

WOKING SHOPMOBILITY – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

An application for financial support has been received from Woking Shopmobility to assist with the Charity's running costs. ShopMobility was set up with the aim of enabling barrier-free access to shopping and business facilities in Woking by providing self-driven motorised equipment or manual wheelchairs. Users of the service can also ask for the assistance of a wheelchair pusher if required.

The Group is applying for funding to enable it to return to providing a regular service six days a week and maintain the wide range of equipment needed to meet the requirements of their clients. The amount requested - £12,500 – is at the same level awarded in recent years.

The Group worked within the Government retail restrictions which reduced the opening times and the number of client visits. Operating procedures were changed including a high level of sanitisation of equipment. The unit was closed for 28 weeks and the need for booking user slots reduced the availability on any day.

Clients had a limited time to use the services and had to abide by the pandemic protocols. Alongside the Covid situation, and a high percentage of users being vulnerable, this significantly reduced the usage. If the same level of usage is returned to as prior to the pandemic the Group would handle over 3,700 visits by over 400 users.

The only way the Charity can reduce its grant request is to increase users and generate more income to cover costs. The pandemic has hit the Charity hard though they are now seeing an increase of four new customers a week. They also pay a peppercorn rent to WBC for the premises and receive an annual grant from Woking Shopping of £10,000. In light of the Council's financial position, it is recommended that a grant be approved at the same level of last year less a reduction of 10%, equating to £11,250.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That , subject to the outcome of the Council's budgetary process, a grant of £11,250 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the running costs of ShopMobility.
Reason for Decision	To ensure the continued services of the Group for Woking residents.
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 which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years

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	<p>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>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>Enquiries. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the enquiries received.</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 Woking Borough Council's Community Support Team for advice and support.</p>

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

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Background Papers:

2022/23 Application Form.

Reporting Person:

Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Extn: 3301, Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk

Contact Person:

Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Extn: 3012, Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk
Doug Davern, Democratic Services Officer
Extn: 3018, Email: doug.davern@woking.gov.uk

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Simon Ashall
Email: cllrsimon.ashall@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Will Forster
Email: cllrwill.forster@woking.gov.uk

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Woking Shopmobility was set up in 1989 as a Mayoral charity and the unit opened in 1992. Its aim is to provide barrier free access to shopping and business facilities in Woking by provision of self-drive motorized equipment or manual wheelchairs. A pusher can be provided for manual wheelchairs if required. The service is open to all but traditionally the clients have been the elderly and registered disabled, with the addition of accident sufferers, or people recovering from operations or sufferers of other medical conditions.</p> <p>The Charity aims to provide freedom and independence and promotes social inclusion, noting that users contribute significantly to the economic viability of the town.</p>
1.2 Employees	5, Administrators who do not have set hours. They work a flexible rota agreed with them in advance. The Chairman/General Manager is a volunteer.
1.3 Volunteers	20, whose activities include Treasurer, Secretary, Chairman/General Manager, Trustees, maintenance, pushers , administrators, IT support.
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>200, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 180 male 270 female 450 disabled 40 ethnic minority 315 resident in Woking 5 aged 11-18 225 aged 19-65 220 aged 65+ <p>Users can also apply to be members and pay £12 per annum plus £3 per visit or single users who pay £7 per day for longer hires.</p>
1.5 Members	<p>114, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 male 120 female 200 disabled 20 ethnic minority 180 resident in Woking 60 aged 19-65 140 aged 65+
1.6 Sum Requested	£12,500 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	The grant funding enables the Group to provide a regular service six

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	<p>days a week at charges clients can afford, while maintaining the wide range of equipment needed to meet their needs. The increasing demand for its facilities plus the ongoing Woking Shopping development points towards a strengthening of the community need.</p> <p>The Group notes that Saturday has become its busiest day and it is considering a Sunday opening if it can be resourced.</p> <p>The grant would also help cover the shortfall of £9,000 during the pandemic.</p>																
<p>1.8 Cost breakdown:</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Salaries -</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£33,856</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office Running Costs -</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Centre Expenses -</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,149</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Insurance -</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>£2,250</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total -</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£40,355</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Less</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Job Retention Grant -</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>£18,258</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net Cost</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£22,097</td> </tr> </table>	Salaries -	£33,856	Office Running Costs -	£2,100	Centre Expenses -	£2,149	Insurance -	<u>£2,250</u>	Total -	£40,355	Less		Job Retention Grant -	<u>£18,258</u>	Net Cost	£22,097
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<p>1.9 Community Benefit</p>	<p>The community benefit that the Group provides can be summarised threefold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Woking residents in need of help directly benefit from the provision of scooters and wheelchairs, such that they are not excluded from shared spaces in the town centre. The Group notes “constant demand” in this regard. - The same residents are able to contribute to the economic viability of the town. The Group notes that development in the town centre should bolster their case, in that new retail spaces will precipitate more demand for ShopMobility services. <p>If the same level of usage is returned to as prior to the pandemic the Group would handle over 3,700 visits by over 400 users.</p>																
<p>1.10 Covid-19 Impact</p>	<p>The Group worked within the Government retail restrictions which reduced the opening times and the number of client visits. Operating procedures were changed including a high level of sanitisation of equipment. The unit was closed for 28 weeks and the need for booking user slots reduced the availability on any day.</p> <p>Clients had a limited time to use the services and had to abide by the pandemic protocols. Alongside the Covid situation, and a high percentage of users being vulnerable, this significantly reduced the usage.</p>																

<h3>2.0 Financial Background</h3>	
<p>2.1 Budget</p>	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £21,627 in the bank.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2022/23 which shows an anticipated income of £46,225 against an anticipated expenditure of £48,750, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £2,651.</p>

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2.2 Accounts	The Group has submitted accounts for 2020/21 which show an income of £48,991 (£53,949 in 2019/20) against expenditure of £46,340 (£51,459 in 2019/20), resulting in a surplus of £2,651 (a surplus of £2,490 in 2019/20). The sum of £56,831 was carried forward at the end of the 2020/21 year.
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2021/22 – £12,500 2020/21 – £12,500 2019/20 – £12,500 2018/19 – £12,500 2017/18 – £12,500</p> <p>Following a change in the funding arrangements in 2012/13, the Group has received an annual grant of £10,000 from Woking Shopping, resulting in a lesser grant being awarded by Woking Borough Council. As a part of the arrangement, the Council increased its support of the Woking Community Transport Town Centre Buggy by the same amount since that time.</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>* Mandatory rate relief, discretionary rate relief, concessionary rent</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</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>
3.2 Assessment	<p><u>Officer Comments</u></p> <p>The only way the charity can reduce its grant request is to increase users and generate more income to cover costs. The pandemic has hit them badly but they are now seeing an increase of 4 new customers a week. They also pay a peppercorn rent to WBC for the premises and receive an annual grant from Woking Shopping of £10,000.</p> <p>In light of the Council's financial situation, it is recommended that a grant be awarded at a reduced level of 10% from last year, equating to £11,250 for 2022/23.</p>	

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Comments from Councillor Appointed to Group (Councillor Will Forster)

I am willing to confirm I support Woking Shopmobility's grant application of £12,500, and recommend the Council grants them that funding.

Woking Shopmobility was formed in 1989 as the then Mayoral Charity, they help provide freedom and independence to enable people to enjoy Woking town centre. In normal times, they support 600 users access Woking town centre and make an important contribution to support less mobile residents.

Obviously, Woking Shopmobility has been unable to operate in a business as usual way since March 2020. However, they will be a key organisation to help encourage the public back to Woking town centre after the lockdowns and pandemic.

REPORT ENDS