

THE LIGHTBOX – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

An application for support has been received from The Lightbox, Woking’s premier community arts and heritage organisation which seeks to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the community through engagement with arts and heritage activity. It hosts widely accessible programmes in its building for visitors of all ages, staging exhibitions and activities throughout the year.

The Lightbox has applied for funding of £1,200 to cover the staffing and refreshment costs of its “Open Mind” programme, a monthly event for users of Woking Mind to receive a tour of one of the exhibitions currently taking place along with refreshments. Each month the programme looks at different artworks and discusses the artists’ lives in an interactive tour which is used as a way of fostering inclusion and participation. The participants differ depending on the users’ mental health and the exhibition to be toured, and averages 12 participants per month.

The value of the exhibitions and the chance for the users of Woking Mind to socialise, make friends and learn about an exhibition in a supportive environment is noted. However, due to the Council’s current financial position and the constraints on the grants budget, it is not felt that the project can be funded next year. It should be noted that the Lightbox receives support from the Council for the delivery of arts and heritage services through a Service Level Agreement. Accordingly, it is recommended that no grant be awarded.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That no grant be awarded.

Reason for Decision

The constraints on the grants budget for the year ahead do not enable the application to be supported.

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 Lightbox is a community arts and heritage organisation with a social purpose to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of its community through engagement with arts and heritage activity. It hosts widely accessible programmes in its building.</p> <p>The Lightbox has a history of working with the whole community to offer a diverse, high quality programme centred on the visual arts and local heritage. The Centre encourages exploration and learning through play for younger audiences, including under 5's activities and holiday workshops, whilst giving knowledge and allowing for experimentation for older audiences, including those living with dementia and isolated older people. The Centre works in partnership with Woking Borough Council to deliver arts and heritage services to promote a vibrant and healthy community.</p> <p>The Lightbox tells the story of the local community through a museum and stages 20 exhibitions a year in 3 galleries. The Lightbox has become a central part of the life of the town.</p>
1.2 Employees	22 including the Director, Operations Director, Head of Finance, Retail Manager, Facilities Manager, Head of Learning and Engagement, Head of Exhibitions, Visitor Experience Manager and Head of Marketing and Communications.
1.3 Volunteers	178, whose activities include front of house, education and engagement, administration, gardening, oral history / heritage, exhibitions and collections, events and marketing.
1.4 Clients/Users	103,000 visitors (pre-pandemic figures), 76% of whom are from within the Borough. The main Gallery and Upper Gallery are entered with a day pass (£7.50) or by becoming a member (£30) to gain access to all shows for a whole year. The rest of the building, including the Museum, is free to enter.
1.5 Members	<p>824, comprising:</p> <p>303 male</p> <p>521 female</p> <p>Members Charges (annual)</p> <p>Individual £30</p> <p>Joint £50</p> <p>Supporter Friends Charges (annual)</p> <p>Individual £300</p> <p>Joint £500</p>
1.6 Sum Requested	£1,560 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	The Organisation states that the Lightbox is a place to stop, reflect and relax and go away feeling just that little bit better. Its 'Open Mind'

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	<p>programme is a relaxed monthly free tour offered to users of Woking Mind to come and explore the exhibitions featuring world-renowned artists. Each month it looks at different artworks and discusses the artists' lives in an interactive tour used as a way to foster inclusion and participation. The participants differ depending on the users' mental health, but averages 12 participants per month. At the beginning of each session a free drink is offered before the tour of a specific exhibition begins. They are given the opportunity to look around at their own pace, asking questions if and when they have them. The social aspect of the tours enables friendships and connections to be made in a supportive environment which combats loneliness and depression. The Group is seeking funding to ensure the free tea/coffee for the tours can be continued and to ensure that staff time is covered for planning and talking to the group.</p>
<p>1.8 Cost breakdown:</p>	<p>Tea/coffee for approx. 12 attendees = £30 /tour = £360 for 12 months Staff time for 12 sessions (planning and delivery) = £100/half day = £1,200 for 12 months Total cost of project for one year = £1,560</p>
<p>1.9 Community Benefit</p>	<p>Approximately 12 people attend the tours each month which varies according to the exhibition being toured. The attendees are self-selecting through Mind and benefit from being able to reflect, relax and learn something new or more about an artist or exhibition. All attendees benefit from free tea / coffee on arrival and being able to increase their knowledge and self-esteem.</p>
<p>1.10 Covid-19 Impact</p>	<p>The Lightbox has not been able to deliver some programmes due to the impact of closures and smaller group sizes / mask wearing. This has meant that it has worked remotely with some groups, but this has been difficult. Working with people with mental health issues is very different in a remote environment and so it is looking forward to engaging with people in person again, which is extremely important for visitors' self-esteem and reducing social inequality.</p>

<h3>2.0 Financial Background</h3>	
<p>2.1 Budget</p>	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £939,690 in the bank, of which £70,000 is restricted grant funding for specific purposes, £256,000 is restricted for pre-paid services to be delivered, and £500,000 is a long term reserve as prescribed by the Charity Commission. The budget for the project is set out in paragraph 1.8 above.</p>
<p>2.2 Accounts</p>	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20 which show an income of £901,123 against expenditure of £879,020, resulting in a surplus of £22,103. The sum of £407,627 was carried forward at the end of the 2020/21 year.</p>
<p>2.3 Support over the past five years</p>	<p>2020/21 – £1,200 2019/20 – £1,100</p>

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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>* Discretionary and mandatory rate relief, concessionary rent and Service Level Agreement with the Council for delivery of arts and heritage services.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes *</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>
3.2 Assessment	<p>The value of the exhibitions and the chance for the users from Woking Mind to socialise, make friends and learn about an exhibition in a supportive environment is noted. In light of the Council's financial situation, it is recommended that no grant should be awarded towards the project. It should be noted that the Lightbox receives support from the Council for the delivery of arts and heritage services through a Service Level Agreement.</p>	

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