

Community and Wellbeing Committee
(Date of Meeting)

SPORTS AND LEISURE COUNCIL

Head of Service: Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected: (All Wards);
Urgent Decision? No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Appendices (attached): Appendix 1: Sports and Leisure Council Constitution

Summary

This report seeks to provide an overview of the work of the Sports and Leisure Council and makes a recommendation as to the future provision of the Sports and Leisure Council, and use of Council funding.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree that the Council's Sports and Leisure Council will be disbanded as of 31st March 2023**
- (2) Agree that from 31st March 2023, the funds used to support Sports and leisure grants will be retained by the Council**
- (3) Agree that the future spend of funds will be subject to the criteria as set out in 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 of the report**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To ensure the community sports and leisure grants are re-directed in order to support the priorities as set out in the Council's Health and Wellbeing strategy.

2 Background

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- 2.1 In 2018, the Council agreed the Epsom and Ewell Health & Wellbeing Strategy. The Council placed greater focus on those who are vulnerable and experiencing significant hardship and making the health and wellbeing of these residents a priority.
- 2.2 Since 2018, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been superseded by the Council's Annual Plan. This plan continues to reflect the needs of the most vulnerable, and those who have been disproportionately impacted by the Pandemic and most recently, the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.3 The Sports and Leisure Council (SLC) was formed by the Council in 1993 with the Council's Leisure Development Team being the main point of contact with the Council. This function was transferred to the Council's Community Development service following reorganisation in September 2021.
- 2.4 The constitution of the SLC consists of an honorary chair, the vice chair, secretary, and treasurer and any such officer the Sports & Leisure council may from time to time appoint.
- 2.5 The main purpose of the SLC was to work with the Council to determine the sports and leisure needs of the borough, disseminate information, encourage participation in sports and leisure, and to allocate grants to clubs and individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations. Please refer to Appendix 1
- 2.6 The annual contribution to the SLC by the Council is £3,400. The criteria for all grant applicants are that they must be an Epsom and Ewell resident, or that the grant funding must be used for the benefit of Epsom and Ewell residents
- 2.7 Prior to the Pandemic, the SLC would meet in person on 6-8 occasions per annum, along with an Annual General Meeting (AGM) every April/May. These meetings were held at the Town Hall and had the purpose of agreeing the grants being awarded, to consider any other sport and leisure initiatives in the borough and to agree its membership and constitution. These moved to virtual meetings over the course of the Pandemic.
- 2.8 The SLC has provided significant public service to sports and leisure within the borough for many years and has operated on an entirely voluntary basis.

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- 2.9 Whilst the SLC had been without a formal review since May 2017, the Chair confirmed that it has not experienced any significant changes in its remit/objectives prior to, or after this time. However, recently, the Council has under-taken a review of the allocation of funds by the SLC to determine whether they are being best used to support the Council's priorities, and to review the history of awards and process employed for distributing Council funding. At this point, there was some discussion about whether the SLC intended to carry on functioning

Performance and grant allocation/s:

- 2.10 The number of applications received over the course of the pandemic is naturally lower than in previous years, with 8 applications received in both 2020/2021, and again in 2021/2022.
- 2.11 However, the decline in applications is not simply attributable to the impact of the Covid-19, with the following being of note:
- In the 15-years from 2003/04 until 2017/18 the average number of applications received was 11.8 each year. The highest being 17.
 - In the 4-years from 2018/19 until 2021/2022 the average number of applications received was 7 per annum. The highest being 8.
- 2.12 Those sports/activities that have received the highest number of grants since 2008, have been swimming, athletics, and golf. In recent years, there has also been an increase in grant applications for tennis.
- 2.13 All grants have been for equipment, travel costs and Level 1 coaching courses as to promote progression.
- 2.14 The maximum award that can be paid to any one applicant is £700
- 2.15 It is noted that despite not receiving any Council funding for the 2-years over the course of the Pandemic, the SLC continue to have a relatively significant amount of grant funds remaining unallocated, and they have not been able to allocate funds in their entirety. This has primarily been due to under-spend year-on-year
- 2.16 The SLC also have a small pot of money via sponsorship. Sponsorship funds are derived from local businesses in support the Sports & Leisure Council awards. These awards have now ceased. The amount remaining as of March 2022 was £1,700. These funds would not be deemed Council funds, and it is understood the Council has no jurisdiction over spend
- 2.17 **As of 31st March 2022, the SLC had the following funds:**

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Opening balance 2021-2022: | £6,114 |
| Spend in 2021-2022: | £3,100 |
| Balance 31 st March 2022: | £3,014 |

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The balance of £3014 is comprised of:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sponsorship: | £1,701 (carry over to 22/23) |
| Council Grant Balance: | £1,313(carry over to 22/23) |

- 2.18 As a result of the current under-spend, and a review of the SLC, the Council has not yet made its £3,400 contribution for 2022/2023.
- 2.19 From 2003, until March 2022, the SLC have awarded circa £53,705 to improve opportunity and progression for residents of the borough

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The SLC has been a valuable asset to sport and leisure within the borough however the priorities as a Council since both its beginnings and its last review in May 2017, have changed. There is a need to review current spend to ensure the Councils resources are re-directed to towards having the greatest impact and targeting those who may benefit the most.
- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that the SLC is disbanded as of the end of this current financial year and the funding allocated each year towards the sports and leisure grants, be retained, and distributed by the Council.
- 3.3 The funds will be spent subject to the outcome of an Equality Impact Assessment. This will ensure funds are redistributed appropriately, and towards projects and initiatives that support the Councils priorities
- 3.4 Specifically, funds will be ring-fenced and used to develop sports and leisure projects/initiatives that support the Council's priorities in improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of those who are vulnerable and experiencing significant hardship in the borough.
- 3.5 In respect of governance the Council will set out its intended spend against these funds annually in the April of each year and will seek the scrutiny of both the Chair of Community and Wellbeing Committee and Chair of Health Liaison Panel in doing so.
- 3.6 All projects will be put forward by the Community Development Manager and must meet the criteria set out in 3.4 above in order to be considered. Funds are to be spent in each financial year, with outcomes being reported back to the respective Chairs.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

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- 4.2 It is prudent for the Council to subject arrangements that are in place for review periodically, to ensure they still serve the purpose and priorities the Council has agreed. Despite the unquestionable public service provided by the SLC, consideration of the process by which funding is distributed is justified.
- 4.3 Over the years of operation, there has become a tendency that those applying for grants appear to be from relatively small group, often by those who already are aware of the availability of such grants. As such, grants have been awarded to the same applicants/organisations on multiple occasions, and who may already have the means to access sport and activity in the borough.
- 4.4 There is no assessment/means test that accompanies applications, and as such there is little confidence that grants are getting to those residents who may benefit the most.
- 4.5 This has implications for an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of vulnerable residents, who are already at a disadvantage, not being able to access these funds. Consequently, the proposals set out in the recommendations are considered to have a positive effect on equality.
- 4.6 The Council wishes to address this inequality by diverting funds to projects and initiatives that target vulnerable communities.

4.7 Crime & Disorder

- 4.7.1 By diverting the funds to the development of projects and initiatives that target the most vulnerable in the borough, the Council will seek to have a positive impact on crime and disorder.

4.8 Safeguarding

- 4.8.1 All projects and initiatives utilising funding via the £3,400 would be subject to statutory safeguarding requirements where they involved children or vulnerable adults.

4.9 Dependencies

- 4.9.1 There are no identified dependencies within this report.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The cost to the Council of continuing to fund the SLC would be £3,400 per annum.
- 5.2 This annual contribution is already included in revenue budget for the Community Development Team, therefore, should the SLC continue there would be no new budgetary implication.

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- 5.3 The SLC would retain the remainder of the funds, which as of 31st August 2022, remained at £2,739. This will need to be allocated prior to 31st March 2023.
- 5.4 The remaining sponsorship funds should be given priority for allocation to ensure these are not remaining at year-end. If this is not possible, the SLC would need to agree with the sponsors how this can be spent.
- 5.5 Where allocation of Council funds is not possible, these funds will need to be returned to the Council in April 2023.

Section 151 Officer's comments: None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** Section 1 of Localism Act 2011 provides the Council the power to do anything that individuals may generally do. This gives the Council the power for the allocation of grants to be a council function.
- 6.3 Under section 1 of Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) a Council must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.
- 6.4 Under section 149 EA 2010 the Council has a public sector equality duty. The Council must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under EA 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c.) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.5 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (section 149 (7) EA 2010).
- 6.6 The public sector equality duty is a continuing duty and should be considered and reviewed as plans develop on future allocation of funds.

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7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- The Council's 4-year Corporate Plan and Annual Plan highlight the need to prioritise health and wellbeing inequalities in the borough by targeting the most vulnerable residents.
- The £3,400 per annum would be diverted to support, initiatives and projects that target vulnerable residents and promote opportunity.

7.2 **Service Plans:** The future of the SLC and the future granting of funds is not in the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** There are no known climate and environmental impacts of this recommendation

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

7.5 There are no sustainability policy & community safety implications

7.6 **Partnerships:**

8 Background papers

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports: None located

Other papers: Appendix 1 – The Sports and Leisure Constitution May 2017