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<b>Report title</b>	<b>Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) Grant Allocations</b>
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<b>Department</b>	Community Development, Community Services
<b>Exempt</b>	No

**Purpose of report:**  
**To Resolve**

**Synopsis of report:**

- 1) **To provide contextual background information on Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF), received by the Council in relation to Covid**
- 2) **To set out the proposed allocation of COMF in relation to the applications received for the one-off grant scheme.**

**Recommendation(s):**

- i) **Members approve the recommended successful applications to COMF; and**
- ii) **Members agree to ringfence the requested amount for organisations where further discussion or information is required, and that the decision to award a grant be delegated to the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Community Services Committee.**

**1. Context and background of report**

1.1 As part of the government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic local authorities across England were allocated sums from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). The initial purpose of this fund was to reduce the spread of coronavirus and support public health initiatives. Since the initial allocation of monies there has been greater flexibility as to what COMF can be used for, with initiatives supporting recovery from the pandemic being able to benefit from COMF monies. Any unspent COMF allocation must be returned to the government at the start of the 2024/2025 financial year.

1.2 Members agreed to set aside a sum of £50,000 from the COMF for the delivery of a post pandemic capacity building grant scheme. Maximum grants of up to £5,000 were available to voluntary, faith and community sector organisations based in, or operating within, Runnymede borough, and delivering services directly to residents.

- 1.3 The criteria of the grant scheme focused on how the funding application will contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents and development of communities, following the priority strands of the corporate Health and Wellbeing strategy and Empowering Communities strategy.
- 1.4 Applicants were asked to outline the impact the pandemic had, or continues to have on their activity or service, and the steps taken to recover said activity or service over the last two years.
- 1.5 Applicants were also asked to outline how the grant award will be used to further strengthen their organisation as part of their ongoing recovery, or how the grant funding will be used to build capacity in respect of the following:
- To increase participation and/or access to services as part of their continued recovery post pandemic
  - To establish or further develop/promote the sustainability of services that were key during/post pandemic including but not limited to:
    - Support with access to food/meals
    - Mental health support
    - Reducing loneliness and isolation
    - Providing information and advice
    - Providing neighbourhood/community support
    - Providing continued support to specific populations, disproportionately impacted (e.g. BAME population)
- 1.6 Applicants were asked to confirm how their project or service development will be sustainable in the future, given this is a one-off grant scheme and thus not a long-term source of funding.
- 1.7 A total of 11 applications were received for COMF, to the total value of £50,922. This report sets out the Officer's recommendations for approval, rejection and further conversations required for each of the applications received.
- 1.8 A panel met on Tuesday 3 October 2023 to review the applications and recommend to Community Services Committee the outcome of each application. The panel was made up of Councillor Chris Howorth, Chairman of Community Services Committee, Councillor Scott Lewis, Vice-Chairman of Community Services Committee and two officers from Community Services.

## **2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended**

### ***Applications Recommended for Approval***

- 2.1 Set out below are the panel's recommended grants for approval.

<b>Recipient Organisation</b>	<b>Summary of Project</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>
Home Start Runnymede and Woking	To set up Baby Bubble groups in Runnymede. Funding will cover room hire, two staff at each session, craft activities and refreshments	£4,950
The River Church, on behalf of the Forest Estate Community Hub	To support The Hub's operational costs, the costs of providing materials for the various clubs and a contribution to the manager's salary	£5,000
White Lodge	To increase access to services by disabled adults with complex physical and neurological disabilities. Services include adult physiotherapy and fitness sessions	£5,000
St Paul's Church	To extend the hours of the Food Kitchen and run cooking classes. To increase the number of activities for young people and promote the services available to older residents	£5,000
Cruse Bereavement Support	to recruit and train 2 new Bereavement Volunteers to provide on-going support, supervision and CPD for the volunteer team	£4,921
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£24,871</b>

2.2 The applications are supported as they all clearly articulate the impact that the pandemic has had on their service and/or service users. Applications were detailed and provided a breakdown of costs.

### ***Discounted Applications***

2.3 The panel recommends rejecting the following application due to the limited link between the project and COMF grant criteria. This project is considered a facility development project and unsuitable for this fund. However, officers will seek opportunities to engage with Egham Cricket Club to further understand the specific need and requirements of this project and whether there are other more suitable funds which can bring this forward.

<b>Recipient Organisation</b>	<b>Summary of Project</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>
Egham Cricket Club	To install power supply and construct floodlighting	£5,000

### ***Applications Requiring Further Information/Consideration***

2.4 Below are the panel recommended grants to ringfence for the organisations. The panel considered the best way to address applications which were felt to be viable

subject to amendments to their application. Releasing the funds to the organisations would be dependent on satisfactory clarification of project details, modifications regarding the project's focus, strengthened links with the pandemic recovery and/or details on project sustainability. Where applicable officers have considered that some elements of the following applications should not be supported and this is reflected in the proposed sums to be ring-fenced.

<b>Recipient Organisation</b>	<b>Summary of Project</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>
The Village Centre	Food and drink for 33 sessions for the Elderly Lunch Club. Hall hire and staff time.	£4,910
Chertsey and Addlestone Good Neighbours	A Cloud-base IT booking system for clients to use	£2,000
Addlestone Community Centre	1k for children's events and activities, 1k for older peoples' events and activities, 3k to extend the café offer	£5,000
Surrey Coalition of Disabled People	To set up a small technology skills group. To purchase 20 electronic devices	£5,000

- 2.5 The panel noted on the application form the increased use of services that the Village Centre provides, including their Community Fridge which was set up between lockdowns. The Baby Basics project was stated as also being busier than it was pre-pandemic. The panel felt that the grant request for the elderly lunch club did not provide strong enough links to the criteria for the COMF funding, but would like to work with the Village Centre to develop a case for the elements that fit the COMF funding criteria (e.g. Community Fridge and Baby Basics).
- 2.6 The panel noted on the application form the demand for the services from Chertsey and Addlestone Good Neighbours increased by 80% during the pandemic. Officers thought it would be beneficial to have further conversations with C&A GN to refer them to an IT Charity who can provide software advice and support, and also to see whether any in kind support can be offered. The panel agreed that officers should look to engage with this organisation on software options and see whether other areas of development may be more suitable for this grant.
- 2.7 Concerns were raised about Addlestone Community Centre's capacity to deliver youth and older people's services and their ability to extend their café offer. The panel recommends ringfencing £1,000 to see whether any support can be provided for the Centre's Men in Sheds project which has a stronger link to pandemic recovery and is better suited to the COMF funding criteria. The panel recommends ringfencing £1,000 to discuss with Addlestone Community Centre their plans regarding events/activities for young people and the safeguards in place. The panel recommends rejecting the £3,000 request for paid assistance for the café to extend the opening hours on the basis that there is not a strong link to pandemic recovery within this specific element of the Centre's application.

2.8 The panel noted the importance of supporting those who are digitally excluded with digital poverty as an impact of COVID. However, the panel was concerned whether the grant represented good value for money in supporting 20 individuals. It is recommended that £5,000 should be ring-fenced and officers be instructed to engage with SCDP to consider how training could be funded and the possibility of maximising the reach of this project by utilising community venues across the borough.

2.9 The panel recommended that Officers commence engagement with each organisation and are given delegated authority to issue the grants up to the maximum amount requested, upon agreement as to how the proposed project should move forward, particularly around its focus and link to pandemic recovery and project sustainability.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

3.1 The approval of panel-recommended successful applications will support the themes of the Council's Corporate Business Plan, specifically the themes of Empowering Communities and Health and Wellbeing, and their associated strategies due to the successful applications strong link to community-led pandemic recovery.

### **4 Resource implications/Value for Money (where applicable)**

4.1 The funding identified for this grant scheme is non-recurrent funding received from central government via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, received in relation to the Covid pandemic.

4.2 Therefore, whilst funding is identified to deliver the grant scheme, it is important to recognise that this is a scheme that will not be repeated and therefore, all applicants had been asked in their application how they will ensure the sustainability of any project, without further funding from the Council.

4.3 Any COMF monies unspent by the Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, will be required to be returned to central government.

### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 It is important that grant monies be allocated following the correct criteria; this will avoid the Council being potentially challenged and having to reimburse government money when it has already been allocated and spent by the various projects.

### **6. Equality implications**

6.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b) advance equality of opportunity
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

6.2 We should at all times act in a way that is non-discriminatory through our policies and procedures and interactions with people.

- 6.3 Whilst this report itself has no direct impact on equalities the projects recommended for approval do. A number of these projects are focussed on particular demographics who have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the pandemic and as such the main aim of these projects is to combat this inequality through community-led measures and initiatives.
- 6.4 If the panel recommendations are not approved by Community Services Committee it is possible that this could result in negative equality implications due to the lack of financial support to take forward some of these projects.
- 6.5 An Equalities Screening Assessment has been undertaken, reviewed by the Equalities Group and is attached at Appendix 'A.'

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 There are no environmental, sustainability or biodiversity implications that arise directly from this report.

## **8. Timetable for Implementation**

- 8.1 Should the recommendations be approved officers will begin to process the successful applications and distribute memorandums of understanding (MOU) to the successful applicants. Grant monies will then be distributed upon return of these MOUs.
- 8.2 Where it has been recommended that sums be ring-fenced for specific purposes officers will seek the earliest opportunity to engage with these organisations and consider how these applications could be brought forward in a manner that is considered satisfactory against the criteria of the COMF grant scheme. Should these applications be taken forward officers will use delegated authority to award the grant sums to these applicants.
- 8.3 Should any of the money assigned to these grant scheme remain unspent the Corporate Head of Community Services will consider other viable uses of the money against the wider-purposes of COMF and will seek to allocate any underspend prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 deadline.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1 The recommendations on the applications to the COMF grant scheme outlined in the report have been proposed by the panel following the review of applications.
- 9.2 Awarding these grants will enable community organisations within the borough to address some of the challenges and inequalities that have emerged or been increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **10. Background papers**

None

## **11. Appendices**

Appendix A Equalities Screening Assessment