

WOKING TALKING NEWSPAPER (1988) ASSOCIATION – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

The Woking Talking Newspaper Association has applied for a grant to cover the costs of renting office space at the Moorcroft Centre. The Group provides visually impaired people of Woking with a weekly audio tape containing local news. The Service is available to those of any age and the Group currently has 38 listeners in the Borough who are registered blind or have a visual impairment. Work takes place with Sight for Surrey to ensure that the service is made available to those who would benefit from it.

Prior to the pandemic, Woking Talking Newspaper rented a room at Moorcroft for its recordings and the Council paid for the hire of the room. The service has now been adapted to enable the recordings to be made at the homes of the volunteers and therefore the Group has applied for grant support of £1,500 towards consumables such as memory sticks and wallets, as well as a replacement laptop and copying machine.

The Association has been able to continue its recordings throughout the pandemic which has helped provide stability for its vulnerable users. The recordings have gone some way to relieve the isolation felt by many visually impaired people during such times.

It is noted that the Group provides an excellent and valued service to those with a visual impairment in the Borough, along with ongoing awareness-raising to increase its number of users. The service has been described by many users as a "lifeline". Many radio and television stations provide regional news but with the aid of the Woking News and Mail they can deliver Borough news and information to visually impaired persons.

It is recommended that a grant be awarded at a reduced level of 10% of last year, equating to £450 for 2022/23 to support with the day to day costs of using recording and posting equipment. The Council is supportive of the excellent work of this Charity and continues to provide working space at no cost regularly to the volunteers. In future, the Charity is encouraged to explore if there are ways to make this work more sustainable, for example asking recipients if they would like to volunteer to contribute if able, and also to liaise with the Council's Funding Officer if advice would help.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That , subject to the outcome of the Council's budgetary process, funding of £450 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the production of the talking newspaper.
Reason for Decision	To enable Woking Talking Newspaper to continue to provide its service to those people in the Borough with a visual impairment.
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

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	for the 2022/23 funding until this confirmation has been received.
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. 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>
Performance Indicators	<p>Users. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users.</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.

Background Papers:

2022/23 Application Form.

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Formed originally in the late 1960s and converted to a registered charity in 1988, Woking Talking Newspaper provides a free weekly news information service to blind and visually impaired persons. The Association produces an audio version of the Woking News and Mail together with other publications and "Magazine" items. The recordings are produced every Thursday evening (the day of publication of the newspaper) and distributed via Royal Mail on USB thumb drives/memory sticks. All their readers and recording producers give their time on a voluntary basis and are from the Woking area. A Christmas message is recorded by the Mayor each year from the Mayor's Parlour and recordings are made of civic events in the Town Centre.</p> <p>The weekly recordings are produced by volunteer readers recording in their own homes. By using the Internet these recordings are gathered and combined into one audio file that can be copied onto USB memory sticks and distributed to the listeners in returnable wallets using the Royal Mail's "Articles for the Blind" free postal scheme.</p> <p>All the running expenses are funded by voluntary contributions, grants and gifts from other individuals and organisations.</p>
1.2 Employees	None.
1.3 Volunteers	25, whose activities include preparing the Talking Newspapers as well as volunteers who run a programme of marketing and awareness initiatives that comprise contacts with Sight for Surrey, The Macular Society and other charities, doctors, care homes, carers and care managers.
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>38, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">16 male22 female38 disabled37 resident in Woking <p>The service is provided free of charge to users. In addition, player units can be loaned to users. The weekly productions are also available on the Group's website and the British Wireless Fund for the Blind website. In addition to the above, there are around 40 listeners from this steaming service located all around the UK.</p> <p>Last year, the number of users was stated to be 46 and the reduction is due to a care home no longer requiring the service.</p>
1.5 Members	<p>63, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">26 male37 female38 disabled

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	<p>1 ethnic minority</p> <p>62 resident in Woking</p> <p>All listeners and volunteers are classed as members. The Group believes that the vast majority of its members are over 65 years old.</p>														
1.6 Sum Requested	£1,500 (Revenue)														
1.7 Project	<p>The Association has for many years been the beneficiary of a grant made specifically to off-set the rent charges for the use of “Studio” space at Moorcroft Centre for the Community. As the method of operation has changed to working from home, this support is no longer required. However, the Association seeks to obtain funding to replace equipment as the wallets and memory sticks used become damaged and require replacement.</p> <p>In addition the Association will need to replace its laptop computer and the copying machine in the course of time.</p> <p>The Association requests that the Council matches expenditure made by the Association up to a maximum of £1,500 such funding being given after the expenditure has occurred and a formal claim made upon the grant award.</p>														
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Wallets</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£350</td> </tr> <tr> <td>USB Memory Sticks</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£350</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Laptop replacement</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Copying Machine replacement</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£450</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,750</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Less: 50% borne by Association</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£875</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grant Request</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£875</td> </tr> </table>	Wallets	£350	USB Memory Sticks	£350	Laptop replacement	£600	Copying Machine replacement	£450	Total	£1,750	Less: 50% borne by Association	£875	Grant Request	£875
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1.9 Community Benefit	<p>The Association currently has 38 registered listeners who, but for the service provided, would not have access to local news and details of local events. The grant funding would allow the Association to continue to seek to expand its listener base to reach more and more citizens in the Borough as well as continue the service to existing listeners.</p> <p>The Trustees are actively engaged on programmes to increase the number of listeners through contacts with care homes, carers and relations of visually impaired persons.</p>														
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>The whole production procedure had to be re-thought at the commencement of the pandemic and a move from “studio” recording to home recording was introduced. This required training of volunteers in using microphones and other devices to record. It also meant a complete change in that recorded audio files were collected via the internet and the copying and despatch function carried out at a new location.</p> <p>Many listeners live alone and the continuation of the service has been essential for them during lockdowns. Since the first lockdown only one week’s production was missed. A number of messages have been received thanking the Group for the continued service.</p>														

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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £2,600 in the bank.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2022/23 which shows an anticipated income of £402 against an anticipated expenditure of £625. After the transfer from the replacement reserve for the equipment costs of £500, there would be an anticipated surplus of £277.</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2020 which show an income of £2,320 (£2,445 in 2019) against expenditure of £2,394 (£2,274 in 2019), resulting in a deficit of £74 (a surplus of £405 in 2019). The sum of £2,534 was carried forward at the end of the 2020 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2021/22 – £500 2020/21 – £1,870 2019/20 – £1,781 2018/19 – £1,696 2017/18 – £1,537</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>* WBC allows the Association the use of a small office at Moorcroft for about one hour per week for the administrator to work and also as a return postal address for wallets. Moorcroft does not charge for this facility.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes *</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>
3.2 Assessment	<p>It is recommended that a grant be awarded at a reduced level of 10% of last year, equating to £450 for 2022/23 to support with the day to day costs of using recording and posting equipment. The Council is supportive of the excellent work of this Charity and continues to provide working space at no cost regularly to the volunteers. In future,</p>	

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REPORT ENDS