

VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2025-2026

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Report Author	Rachel Epton
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Financial Support 2025-2026 Appendix 2: Voluntary Sector Annual Impact Reports. Exempt Appendix 3: Revised Proposal for Funding Support 2025-2026

Summary

This report considers the continued support of voluntary sector organisations and sets out the proposed funding arrangements for 2025/2026.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Agree to the financial support of the voluntary sector organisations in 2025-2026 as detailed in:**
 - a) option 1 (section 3.3 of this report)**
 - or;**
 - b) option 2 (section 3.10 of this report)**
 - or;**
 - c) option 3 (section 3.13 of this report)**

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1 Reason for Recommendations

- 1.1 The Council has continued to provide financial support to those voluntary sector organisations as set out in section 2.2 of this report. This support is subject to committee approval each year.
- 1.2 As the Council faces significant financial pressures, the Council wishes to consider the options for the on-going support of these organisations and as such is asking the committee to agree to the proposal as set out in option 1 (section 3.3 of the report) or as set out in option 2 (section 3.10 of the report) or as set out in option 3 (section 3.13 of the report).

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 Council currently supports the following organisations:
 - Age Concern Epsom & Ewell (ACEE)
 - Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell (CAEE)
 - Central Surrey Voluntary Action (CSVA)
 - RELATE Mid & East Surrey
 - The Sunnybank Trust
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, the support the voluntary sector offered the borough's residents was invaluable, and they have continued to meet the needs of vulnerable residents who were disproportionately impacted by the effects of the pandemic.
- 2.5 The response of the voluntary sector to the recent cost-of-living crisis has also proved invaluable. This continues to impact many of the borough's residents; especially those who were already experiencing significant hardship. Both CAEE and ACEE have reported an increase of 25% and 22% respectively in the numbers of residents they are supporting.
- 2.6 CAEE have also recently supported the Council in distributing the UK Governments' Household Support Fund, offering residents facing hardship the opportunity to apply for financial support, and in doing so ensuring the Council meets the schemes requirements.

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- 2.7 The impact reports for each of the organisations supported by the Council are shown in Appendix 2.
- 2.8 Ceasing to provide financial support to the voluntary organisations, especially during the on-going 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. Such a decision may also increase demand on Council services.
- 2.9 While some of the voluntary sector organisations depend on the support of the Council to ensure their ability to support residents, others do benefit from significant levels of alternative funding.
- 2.10 For example, ACEE has been the beneficiary of significant funding from bequests in recent years. RELATE Mid & East Surrey also charges fees of between £50-£240 for their counselling and mediation services. This may be considered relevant when allocating funding for a further year, given the Council's own financial position.
- 2.11 During 2025/2026, the Council intends to relocate from its current office location on The Parade in Epsom, to a newly refurbished, modern and environmentally sustainable headquarters at 70 East Street.
- 2.12 Provision has been made for those voluntary sector partners who are currently tenants in the current Town Hall, to move with us to 70 East Street. The exception is the CSVA who have indicated that they no longer require office accommodation in the same way.
- 2.13 Discussions have been ongoing with ACEE, CAEE, and the Sunnybank Trust, all of whom are expected to move with the council to 70 East Street.
- 2.14 RELATE Mid & East Surrey occupy a building owned by the Council. They provide relationship counselling and mediation services to residents of Mid and East Surrey. They have services located in Reigate and Epsom Town Centre.

3 Proposals:

- 3.1 This report sets out three options regarding funding for specified voluntary organisations.
- 3.2 The option recommended by Officers is option 2 or option 3 as set out in section 3.10 and 3.13 of this report.
- 3.3 Option 1:**
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to approve the proposed (on-going) support for voluntary organisations in 2025-2026 as detailed in Appendix 1.

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- 3.5 The proposed budgeted net amount for 2025/2026 is £212,170. Included within the proposed voluntary sector funding, are the following financial benefits:
- Shared facilities: This amounts to £17,973 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.
 - Service charges: This is inclusive of water, electricity, and gas. There has been slight reduction in the cost of utilities and central management charges for those organisations based at the Town Hall, with all costs subsumed into the Notional Grant.
- 3.6 Parking charges: The Council subsidises parking for those organisations based at the Town Hall – the estimated subsidy for 2025-26 is £18,550. These charges are based on those forecasts for the next financial year and are due to be agreed at Environment Committee on 21st January 2025.
- 3.7 RELATE Mid & East Surrey benefit from a notional grant of £19,710 per annum. This equates to the value of a commercial rent. The Council receives an income of £1,294 from RELATE Mid & East Surrey which contributes towards the cost of cleaning.
- 3.8 The Council receives £3,420 from The Sunnybank Trust in rental income. They do not benefit from any other notional grants/awards aside from parking.
- 3.9 In respect of the Town Hall move as cited in points 2.12 to 2.14, the Council is unable to forecast and report on financial arrangements to be made in relation to the move to 70 East Street.
- 3.10 Option 2:**
- 3.11 The Committee is asked to approve the revised proposal for support of voluntary organisations as detailed under option 2, in Exempt Appendix 3.
- 3.12 Exempt Appendix 3 is only available to Committee Members and Council Officers.
- 3.13 Option 3:**
- 3.14 The Committee is asked to approve the revised proposal for support of voluntary organisations as detailed in option 3, in Exempt Appendix 3.
- 3.15 Option 3 incorporates the recommendation as detailed in option 2, alongside a further recommendation for the revision of financial support.
- 3.16 Exempt Appendix 3 is only available to Committee Members and Council Officers.

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4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1.1 Whilst acknowledged that withdrawing the financial support offered to the voluntary organisations could have an impact on the borough's residents in respect of the support they can access, this report is concerned with the provision of financial support to these organisations and not the provision of the service. As such there are no EIA considerations directly as a result of this report.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 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).

4.3 Safeguarding

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

4.3.2 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.

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 None.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 None

5 Financial Implications

5.1 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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- 5.2 The support the voluntary sector organisations provide to residents has both direct and indirect financial benefits to include, but not exhaustive of:
- 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
 - Maximising benefits and additional income entitlements
 - Providing direct resources to include Foodbank vouchers, energy payments, and other discretionary payments i.e., for transport or additional services.
 - Providing opportunities for accessing education, volunteering, and employment
 - Securing external sources of funding opportunities.
 - 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.
 - Providing mental health/psychological interventions that can prevent a crisis that often, inadvertently, can result in financial difficulties.

5.3 Section 151 Officer's comments: The Council faces its own financial pressures in dealing with projected deficits. These need to be taken into consideration when choosing the preferred option as to whether the Council can continue to provide financial support to the organisations in this report.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 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).
- 6.2 The Council must enter licences, funding agreements and other 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.
- 6.3 The grants set out within the body of this report are not subject to the Council's Contract Standing Orders. (Section 4 and 10 EEBC CSO).
- 6.4 **Legal Officer's comments:** As stated above.

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7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **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.

7.2 **Service Plans:** Providing support to the vulnerable residents as well as supporting the local voluntary sector are both included in this years' Service Plan.

The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** No implications for the purpose of this report.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** No implications for the purpose of this report.

7.5 **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 on a Community and Voluntary sector forum that is held annually and brings our voluntary sector organisations together.

8 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Report entitled Voluntary Sector Funding 2024/25 reported to Community and Wellbeing Committee 16th January 2024: <https://th-modgov19-01.eebc.gov.uk/documents/s30124/Voluntary%20Sector%20Funding%202024-25.pdf>

Other papers:

- None.