

VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2023-24

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Financial support 2023-24 Appendix 2 – Voluntary Sector reports (TO FOLLOW)

Summary

The report considers the previous year's support provided to voluntary organisations, and asks the committee whether the funding arrangements should continue for 2023-2024

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider and confirm if the previous level of support given to the voluntary organisations should continue for 2023-2024**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To agree if the previous level of financial support to voluntary organisations, as set out in Appendix 1, should continue.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council provides support to a range of voluntary organisations in Epsom and Ewell. This support has been provided to help maintain and improve the quality of life for the borough's residents.

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- 2.2 The financial support the Council has previously provided to the voluntary and community organisations is set out in Appendix 1. These organisations provide support to some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough. They are also often the catalyst for mobilising community action and attracting, training, and deploying volunteers.
- 2.3 Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, the support the voluntary sector offered the borough's residents was invaluable. This support was offered directly to residents, and to the Council's Community Hub; the service set up to make provisions for those who were most vulnerable and shielding from Covid.
- 2.4 Despite the end of restrictions imposed by central government, the voluntary sector has continued to meet the needs of vulnerable resident's post-pandemic. Although the full impact of the pandemic is yet to be known, the committee is asked if it wishes to continue its support of this sector at the same level, and in line with previous years.
- 2.5 It is recognised that we find ourselves in unprecedented times and the cost-of-living crisis that will impact on many of the borough's residents; especially for those who are already experiencing significant hardship. Ceasing to deliver the financial support to the voluntary organisations, especially during this cost-of-living crisis, could result in vulnerable residents being placed at a further disadvantage and unable to access the support and advice they need. However, it should also be recognised that while some of the voluntary sector groups depend on the support of the Council to ensure their ability to support residents, others do benefit from significant levels of alternative funding. For example, Age Concern Epsom & Ewell has been the beneficiary of significant funding from bequests in recent years.
- 2.6 The Council will continue to network and build partnerships with the voluntary organisations and take a coordinated approach with regards to joint funding applications.
- 2.7 The Council currently supports the following organisations:
 - 2.7.1 Age Concern Epsom & Ewell (ACEE)
 - 2.7.2 Citizens Advice Bureau Epsom and Ewell (CAB)
 - 2.7.3 Central Surrey Voluntary Action (CSVA)
 - 2.7.4 RELATE Mid Surrey
 - 2.7.5 The Sunnybank Trust

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3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 A reduction in the financial support offered to the voluntary organisations could have a significant impact on the borough's residents in respect of the support they can access.

3.1.2 Any reduction in financial support would also disproportionately impact those who are already vulnerable, and for those who the cost-of-living crisis is having the greatest impact.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 The voluntary organisations play an important role within the borough, assisting the statutory services in supporting residents requiring professional interventions, and supporting Community Harm and Risk Management Meetings (CHaRMM)

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 Voluntary organisations offer frontline services, and direct support to residents. Voluntary organisations are well placed to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns

3.3.2 Voluntary organisations work with statutory services in reporting safeguarding concerns through the appropriate channels, and subject to the requirements of the Multi-agency Adult and Child Safeguarding hubs.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 The vulnerable residents of Epsom and Ewell were especially dependant on our voluntary organisations during the pandemic. This was in mobilising volunteers, in assisting with shopping and medical supplies, and in providing advice and emotional support to those in need.

3.4.2 As the full impact of the pandemic is yet to be known and continues to have a significant, negative impact on residents, the voluntary and community organisations can continue to provide vital assistance.

3.4.3 As we now experience an unprecedented increase in the cost-of-living, the borough's residents (especially those who are already vulnerable) will likely depend heavily on the support provided by this sector

3.5 Other

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3.5.1 None

4 Financial Implications:

- 4.1 Much of the work of the voluntary sector organisations involves substantially the same residents as those who interact with the Council on a regular basis. These residents may primarily be those who access the Council's services regarding Housing, and the Revenue and Benefits team.
- 4.2 The support the voluntary sector organisations provide to residents has both direct and indirect financial benefits to include, but not exhaustive of:
 - 4.2.1 Prevention of evictions and statutory homelessness by providing advice and support in reducing housing and energy related debts, and support in the repayment of Council Tax arrears
 - 4.2.2 Maximising benefits and additional income entitlements
 - 4.2.3 Providing direct resources to include Foodbank vouchers, energy payments, and other discretionary payments i.e., for transport or additional services
 - 4.2.4 Providing opportunities for accessing education, volunteering, and employment
 - 4.2.5 Securing external sources of funding opportunities.
 - 4.2.6 Increasing social impact in respect of reducing isolation, offering emotional support, gaining a sense of purpose, and belonging, and intervening to address issues as they emerge.
 - 4.2.7 Providing mental health/psychological interventions that can prevent a crisis that often, inadvertently, can result in financial difficulties.
- 4.3 Whilst this report cannot present fully the direct and indirect financial impact of the voluntary sector, their contribution is very valuable with their impacts provided in **Annex 2**
- 4.4 The Committee is asked if it proposes to continue to support the voluntary sector as set out in **Annex 1**
- 4.5 This proposed budgeted net amount for 2023/2024 is £209,340
- 4.6 Included within the proposed voluntary sector funding, are the following financial benefits:

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- 4.6.1 **Shared facilities:** This amounts to £20,524 for those voluntary organisations based at the Town Hall over the course of the next 12-months and is subsumed into the Notional Grant amount.
- 4.6.2 **Business rates:** Offices within the Town Hall which are rented, do not have separate rateable premises for the purposes of Business Rates. As a result, they do not currently have a Business Rate Liability within Epsom & Ewell. The Business rates for the whole of the Town Hall are paid in full by the Council
- 4.6.3 **Utility costs inclusive of water, electricity, and gas:** There has been no increase in the service charges for those organisations based at the Town Hall, with all costs subsumed into the Notional Grants.
- 4.6.4 Conversely, whilst the Council has been exposed to fluctuating energy costs, these have not been passed on to the voluntary sector. They have therefore benefited from financial stability and reduced subsequent pressures on service delivery.
- 4.7 **Parking charges:** The Council subsidises parking for those organisations based at the Town Hall. This discount is representing a saving of £3,120
- 4.8 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are included in the body of the report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council must enter licence and funding agreements in respect of notional and direct awards. The contract manager will review these agreements as required, and in ensuring the financial integrity of each organisation
- 5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** **None arising from the contents of this report.**

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Safe & Well: A place where people feel safe, secure, and lead healthy, fulfilling lives and Smart and Connected: building stronger communities
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** Providing support to the vulnerable residents as well as supporting the local voluntary sector are both included in this years' Service Plan. Support for voluntary organisations is expected to also feature in service plans for 2024/25
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None

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- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** The voluntary organisations play an important role within the borough assisting statutory services in supporting residents requiring professional interventions, via the multi-agency safeguarding requires, and in supporting other community safety arrangements as required.
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** Voluntary organisations comprise members of the "third sector" that support the local community through the delivery of services. The Council works in partnership with all the voluntary organisations identified in this report. The Council also leads in a Community Forum that is held 3 times per year and brings our voluntary sector organisations together.

7 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

Report entitled Voluntary Sector Grants and Funding 2022/23 reported to Community and Wellbeing Committee 18th January 2021.

Other papers:

- None