

## **VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2024-25**

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	Appendix 1 – Financial Support 2024/25 Appendix 2 – Community and Voluntary Sector annual impact reports

### **Summary**

This report considers the continued future support of voluntary organisations and sets out the proposed funding arrangements for 2024/25

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Approve the proposed support for voluntary organisations in 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.**

## **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.
- 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.

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- 2.3 Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, the support the voluntary sector offered the borough's residents was invaluable. Despite the end of restrictions imposed by central government, the voluntary sector has continued to meet the needs of vulnerable residents post-pandemic.
- 2.4 It is recognised that we find ourselves in unprecedented times and that the cost-of-living crisis is impacting on many of the borough's residents; especially for those who are already experiencing significant hardship.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 The Council will continue to network and build partnerships with the voluntary organisations and take a coordinated approach with regards to joint funding applications.
- 2.8 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

### **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 In the event the committee's decision is to withdraw funding a full EIA would require completion.

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3.1.3 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

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.

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- 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 The Committee is asked if it proposes to continue to support the voluntary sector as set out in Appendix 1
- 4.4 This proposed budgeted net amount for 2024/2025 is £214,189. Included within the proposed voluntary sector funding, are the following financial benefits:
  - 4.4.1 **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.
  - 4.4.2 **Business rates:** In previous years, rented offices within the Town Hall did not 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. In 2023/24 the business rate values for the voluntary organisations were appealed by external consultants on behalf of EEBC. The result is their occupied areas, under the licence agreements, are now subject to business rates and have their own rateable values. They can separately apply for a charitable business rate exemption which equates to up to 100% relief. In turn as the Council is no longer paying standard business rates over the whole building, as the voluntary organisations areas have been removed, the costs relating to business rates have been removed from the service charge (as shown in Appendix 1) which is why the notional service charge grant has reduced.

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4.4.3 **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.

4.4.4 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.

4.5 **Parking charges:** The Council subsidises parking for those organisations based at the Town Hall – the subsidy for 2024/25 is £17,500.

4.6 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

## 5 Legal Implications

5.1 The Council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. All grants will be made in accordance with the requirements of subsidy control legislation (if applicable).

5.2 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.

5.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** As stated above.

## 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

**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.

6.1 **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.

6.2 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None.

6.3 **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.

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- 6.4 **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 2 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 Funding 2023/24](#) reported to Community and Wellbeing Committee 17th January 2023.

### **Other papers:**

- None.