

APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Woking Borough Council provides a significant level of discretionary support for the voluntary sector each year, including financial support, accommodation, rate relief and Officer advice. Over July and August 2021 the Council invited local community and voluntary organisations to apply for funding for projects which demonstrate substantial community benefit for the residents of the Borough. As in previous years, the Council has received applications seeking support for a wide range of projects and events, all designed to benefit one or more of the many communities in the Borough over the coming financial year.

Each application has been carefully considered in light of the Council's criteria, priorities for the year, sustainability, community benefit and added value, with a detailed report drawn up on each of the applications. The reports set out the Officer recommendations which have been reached with a view to giving the greatest benefit to residents within the limited financial constraints faced by the Borough Council, taking into account comments from a range of consultees including Officers, Councillor Simon Ashall, Portfolio Holder for Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations, Councillor Will Forster, Shadow Portfolio Holder for Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations, and Councillor Ayesha Azad, Leader of the Council.

For the purposes of financial planning, the recommendations within the reports have been used to calculate the impact on the budget. Should the Members of the Executive wish to make any changes to the recommendations, the impact on the budgets may need to be taken into consideration to ensure that the budgets are not exceeded.

As a result of the impact of the Pandemic on the Council's finances, in consultation with Group Leaders, the decision has been taken to reduce the grants budget for the coming year and not to add funds to the Council's Community Fund for a second year. The recommendations and committed funding allocates £749,975 of the revenue budget of £750,000 agreed for 2022/23. The level of funds available through the Community Fund, used to support one-off capital projects, is such that applications for capital funding have not been invited. The decisions represent a saving of £272,000 for the Council.

In considering each of the applications, the Members of the Executive are advised to take into account a number of key standards when reaching a decision. These are set out in section 4.2 of the report and have been drawn up to assist in the determination of the funding requests.

The continuing impact of Covid-19 cannot be ignored and this report seeks to set out the risks associated with the social distancing restrictions on community groups, the residents they support and the Council's funding of those groups. In addition, each applicant was invited to set out the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on their services at the time of their application, details of which are outlined in each individual report.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the report be noted; and

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- (ii) any unused funds remaining in the budget from the 2022/23 financial year be transferred to the Community Fund.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To determine financial support for voluntary and community organisations through the Council's Community Grants Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Community Grants scheme is an annual funding process through which the Council seeks to assist and support local voluntary and community projects serving the residents of the Borough. Groups can register their interest through a form available on the Council's website and the scheme is opened in July for applications, together with their supporting documents to be submitted by early September.
- 1.2 47 applications have been received seeking financial assistance in the 2022/23 financial year. A schedule summarising the applications received, the amounts requested and the amounts recommended, is attached at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 1.3 A copy of the Council's guidelines in respect of applications for financial assistance is attached at Appendix 1. In 2009 the Council adopted a definition of a Community Organisation to assist those considering submitting an application to the Council – a copy of the definition is set out in Appendix 2. All information relating to the Community Grants Scheme is available on the Council's website.
- 1.4 The Council has also adopted a Policy Statement for the support it provides to the voluntary sector. The Policy states that the Council will target its support at those organisations that contribute towards the achievement of its general priorities and objectives and, more specifically, those set out in the Community Strategy. These are:
 - A strong **Community Spirit** with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility.
 - A clean, healthy and safe **Environment**.
 - A **Transport** system that is linked and accessible, recognising Woking's potential as a transport hub.
 - Access to decent **Housing** which is affordable for local people and key workers.
 - A community which values personal **Health and Well-Being**.
 - Provide opportunities and encourage people to participate in **Learning** throughout their lives so they progress and reach their potential.
- 1.5 It should be noted that a number of the applications satisfy more than one of the themes.
- 1.6 A copy of the Policy Statement is attached for information at Appendix 4, which will be updated shortly to reflect alignment with the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Corporate Plan.

Executive Reports

- 1.7 A report on each application has been prepared and these are set out elsewhere on the agenda. Each report outlines the aims and objectives of the applicant, the purpose of the application, how much is requested, the costs of the project, the applicant's financial position, previous support by the Council and a recommendation as to the amount to be awarded.
- 1.8 The recommendations in the reports have been drawn up taking into account the comments of consultees, including the Council's representatives on outside bodies. Informal discussions have been held with the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder and the Shadow Portfolio Holder, and their comments have been taken into consideration.

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- 1.9 For purposes of financial planning, should the Executive propose a change to a recommendation in any of the reports, consideration may need to be given to the impact on the overall budget.

Monitoring

- 1.10 All successful applicants are required to accept the grant and, more importantly, the conditions of the grant before any funding will be released. Key to the grants scheme is regular monitoring information to be provided by the applicants. The applicants are advised of the information to be provided at the time of the award notification and are sent reminders to submit the information. In the event of a Group proving itself poor at providing the monitoring information, Officers withhold the release of their payments pending receipt of the information.

2.0 COVID-19 Pandemic

- 2.1 The continuing impact of Covid-19 on the Borough's residents, community organisations, businesses and the Council cannot be underestimated, and should be taken into consideration as part of the Council's discretionary funding arrangements for the voluntary and community sector. Each applicant was again invited to give an indication of the impact of the social distancing restrictions on their services and communities supported, and it is clear that all have seen significant changes in the way they operate, seeking to support the people most in need through new approaches designed in light of the social distancing restrictions. Details of the impact of Covid-19 on local organisations have been included in the respective reports on the applications, though it should be noted that these statements were submitted as part of the application forms in August 2021.
- 2.2 In considering the applications received, it should be borne in mind that the Council's community grants scheme is not there to make up any losses incurred by the Groups as a result of Covid-19. The Council does not have sufficient resources to do so. The recommendations before the Executive seek to support projects to be undertaken in the coming financial year (2022/23) and will not be used to build up the reserves of individual groups.
- 2.3 The impact on the Council's finances continues to be of concern and the budgets for the coming year have had to be reduced. The Council's Community Fund, historically used to support capital (one-off) projects, has not been credited with an additional £100,000 for a second year and the current balance is such that the Council has not invited applications for capital funding for the coming year. In addition, a reduction has been agreed in the level of support available through the main grants budget to assist the Council in meeting its savings targets. The budget available for the coming year is £750,000 and the Council will need to seriously consider the budget levels in subsequent years and the implications that would arise for the local community and the Council's support services.

3.0 The Budgets

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council supports the voluntary and community sector through several discretionary budgets each year. The Community Grants Scheme makes use of the core revenue budget and in previous years the Council has employed its Community Fund to support capital, one-off projects.
- 3.2 The revenue budgets are set in February each year as part of the Council's annual budget setting process. As a consequence of the Executive's previous decision to move the Community Grants Scheme forward by three months, the budgets are currently in draft. This year, the Council has had to make the difficult decision of reducing its contribution to the

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voluntary sector as part of its overall savings strategy to address the losses and costs incurred by the Council as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.3 As in previous years, it is proposed that any remaining balance in the Community Grants Budget, following the decisions of the Executive, will be transferred to the Council's earmarked reserves.

Revenue Awards

- 3.4 The Grants Revenue Budget for 2022/23 has been agreed at £750,000. The sum represents a reduction of £172,000 on the 2021/22, necessitated by the need for the Council to achieve significant savings.
- 3.5 The recommendations before the Executive represent a total of £749,975 in revenue funding. The remaining balance stands at £25.

One-off and Capital Awards

- 3.6 In addition to the revenue budget, the Council has historically maintained a Community Fund for one-off or capital projects such as building works or the purchase of equipment or vehicles. Prior to the Pandemic, the Council would increase the budget by £100,000 annually to ensure funding was available. In view of the continuing impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances, the decision has been taken not to increase the budget by £100,000 for a second year.
- 3.7 The current available balance has dropped to £13,841 and accordingly applications for capital projects have not been invited this year.

Community Small Grants

- 3.8 The sum of £14,420 has been identified for the Community Small Grants Scheme, through which local individuals or groups can apply for small sums of money for projects under the headings of Sports, Arts, Youth, and Living Well in Woking. The funding is awarded throughout the financial year.

Arts, Sports and Youth Small Grants (£14,420)

- 3.9 The small grants scheme available to those residing or located within the Borough. Funding is awarded to individuals or clubs that would like to:
- (i) enhance or improve equipment and/or facilities for individual or group performances;
 - (ii) develop and expand the range of activities;
 - (iii) increase participation and the number of members;
 - (iv) provide specified specialist coaching or training for individuals or groups to achieve i, ii or iii above; and
 - (v) fund innovations or new events requiring initial support.
- 3.10 The Sports Grants of this scheme are administered by Woking Sports Council whilst applications for a youth grant are reviewed on a quarterly basis by Woking Youth Council.
- 3.11 There is a maximum award of £500 for exceptional projects with an average award of £275. Applications must include evidence that the applicant is contributing a minimum level of 50% to the cost of the scheme from either personal or other sources. There is a limit of one application per individual or group in any Council year. A minimum 40% proportion of grant funds is available for individual applications.

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4.0 Community Grants Scheme Underspend during 2020/21 Financial Year

- 4.1 During 2019, the Community Grants Scheme received the benefit of a Review undertaken by Internal Audit to consider the overall annual process and recommend any improvements which could benefit the Council going forward. The Council received satisfactory assurance with a total of four medium or low priority recommendations highlighted, which were implemented shortly afterwards. In line with all Internal Audit reports, the final report was made available to the Standards and Audit Committee.
- 4.2 One of the recommendations was to report any underspend against the agreed revenue and capital budgets during the most recent financial year, as part of the annual covering report. Underspend would generally occur if a Group chose not to claim all of the grant awarded, for example if its activity during the year was less than what had been originally intended at the time of application.
- 4.3 For the financial year ended April 2021, the Executive agreed a total revenue grant spend of £922,176 and at the end of the year there was an underspend of £9,210. The Executive also approved capital and one-off grants totalling £147,312, leading to an underspend of £31,853. The total revenue and capital support to voluntary organisations through the Community Grants Scheme during the 2020/21 financial year therefore equated to £1,069,488.

5.0 The Applications

- 5.1 Individual reports have been prepared for all the applications received in consultation with relevant Officers within the Council, including the Senior Equalities Officer. Informal discussions have been held with the Leader of the Council and both the Portfolio Holder and the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations on each of the recommendations.

Considerations in Determining the Applications

- 5.2 In considering the applications before them, the Members of the Executive are advised to take the following into account when reaching a decision:
- Does the application contribute towards the themes of Woking's Community Strategy?
 - Does the application deliver any specific action(s) in strategies/plans that the Council has signed up to?
 - Is there evidence that the application meets the needs of the local community?
 - Has the applicant met all the criteria for applying and supplied all the necessary information?
 - Has the application demonstrated evidence of financial need?
 - Are there any risks associated with the application?
 - Are there any other Organisations providing the same service within the Borough?
 - Has the applicant provided details of monitoring undertaken?
 - Is there evidence that the applicant has actively explored other sources of funding/fundraising?
 - Has the applicant provided sufficient evidence of demand to support the proposal?

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- Will there be the need for ongoing support in future years?
 - Do the proposals appear to offer good value for money?
 - Are the proposed conditions attached to recommendations adequate?
- 5.3 Officers have set out in each report a series of key elements relating to both the applicant and the application. These include whether the applicant is a registered charity, whether they have specific policies covering areas such as safeguarding, whether they have pursued other sources of funding and whether historically the Group has provided regular monitoring information. This summary has been drawn up to assist Members in their consideration of the applications.

Service Budget Supported Projects

- 5.4 As part of the Council's review of spending, three local community organisations were identified which have received annual funding in recent years outside of the Grants process. The Groups concerned are Cardinals in the Community, The Prison Fellowship and the Woking Asian Business Forum. The three Groups were this year invited to apply for their funding for the coming year to provide the Executive with an opportunity to review the levels awarded. Each Group subsequently submitted an application and the relevant reports appear elsewhere on this agenda. The recommendations before the Executive allocates £15,000 from Service Budgets.

6.0 Committed Funding for 2022/23

- 6.1 Included within the funding schedule for 2022/23 are items of annual expenditure which have been agreed previously. These are summarised below.

LinkAble

- 6.2 LinkAble supports children and adults with learning disabilities in the Boroughs of Woking and Surrey Heath. It is the only Charity in the local area that provides support to people of all ages with learning disabilities, offering a range of activities and supporting access with trained staff. The Group has a fully accessible Centre in Woking and works in the local community to offer familiarity and routine to the children, young people and adults. The services also offer respite for exhausted parents and carers.
- 6.3 At its meeting held on 10 December 2020, the Executive received an application for financial assistance from LinkAble for a grant of £34,200 for each of the next three years to cover the salary of the Head of Services role, enabling the Group to focus on enhancing its service provision in the Borough. After the three year period expires, the Charity aims to raise the funds required by proactively applying for grants from charitable trusts and foundations, whilst encouraging individuals, businesses, and community groups to undertake fundraising.
- 6.4 Given the excellent work undertaken by the Charity and the consultee comments which were supportive, the Executive agreed that the application be approved with a grant of £34,200 for each of the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, with no commitment to any funding beyond that time. The funding was set aside in the Council's Community Fund.

Elderly People's Lunch Clubs

- 6.5 Each year, Elderly People's Lunch Clubs are invited to apply for financial assistance to help with their running costs. The level of grant is based on the number of members of the Club over the age of sixty, with awards of £2.00 for the first 50 members, £1.00 for the second 50 and £0.50 above 100. Applicants are required to give details of the services provided, accounts and a safeguarding policy.

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- 6.6 The awards are dealt with under authority delegated to the Chief Executive. Three (three in 2021/22) applications have been received for assistance in 2022/23 and a total of £293 (£351 in 2021/22) has been set aside under delegated authority. The Groups to benefit are:
- Anandmilan – Vadil Parivar Elderly Club
 - Mascot Friendship Cafe
 - Pyrford Retired Men’s Lunch Club
- 6.7 A copy of the full report is available on request through Democratic Services.

High Sheriff’s Award

- 6.8 The High Sheriff’s Award is a scheme which encourages schools, youth clubs, and all other youth related organisations to set up projects that tackle crime prevention and community safety issues. The scheme is an Award of Excellence that any group of young people can work towards achieving, with practical help and on-going support available. Contributions towards the scheme are provided by the County’s Borough and District Authorities. Young people – normally between the ages of 9 and 18 – can apply for grants from £50 up to £1,000 to fund their projects. Full details can be found on the High Sheriff’s website (www.surreyhighsheriff.org/awards).
- 6.9 The Council has supported the scheme since 2002. The level of contribution increased in 2020 by £500 and the contribution requested for the coming year stands at £2,500 (£2,500 in 2021/22). It is recommended, however that the Council’s contribution is reduced for the coming year to £2,250, recognising the impact of the Pandemic on the Council’s finances.

7.0 Other Forms of Support

- 7.1 The Council’s support for the Voluntary Sector goes far beyond direct funding and includes elements such as rent free accommodation, discretionary rate relief, storage facilities for vehicles and direct Officer support. Although not always apparent, these types of support by the Council are extensive and invaluable for a wide range of local groups. With the inclusion of the value of the car park spaces provided, the estimated value of the other forms of support provided by the Council is £936,880 for the year.

Car Parking

- 7.2 The value of the free parking provided by the Council to the voluntary sector is estimated to be £122,460.

Community Lettings

- 7.3 A number of Groups receive reduced levels of rent for Council owned premises under its Community Lettings Policy. These include Citizens Advice Bureau, Relate West Surrey, the Maybury Centre, shopMobility and Woking Community Transport. The level of the rent is calculated on the Group’s ability to cover the costs and is reviewed every five years. The estimated value for the annual support is £250,000.

Discretionary Rate Relief

- 7.4 Groups can apply for discretionary rate relief for the premises they occupy. Charitable Groups are eligible for 80% statutory rate relief and can apply to the Council for relief on the remaining 20%, which the Council has the discretion to determine. The provision of Discretionary Rate Relief is a very cost effective way of providing support to these organisations due to a

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proportion of the cost being funded by central Government through the pooling arrangement for business rates. The estimated value is £550,000.

Officer and Member Support

- 7.5 A number of Groups receive direct Officer support and advice. In addition to this, the Council appoints Member representatives to several of the Organisations, including Woking shopMobility, the Maybury Centre and Woking Community Transport.

Service Charges

- 7.6 A number of Groups occupying Council-owned properties are liable for service charges for their accommodation. Service charges cover accommodation costs incurred by the Groups such as heating, lighting and services such as water. Where the Council covers the full cost of the service charges, the costs are paid by internal transfer.

Volunteering

- 7.7 Volunteer Woking aims to deliver a healthy local voluntary sector for people living in Woking, to actively increase and improve the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally.
- 7.8 The Council supports the sector through:
- Brokerage: Matching both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. Volunteer Woking holds information on a comprehensive range of opportunities and offer potential volunteers support and advice matching the volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.
 - Community Development: Strengthening the voluntary sector's capacity to help its clients through promoting best practice, funding advice and training;
 - Voices: Speaking up for the voluntary sector on issues crucial to its future, and increasing the sector's access to, and influence upon, decision makers;
 - Support: Officers provide help and advice on Governance, provide a Payroll service and DBS checking facility for all charities and non – profit organisation in the Woking Borough.
- 7.9 Through the Pandemic, Volunteer Woking helped by keeping charities updated with guidance coming out from government, funding, the offer of PPE equipment and ensuring that volunteers can be sourced to help out if a charity requests assistance. A regular newsletter is sent out updating charities on funding and information on their sector. Since the Pandemic volunteering has continued to increase with new opportunities for volunteers to volunteer from home.
- 7.10 Volunteer Woking is helping with the ongoing need for vaccination volunteers.
- 7.11 Volunteer Woking has been helping charities with funding and has close links with Community Foundation for Surrey and The National Lottery. Charities have also been able to run their fundraising events again due to restrictions being lifted.
- 7.12 Volunteer Woking is expanding its network of Woking Businesses and has organised 9 business volunteering days with local charities and schools since July 2021 (since the pandemic restrictions were lifted). This is a great way of connecting businesses with the community.
- 7.13 Volunteer Woking organised the Working Together for Woking event which took place in November 2021. Over 50 charities and community organisations attended to showcase the

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work they do for Woking. The event had such positive feedback and allowed for all these organisations to make important connections within the Borough.

8.0 Broad Policies

8.1 Broad policies have been developed over recent years for the determination of applications, as follows:

Revenue Funding

8.2 Whenever a grant is made towards revenue funding the applicants are informed of the basis on which future funding will be awarded. No allowance for inflation has been included and the level of recommended revenue funding will only be increased where special circumstances warrant an increase.

Rent

8.3 The Council charges rent to voluntary and community groups using Council owned premises. Where an application is for the rent of Council owned premises it is indicated in individual reports. Payment of any grant for this purpose will be by internal transfer to the appropriate budget.

8.4 The Council also operates a Community Lettings Scheme through which Community Groups occupying Council owned premises can apply for a reduced or peppercorn rent. Community Lettings are awarded under delegated authority and are reviewed every five years.

8.5 Examples of Groups in receipt of Community Lettings include Woking shopMobility, Surrey Welfare Rights, and Citizens Advice Woking.

One-off and Capital Grants

8.6 In past years, applications for one-off or capital grants have been considered on their merits and the recommendations have been made accordingly. The Grants criteria state that grants for capital projects such as building works or the purchase of equipment will be awarded up to 50% of the total cost unless special circumstances apply.

8.7 The funding is awarded from the Council's Community Fund. In the case of significant building projects, an element of the grant, normally 10%, may be withheld subject to an inspection by Officers.

8.8 This year, however, the budget for capital projects is such that applications were not invited for 2022/23.

9.0 Conditional Support and Informatives

9.1 Each report which carries a recommendation to support a project, whether for revenue or capital funding, will set out a series of conditions and informatives on which the support is dependent. The majority of these conditions are common to most if not all Council funded voluntary sector groups. A brief summary of the standard conditions is set out below. In some cases, additional conditions may be added for specific elements, such as the adoption of appropriate policies or the sharing of resources.

Accounts.

9.2 The Organisation must submit accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet.

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Monitoring Information.

- 9.3 Organisations must submit monitoring information as a measure of their achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award.

Publicity.

- 9.4 Where possible, the Organisations are required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on websites and literature / leaflets produced.

Payments.

- 9.5 Unless exceptional circumstances exist, all invoices must be received quarterly with monitoring information for the previous quarter.

Payment Period.

- 9.6 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 before the end of the award year.

Invoices / Receipts.

- 9.7 In order to claim an element of the funding, Organisations must submit paid invoices or receipts relating to equipment purchased or services provided.

Inspection.

- 9.8 Ten percent of the funding for large capital projects will be retained until a satisfactory inspection has been carried out by Council officers.

Future Budgets

- 9.9 The financial pressure on the Council's budgets is expected to continue in the coming years and accordingly it is proposed that successful applicants are again advised that the level of any future support may be reduced. Organisations awarded revenue funding for the coming year are to be advised that the support does not imply that a similar application in 2023/24 would be supported. Furthermore, the Council is unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2022/23 levels.

Joint Working

- 9.10 Over the recent years, Groups have been encouraged to engage positively in joint working around health and well-being, both with agencies such as Woking Borough Council and with other voluntary organisations. To further this, a standard condition, as set out below, is added to the recommendations within the reports:

“Joint Working. Woking Borough Council 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.”

- 9.11 It is recommended that the Council once again encourages joint working and that the condition is added to recommendations within the reports.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- 9.12 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

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maximise the opportunities to prevent such. All Groups supported through the Council's Community Grants Scheme are asked to assist the Council in assisting those at risk of homelessness.

- 9.13 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 supported by the Council which do not support this new legislation and way of working positively may put their Council support at risk.

Venue Hire

- 9.14 The following paragraph has been added as a condition of any funds awarded to Groups in respect of the hire of any rooms managed by the Applicant.

"Woking Borough Council has a duty to ensure that publicly-owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This duty extends to organisations that work with the local authority so this includes recipients of any grants from Woking Borough Council. If you hire out your venue/s you should ensure you have good processes in place for record keeping and checking if they are an appropriate group to be making the hire arrangements. The following are some of what should be considered:

- Basic details should be recorded to include speakers address, mobile phone number & organisation details.
- Has the identity of the speaker been confirmed & is their organisation bona fide? Are they known to you?
- Is the speaker from the area? Are they UK citizens or from overseas & will they travel specifically for this event?
- Consider checks on the internet to confirm the status of speaker to include website, YouTube or social media sites.
- How many people are likely to attend (check previous or similar events either locally or online)."

10.0 Implications

Covid-19

- 10.1 The Council continues to face significant financial restrictions as a result of the losses in income and increases in expenditure during the Pandemic. As a result, the Council will need to keep under review all elements of expenditure, in particular discretionary spending such as the Council's Community Grants scheme. This year, the decision has been taken to reduce the overall revenue budget to £750,000 as part of the Council's savings targets. In addition, no funding will be identified for capital, one-off projects for the coming year.

Financial and Risk

- 10.2 As a result of the Officer recommendations and committed funding, a total of £25 from the revenue budget remains unallocated. The position is such that consideration of the budget will need to be taken into account in the event of any recommendations being revised by the Executive.
- 10.3 A summary of the financial implications of the Officer recommendations before the Executive, together with the level of committed funding in the coming year, is set out below.

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Discretionary Support for the Voluntary Sector 2022/23			
	Budget	Recommended	Balance Available
Grants Budget	£750,000	£749,975	£25
Service Budgets		£15,000	-
Support in-kind*:	-		-
○ Car park passes		£122,460	
○ Community Lettings		£250,000	
○ Discretionary Rate Relief		£550,000	
○ Small Grants Scheme	£14,420	£14,420	-
Totals		1,701,855	£25

*Awarded throughout the year.

- 10.4 On top of this sum, the Council provides further support through peppercorn rents, discretionary rate relief, car parking and direct assistance by Councillors and Officers valued at approximately £922,460, giving a total value of support of £1,701,855. A more detailed breakdown of the recommendations, and the budgets available, is set out in Appendix 3.
- 10.5 The Council's support of local community groups provides an added element to the services and facilities available in the Borough. In many cases, the services provided by such Groups would otherwise need to be provided directly by the Borough Council or other statutory authorities.
- 10.6 In Risk Management terms, reducing or withdrawing the Council's financial or in-kind support will have a direct impact on the services provided by the many Groups which benefit from the Council's support. The Council has sought to minimise the reduction in grant funding but the financial position of the Council is such that for 2022/23 the Grants budget has had to be reduced. Whilst Groups have previously been advised of the possibility of reductions in available funding, they will no doubt be disappointed.

Equalities and Human Resource

- 10.7 There are no training and development implications directly arising from this report.
- 10.8 The Grants Scheme has been assessed against the Council's Equalities standards by the Council's Senior Equalities Officer in order to ensure that it does not discriminate against any individual or group and that, where possible, it promotes equality.
- 10.9 Each application is considered on its own merits and all applicants are required to submit their Equal Opportunities Policy as part of the grant application process. In the context of social inclusion, many of the groups supported by the Council make positive contributions to disadvantaged people.

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10.10 Copies of the assessments prepared by the Council's Equalities Officer are attached at Appendix 5 to this report.

Legal

10.11 Legal Services have been consulted and have raised no issues other than ensuring compliance with the Equalities Officer's assessments.

11.0 Consultations

11.1 The merits of each application have been considered and recommendations have been made on the basis of the policies previously applied. Each application has been discussed with the both the Portfolio Holder and the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations and the Leader of the Council. In addition, Officers across the Council, including the Council's Senior Equalities Officer, have been consulted on the applications submitted. These discussions have shaped the recommendations.

REPORT ENDS