 carer), 1 overnight stay with two to one support and 1 tea visit with two to one support.</p>
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted on the Charity's ability to fundraise in the community and to undertake various activities and events. A significant amount of time has been spent working to reduce the resulting shortfall, though a small shortfall is anticipated in fundraising activities. This, together with the anticipated reduction in care income due to reduced capacity, means that the Charity is budgeting to make an annual deficit in the next financial year.</p> <p>As restrictions slowly lift, the Charity is confident that it will be able to return to pre-Covid-19 capacity levels, with the operating income increasing as a result. The Charity has worked hard over the last few years to ensure that Cherry Trees is financially sustainable as a result of its fundraising income.</p> <p>The children with autism are often significantly affected by change and they need consistency in their lives to be able to fully function and be happy. The pandemic has had a strong negative impact on them and, with schools closed or placed on much reduced timetables, they were unable to do 'normal' things that they expect to do such as see relatives, go shopping, for some even go to the park. This created significant anxiety for them, for some resulting in increased self-harming behaviours, isolation, increased physical behaviours and regression, especially for those with a specific learning disability who do not understand why all of these changes happened</p>

<h3>2.0 Financial Background</h3>	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £4,797,325 in the bank. Some funds are reserved for specialist equipment, mini bus costs, garden project, playroom project, and welfare and covid appeals.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for the current year rather than the year in which the application applies (2022/23). The budget shows an anticipated income of £1,371,000 against an anticipated expenditure of £1,473,000, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £102,000.</p> <p>The Group has also applied to Tallow Chandlers, Children in Need, Truemark Trust, Tendril Trust and The Loseley Trust.</p> <p>Fundraising has had a very challenging year, with the pandemic impacting on public events and the community fundraising activity.</p>

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	<p>Innovative ways were adopted to communicate, connect with key audiences and maximise opportunities throughout the year. This included digital events and workshops, a charity golf day and sculpture event. An emergency Covid appeal was undertaken and the Charity received much financial support from Trusts. The Charity also secured appearances on Channel 5 news and BBC Radio along with local and national press coverage.</p> <p>Just over half of Cherry Trees income comes from care services fees via a Surrey County Council local authority contract, other local authority fees, plus parental top ups.</p> <p>In 5 out of the last 7 financial years, Cherry Trees has operated at a net loss but has worked hard over recent years to implement a programme which moves it to a more sustainable financial footing.</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2020/21 which show an income of £1,456,703 plus investment income of £554,595 (£1,422,816 and investment income loss of £227,810 in 2019/20) against expenditure of £1,337,222 (£1,338,831 in 2019/20), resulting in a surplus of £674,076 (a deficit of £143,825 in 2019/20). The sum of £4,797,325 was carried forward at the end of the 2020/21 year.</p> <p>It is charity policy to maintain a level of between 9 and 12 months of current expenditure in free reserves to meet short term funding needs. As at 31 March 2021, free reserves were £1,548,836.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2021/22 – £2,000 2020/21 – £2,000 2019/20 – £2,000</p>

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 Yes No Yes Yes Yes No Yes No Yes N/A Yes</p>
3.2 Assessment	<p>An excellent, well establish charity based in East Clandon, near Guildford who help families from Surrey, Berkshire, Hampshire, Richmond, Wandsworth and Sussex. In total the Charity helped 120 families last year, including seven children from Woking who receive</p>	

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short break care in the form of tea visits, day care and 24 hour care. During the previous year, the Charity supported six children from Woking with a total cost to the Charity of over £11,000.

In light of the Council's financial situation it is recommended that a grant should be awarded at the level of last year with a reduction of 10%, equating to £1,800.

REPORT ENDS