

Committee: Voluntary Support Grant Committee

Date: March 2024

Title: Voluntary Organisation Support Grant

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sutton – Communities

Report Author: Sue Hayden

Key decision:

Summary

1. Each year the district council opens its Voluntary Organisation Support Grant to registered charities who provide vital assistance to the residents of Uttlesford through the Council's corporate objectives. The organisations apply via an on-line application form, as well as supplying a copy of the organisation's most recent audited financial accounts, medium/long term business plan, copies of the organisation's equalities policy, constitution and safeguarding policy.

Recommendations

2. To consider all applications and allocate up to £310,000 grant funding as per the Council's Grants policy.

Financial Implications

3. There is a budget provision of £310,000 for 2024/25 to support organisations, in assisting the council to meet its corporate plan objectives.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Applications received from organisations applying to the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant for 2024/25.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Applications sort from voluntary sector organisations.
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Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Funding is open to all registered charities
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The Council has the powers to award grants to organisations using its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	Communities Team

Situation

6. This year, four organisations will be funded from an underspend in the UKSPF budget. These organisations meet both the criteria of the UKSPF and the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan. Uttlesford Buffy Bus, Dig-it Allotment, Hearing Help and Support 4 Sight have received funding from the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant in the past.
7. Four organisations were considered out of the scope of the grant.
8. Each organisation, to be considered under the Voluntary Organisation Support Grant, was invited to attend an individual virtual meeting with the Committee of the Cabinet, along with officer support, on 14 February 2024 to talk through their application and answer any questions.
9. A formal Committee of the Cabinet meeting will take place on 29 February, along with relevant officer support, to allocate the £310,000. The decisions will then be ratified at a Cabinet meeting, after which time, the organisations will be informed of the outcome.
10. Below sets out details of the use that will be made of any financial aid given by Uttlesford District Council by each organisation and how much money they are requesting for 2024/25.

11. Accuro

Any funding will be used to cover revenue funding for the operational project costs, including staff costs and core organisational costs of delivering Accuro's services in Uttlesford.

Any financial aid will be restricted to Accuro's services in Uttlesford

- Saturday Play Club – Saffron Walden
- U19s Projects – Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow
- School Holiday project – Uttlesford
- Adult Friendship Scheme – Saffron Walden
- Young adult Friendship scheme – Saffron Walden
- STRIDE – Great Dunmow
- Launch new services to meet new needs identified eg Accuro Allotments and Accuro Active

Financial support will enable Accuro to continue to deliver services, help make a real difference to the lives of local people with disability making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and play.

Amount requested up to £30,000

12. Action for Family Carers

Action for Family Carers run fortnightly Respite Club for Young Carers aged 8 to 16 from the Stansted Youth Centre and the Great Dunmow Youth Centre, Uttlesford. These provide Young Carers with:

- A break from caring in a safe environment
- The chance to take part fun activities
- An opportunity to meet with other Young Carers

Each Club runs in the evening during termtime and is led by an experienced Club Lead Worker, supported by a Club Night Assistant and volunteers. Young Carers get the chance to be children and have fun. They can take part in indoor and outdoor games, team building activities, healthy eating cookery sessions and arts and craft projects. Children can talk with a trusted staff member in a safe and confidential environment. In the school holidays they organise events such as Sports Days and outings to bowling, outdoor pursuits centre and the cinema.

The Dunmow Youth Centre has been out of action so both Clubs are currently being run in Stansted. This has had an impact on attendance, both in terms of lack of venues but also the difficulty of travelling from Dunmow to Stansted. It is hoped to have access to the Dunmow Youth Centre next year. In addition, funding from the National Lottery Community Fund has been awarded. The grant will not fund the Young Carers Respite Club but will enable the

employment of two Young Carer Workers in West Essex to work on a one-to-one basis with Young Carers across West Essex including Uttlesford. This will lead to an increase in the number of Young Carers attending the Clubs in Uttlesford since these staff will be working directly with schools to identify the Young Carers who need our support.

Amount requested £15,000

13. Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA)

Centre for Action Rape and Abuse is seeking a contribution towards the specialist counselling and therapeutic support provide for adults and young people from across the Uttlesford district who have been victims of sexual violence and/or child sexual abuse. CARA currently offers 14 one-to-one counselling sessions per week for adults and young people (aged 13-17) for clients from the Uttlesford area, including 10 sessions delivered face-to-face from premises in Great Dunmow and 4 sessions delivered remotely, by video link or phone. Funding to maintain their existing service and further increase the number of sessions they offer to enable them to keep pace with increasing demand for their counselling services in Uttlesford is being sought.

CARA provides one-to-one counselling and therapeutic support for adults and young people with a specialist sexual violence counsellor, usually over a period of 6-20 weeks, depending on the needs of the individual client. The counselling and therapeutic support provided helps victims to process what has happened to them, develop coping mechanisms to deal with the complex emotions and/or trauma reactions they often experience and ultimately supports them in being able to move forward with their lives.

Amount Requested £24,000

14. CraftAbility

The Centre's services are free to all users and transport to & from the Centre is provided through Uttlesford Community Travel to enable members to attend. Over half the Centre's annual costs (around £1,500 per month) are spent on hiring UCT's specially adapted minibuses & trained drivers. Funding is requested to support members accessing the centre.

Amount Requested £4,500

15. Uttlesford Citizen Advice

Uttlesford Citizen Advice are requesting £200,000 to cover core staff salary costs for 2024/25.

UDC funding is paramount to the survival and success of Uttlesford Citizens Advice. Reliable funding from UDC enables them to maintain a consistent core advice service, support the council by preventing or mitigating problems – particularly in connection with housing, benefits and debt issues, apply for and operate projects (that in turn off-set overheads whilst delivering extra services for residents), engage in the community, attend council led partnership meetings and coordinate with statutory and voluntary bodies and legal services.

1. Funds from UDC ensure UCA to have the staff necessary to manage a large volunteer resource and maintain our high quality of advice.

In addition to staff costs associated with advice provision, administrators and managers are paid to ensure that the service is run in a professional, safe manner. UCA are audited annually by the national body of Citizens Advice to assess leadership performance in Governance; Strategic Business Planning; Risk Management; Financial Management; People Management; Equality Leadership; Operation Performance Management; Partnership Working and Research and Campaigns.

In terms of quality of advice, funding allows UCA to have dedicated staff who review randomly selected cases on a monthly basis to benchmark client outcomes, case administration and reliability of scoring against national performance criteria. Financial and budgetary control and good governance of the Charity is overseen by ten Trustees, all volunteers drawn from the local community.

2. Funds from UDC ensure that UCA have a paid training resource.

As a volunteer-led organisation, it is understood that people use them as a springboard to get into or return to the workplace, however this means that they have an ongoing need to recruit and train new volunteer advisers. Over the last year UCA have recruited 13 new advisers (9 are currently volunteering) and one student intern, whilst providing ongoing training and development for the existing workforce. In common with other volunteer-led organisations, they are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers as the current economic climate means fewer people able and willing to give their time for free.

3. Funding from UDC enables UCA to apply for additional funding from other organisations to deliver specialist services.

As well as improving the range support available to residents, project funding can help offset core overheads. However, the time and effort required to pursue such opportunities must be taken into account to ensure balance is maintained between input and potential outcomes. Last year, UCA received project funding from:

Essex Community Foundation - ongoing funding to support their disability benefits service. Over the last 12 months their team advised 575 residents, supporting 246 benefit applications, 51 reconsiderations and 33 appeals. Over the last 12 months they have secured £1.48 million in additional income for clients.

Affordable Warm Solutions, Cadent and Energy Redress - to fund the Warm Homes Services: Last year this service supported 243 clients and achieved £92,742 in additional benefits, emergency fuel payments and grants for energy efficiency measures.

Macmillan Cancer Support - to fund a welfare benefits service for residents with cancer which started to operate in November 2022. Over the last year, this has supported 547 clients who have been newly diagnosed with cancer - helping them to access over £2.5 million in benefits, insurance payments, grants and other financial support.

NHS Community Hubs - one-off funding for 6 months to fund a member of staff to increase outreach provision. Over the last year the member of staff has supported 200 clients, most commonly offering support with benefit, money and housing issues. A portion of her work centred around helping families and individuals transition from being asylum seekers to having 'leave to remain'.

Trussell Trust - to fund two part time debt caseworkers for three years. In the last 6 months, this project has provided long term support to 68 clients, helping them manage long term debt issues and work towards a debt free life.

National Citizens Advice - A small one-off grant, which covers paid supervision to allow us to open to clients on Wednesdays this year.

Cost of Living Funding from Essex County Council - to temporality boost in funding to cover costs associated with increased demand for telephone work, debt specialist work and supervision.

Amount Requested £200,000

16. Uttlesford Community Action Network

The use of the grant funding made by UDC would enable the operational strategy to directly support local groups/partners and the communities it operates within, in the areas of pre-existing and emerging needs through the objectives it has laid out for the forthcoming year. UCAN intend to focus upon the specific areas and gaps in provision that the Covid 19 crisis continues to amplify and will continue to do so over the coming years.

Along with a range of emerging issues that this episode along with others such as the austerity/fuel crisis, digital exclusion, increasing social care needs have and will continue to create within the district. It cannot be underestimated the need for the work and the demands placed upon UCAN, which will only continue to become greater over the coming year, especially during the winter period. They are already seeing people and families reach crisis point which in turn has a knock-on effect of causing other social and health needs that require support. The sector and UCAN must be financially resilient and future proofed to be able to cope with the additional demands that are and will be made of it moving forward. UCAN believe that their current provision in the form of existing projects along with the new volunteering expectation will become more vital than ever before, but at the same time recognising the need to deliver more with less. UCAN operate in partnership and always try to identify areas of duplication to avoid wastage and coordinated effective delivery where it is most needed. UCAN will continue to play to its strengths by acting as the 'bringer together' of the right organisations, resources, approaches, responses and people/volunteers to tackle particular needs, in essence act as sector capacity builders.

Amount requested £80,000

17. Uttlesford Foodbank

For the first time Uttlesford Foodbank is asking for core funding to support its activities. Need for the Foodbank has risen exponentially since the pandemic. Alongside this the rise in the cost of living has meant donations have decreased and they are having to spend more money on food supplies than ever before. By Q3 of 23/24 £65,696 has been spent on food and fresh food vouchers for clients. Currently this can be accommodate with donations and by using COVID windfall money.

The previous director worked on a full-time basis but always maintained her volunteer status and not taken a salary. Replacing her has meant hiring staff. The current operations manager stepped into the role part time, and they have recruited an assistant manager. This year the Foodbank moved into a bigger warehouse to accommodate the growing demand. The money will cover the costs of the two main staff members and a contribution to its rent. This means that donations can be spent on food, which is what they are intended for and not overheads.

The breakdown is as follows:

Salary 1 25 hours per week = £23,000 including tax, NI, pension

Salary 2 20 hours per week = £16,000 including tax, NI, pension

Rent = looking for a contribution of £1000 a month in rent for the main warehouse in Saffron Walden.

This year Uttlesford Foodbank covered, salary 1 and the entire rent out of donated income, salary 2 is a new hire. Donations have decreased significantly this year. For the financial year 23/24 they are on track to receive 50% of the donations we received in 22/23.

Amount requested £51,000

18. East Herts Citizens Advice Service

Historically, Uttlesford District Council has recognised that some Uttlesford residents choose to seek advice in Bishop's Stortford and is financially supportive of the advice given by East Herts Citizens Advice Service. While the majority of clients are happy to receive advice by phone and digital, it is recognised that there are a significant minority who will still need face to face advice. Additionally, 1 in 10 clients require ongoing casework.

The annual cost of running the advice service across East Herts has increased and is predicted to be £311,669 in 2024/25, comprising salaries, volunteers, and premises costs. The increase is due to the award of cost of living pay rises to its staff, and increased back office and infrastructure costs. Funding from Uttlesford District Council will allow them to continue to advise Uttlesford residents by phone, email and face to face, and to offer ongoing casework where their case requires it. It will also contribute to community and partner engagement work including Contact Centres in community spaces and Community Access Points (including public access computers and free phones) in partner buildings as well as helping to continue Frontline.

Around 4.9% of clients who give a postcode live in Uttlesford. Client numbers for Uttlesford from April to September 2023 have reduced by around 15%, compared to the same period last year, despite funding from Uttlesford District Council being reduced by 50%. This has been achieved by limiting clients to one advice session, rather than offering ongoing casework, and EHCA covering some of the costs. They wish to continue to support Uttlesford residents living near their boundary and, in the words of one of their partners who was surveyed recently, to "join the dots across Herts and West Essex to mirror ICB and PCN s".

Residents continue to choose to get advice from EHCA, despite being over the border in Hertfordshire. With funding, they will be able to maintain this service at the current level, and with funding restored to the pre-2023/24 level, could offer casework in addition to one-off advice.

Amount requested £15,000

19. Home-Start Essex

Home-Start Essex is seeking £13,708 of financial aid to continue the delivery of its unique volunteer-led home visiting service in Uttlesford. The financial aid requested would fund 1:1 home visiting support for 11 families within a 12-month period. Based on the currently funded service delivery programme in Uttlesford, it is planned to deliver a range of individually tailored support services to meet the practical and emotional needs of up to 60 families in Uttlesford per annum.

Referrals for support are received from a wide range of sources including professionals from the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, social care and nurseries and through the Frontline platform. Over the past year several referrals have been received for isolated asylum-seeking families from the Uttlesford-based charity, TouchPoint Stansted. Families are also able to refer themselves in for support from HSE.

Ordinarily the support giving would take the following form: upon receipt of referral, one of Home-Start's experienced, locally based Family Support Coordinators (FSCs) completes an initial visit to families to assess their needs. Together, the FSC and family will devise a bespoke Family Support Plan, which will include the provision of a trained volunteer parent mentor who will visit the family within their home for 2 to 3 hours every week, if support is appropriate to the family's unmet needs.

Amount requested £13,708

20. St Clare West Essex Hospice Care Trust

UDC helped fund the establishment of a new rural hospice 'hub' to benefit residents of North Uttlesford in 2022/23. The hub was developed in response to a clear need to improve access to services to people living in the rural north of St Clare's catchment. Many residents struggle to reach the main hospice base in Hastingwood. This is a particular challenge for people dealing with the symptoms of their illness, including chronic pain and limited mobility. Rising

fuel costs, as well as logistical barriers, are precluding many from attending clinical appointments or accessing 'drop in', non-clinical care. A consultation process conducted in 2021 also highlighted the difficulties that healthcare partners in the district experience in providing adequate palliative care, due to a lack of training and resource.

The new Hub was officially launched in March 2023 and provides both clinical care, via scheduled appointments, and practical, social and emotional support on a 'drop in' basis, including counselling, practical advice on financial, legal and housing matters, bereavement support for families and education events and workshops to help address the common challenges faced by those with a terminal or life limiting illness. The latter provision was based at the Salvation Army building in Saffron Walden, but recently moved to UCAN's Jubilee Hub building which has a greater footfall and brings them closer to the people who are likely to need this service and creates a great opportunity to share expertise, skills and resources with other care providers operating in Uttlesford.

Clinical appointments take place every other Friday, at the Gold St GP surgery - also in SW. The main Hub is open every Thursday and beneficiary numbers have grown consistently over the course of the year. So far, they have supported over 260 people at the Hub, some of whom are regular visitors to Cafe Clare, the weekly cafe, which provides an opportunity for people made isolated by their conditions to meet others and gain a new network of peer support.

Because St Clare's are an established organisation, it can absorb many of the costs involved in running the Hub, including IT, facilities, HR, volunteer support etc. They have also been able to allocate existing staffing resource to the project, to keep costs achievable to ensure the sustainability of the new Hub. They are asking for help in funding the additional, non staffing costs associated with the project. These include project resources and equipment, (including medical supplies for clinical appointments at the Gold St surgery), therapy tools, volunteer training and support costs, catering costs and marketing and communication costs - to ensure everyone who can benefit knows about the services they are now providing. Costs will amount to £9,613 in 2024/25.

Amount requested £5,000

21. Uttlesford Community Travel

UCT has been operational for 26 years carrying many of its members and supporting Groups of Uttlesford and has undertaken hundreds of thousands of journeys. UCT are one of the most established forms of transport and with the demand for transport increasing for those who are rurally isolated, disabled and over 60 years of age within Uttlesford, the Grant received from Uttlesford District Council is a vital part

of the income which contributes to the cost of helping UCT provide services to the residents of Uttlesford. The age range of members using UCT services is 80 years and upwards who otherwise would not be able to travel.

UCT aim to replace one minibus every year with the vehicle replacement grant being a major contributor of allowing this to be a reality. With the increase mileage, it is important the vehicle replacement programme remains to avoid safety concerns, high maintenance charges and reliability issues preventing services from being delivered at its current demand.

Amount requested £40,500 plus replacement vehicle project £19,000* from different grant pot.

22. TouchPoint

Any funding received from UDC will be used towards revenue costs incurred in the delivery of Touchpoints community health and wellbeing and food share projects.

Currently TouchPoint is volunteer led and many of its projects are run by volunteers. It is recognised that TouchPoint has grown significantly over the last 2 years and have plans for further expansion. They need to engage part time staff to manage and deliver its projects to ensure they are sustainable, well run in line with TouchPoint's policies and strategy, meeting the real needs identified within their local communities.

The funding received will go towards

- Specialist/staff costs – including a TouchPoint Operations manager, project staff costs and essential support staff costs e.g. fundraising and communications.
- Volunteer Training and Expenses
- Project running costs including Fuel costs, consumables, insurances etc

Financial aid will be restricted to TouchPoint's community health and wellbeing and food share projects delivered in Uttlesford.

Amount Requested £25,000

23. Mind In West Essex

Any financial aid given to Mind in West Essex by the District Council to continue and further develop targeted outreach into communities within the Uttlesford District.

Over the past two years Mind in West Essex has been in the fortunate position to be able to designate £83,488 to Uttlesford specific projects £40,488 in 2021/22 and £43,000 in 2023/24. This has been in line with its ambition to reach further into the local communities. For the coming financial year (2024/25) Mind in West Essex have very little remaining resource that is not already designated for other purposes. This means that future of engagement work in Uttlesford after March 23 is currently uncertain.

£67,000 would enable the organisation to continue with all the Uttlesford outreach projects for a further year and also to expand the time spent at Carver Barracks to 2 days a week.

Amount Requested £67,000

Risk Analysis

24.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Allocation of grants does not secure their implementation	2 The organisations are well established and have a strong partnership	4	The grants will be subject to grant conditions in accordance with the Grants Policy.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.