

COMMUNITY ADVICE FORUM – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

The Community Advice Forum (formerly the Neighbourhood Advice Centre) has applied for funding of £5,000 during the 2021/22 financial year to assist with revenue costs, in particular the rent of the office at the Maybury Centre, and incidental costs such as training, telephone and insurance. The services provided by the Forum includes the provision of information and advice, signposting to local agencies, mediation and outreach work such as visiting clients' homes to assisting with GP appointments.

Due to Covid-19 the Forum had to close their offices from March to September 2020, resulting in no face to face meetings with clients, however outreach work was conducted on a case by case basis and the Forum would have been assisting its clients remotely.

In light of the Council's financial situation, it is recommended that no grant should be awarded. The Charity currently has sufficient funds to continue their services throughout 2022/23 whilst maintaining a reserve.

It is acknowledged that the vast majority of the grant use is for hire of a room at The Maybury Centre and therefore the Charity are encouraged to liaise with the Family and Community Services Manager and seek ways of reducing costs, making the excellent service they provide for Woking residents more sustainable for years to come.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That no grant be awarded.

Reason for Decision

The application has not set out sufficient justification for a grant award to be extended, due to a large proportion of the grant being used for hire of the Maybury Centre and the Council's financial position.

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>The Community Advice Forum (CAF) was formed in December 2016.</p> <p>The main aims, objectives and activities of the charity are to provide advocacies, information and advice to members of the local community over a wide range of issues including; education, employment, housing and welfare rights.</p> <p>The Forum aims to help and support people who are unable to access these services independently, this could be due to a number of reasons; language barriers, financial issues, mobility and transport issues.</p> <p>The Forum helps people for whom English is not their first language by reading and writing letters, form filling, making telephone calls and general communication with service providers and other agencies. The Forum also plays a key role in tackling poverty and increasing social justice by assisting users to claim their full welfare benefit entitlements.</p>
1.2 Employees	None.
1.3 Volunteers	5, whose activities include giving out information, offering advice, making referrals, facilitating mediation, outreach work and administration.
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>200 approximately, comprising:</p> <p>150 male</p> <p>50 female</p> <p>Not known - disabled</p> <p>160 ethnic minority</p> <p>200 resident in Woking</p> <p>150 aged 19-65</p> <p>50 aged 65+</p> <p>No charges are made for the services provided.</p>
1.5 Members	None
1.6 Sum Requested	£5,000 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	<p>The Community Forum (CAF) intends to use the funds for the following purposes; office hire, printing, stationery costs, phone and internet bill, insurance costs, training courses, memberships, subscriptions and volunteer expenses.</p> <p>The Forum has been active for approximately five years and the applicant has advised that during this time the number of visitors to the office has steadily increased, demonstrating the ongoing need for the services being provided by the organisation. Woking Borough Council have provided the Forum with basic revenue funding over the past five years through the Council's Community Grant Scheme.</p>

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1.8 Cost breakdown:	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Office Hire:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£3,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Printing and Stationery Costs:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Phone and internet bill:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£150</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Insurance costs:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Training costs:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Memberships and subscriptions:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£150</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Volunteer expenses:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,000</td> </tr> </table>	Office Hire:	£3,600	Printing and Stationery Costs:	£200	Phone and internet bill:	£150	Insurance costs:	£200	Training costs:	£200	Memberships and subscriptions:	£150	Volunteer expenses:	£500	Total	£5,000
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1.9 Community Benefit	Anyone living within the Borough of Woking and the surrounding areas is able to access the services offered by the Community Advice Forum.																
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	Unfortunately due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the offices have had to remain closed for a large part of the year. This has meant the Forum has been unable to have face to face meetings with clients. However, it has been conducting outreach work on a case by case basis.																

2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £9,988 in the bank. The sum of £3,000 is reserved for such eventualities as rent arrears, pensions and any legal fees.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2022/23 which shows an anticipated expenditure of £5,000, with no income identified.</p>
2.2 Accounts	The Group has submitted accounts for 2020/21 which show an income of £5,000 (£5,000 in 2019/20) against expenditure of £1,750 (£4,994 in 2019/20), resulting in a surplus of £1,750 (£6 in 2019/20). The sum of £9,988 was carried forward at the end of the 2020/21 year.
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2021/22 – £5,000</p> <p>2020/21 – £5,000</p> <p>2019/20 – £5,000</p> <p>2018/19 – £5,000</p> <p>2017/18 – £5,000</p>

3.0 Assessment of Application		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution ○ Registered Charity ○ VAT Registered 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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>*The Forum aims to liaise with the Council's funding officer in order to look into alternative avenues of funding in the future.</p> <p>**No fundraising activities have taken place during the past year due to the Coronavirus pandemic.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>3.2 Assessment</p>	<p>It is recommended that no grant should be awarded for 2022/23. The charity currently has sufficient funds to continue their services throughout 2022/23 whilst maintaining a reserve. It is acknowledged that the vast majority of the grant use is for hire of a room at The Maybury Centre and therefore the Charity are encouraged to seek ways to reduce costs making the excellent service they provide for Woking residents more sustainable for years to come.</p>	

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