

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Community Grants

Panel

held on Wednesday, 16 February
2022 at 9.30 am in 135 Eastern
Avenue, Milton Park, Milton,
Abingdon, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: George Levy (Chair), Peter Dragonetti (as substitute for Jo Robb), Kate Gregory, Victoria Haval, Kellie Hinton, Lynn Lloyd, and Andrea Warren
Officers: Jayne Bolton (Infrastructure and Development Manager), Michael Flowers (Democratic Services Officer), Cheryl Reeves (Community Enablement Team Leader), and Suzi Wild (Volunteering Development Officer)

Remote attendance:

Officers: Harry-Barrington Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes) and Bertie Smith (Broadcasting Officer)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Axel Macdonald, Jo Robb, and Ian Snowdon.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18th February 2020 as a correct record and agree that the chair signs them as such.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The chair ran through housekeeping arrangements appropriate to an in-person meeting and explained the structure the meeting would use to operate.

5 Public participation

A list showing members of the public who had registered to speak had been sent to the committee prior to the meeting.

6 South Revenue Grant Scheme - 2022-2024

The panel considered the applications for the South Oxfordshire District Council Revenue Grant Scheme 2022-2024 and the scoring recommendations detailed in the report. The panel agreed to first note all applications which had a speaker in attendance, and then note all remaining applications afterwards.¹ Following the conclusion of all applications, the panel would then work, with the support of officers, to agree a final scoring and award amount recommendation.

Nomad Youth and Community Project

Sarah Lane and Tim Prior spoke in support of the application.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Nomad Youth and Community Project.

Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice Bureau

RESOLVED: to note the application of Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice Bureau.

Millstream Day Centre

RESOLVED: to note the application of Millstream Day Centre.

Oxfordshire Play Association

Martin Gillett spoke in support of the application.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Oxfordshire Play Association.

Style Acre

Chris Ingram spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the speaker how many staff Style Acre employed and whether they were paid or voluntary. The speaker explained that the organisation employed three hundred and fifty staff across Oxfordshire. The speaker also confirmed that they were contracted by Oxfordshire County Council and most of their staff were support workers who supported registered services.

An additional question followed, seeking information on what activities were funded in Chinnor and Thame. Mr Ingram clarified that support services were currently provided in Thame and there was an outreach service which supported people depending on their differing needs. The speaker also confirmed that the supported living service was funded through both direct payment and from Oxfordshire County Council.

¹ For the purposes of the minuting of the meeting, applications are detailed in the order in which they appeared in the report.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Style Acre.

South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance

James Plunket spoke in support of the application.

As part of the speaker's presentation, the panel received an update to the application in which the applicant informed members that they were seeking a new requested grant of £150,000 in order to deliver their services without the video training programme and link to the cookery school. Their new requested funding amount therefore sought to take the programme through the schools, community larders, and other partners across the district but without the video and cookery school elements.

The panel noted that the organisation had made an application for both the revenue and capital grant schemes and asked the speaker if one project could go ahead without the other. The speaker explained that they could, and that funding from both schemes would enable them to deliver a greater and more versatile service with funding from both schemes. The speaker however explained that if only one source of funding was secured, that they could provide services but would have less flexibility in achieving their aims.

In response to a second question on the value for money from using an ex-cookery school director as a chef, the speaker explained that they were employing the chef on a reduced rate due to the employee willing to take a lower wage in order to support a charity. In addition, a follow-up question of clarification was asked to the speaker to confirm the amount of money the organisation was requesting from the revenue grant scheme. The speaker responded by confirming that they were now requesting £150,000 rather than their initial £250,000 ask.

RESOLVED: to note the application of South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance.

My Life My Choice

In response to a question from the panel on information about the organisation, officers provided a summary of the services offered by the organisation.

RESOLVED: to note the application of My Life My Choice.

Didcot Train Inspiring Young People

Brian McNamee spoke in support of the application.

The panel requested information on the number of staff employed by the organisation. The speaker answered that they had five staff who were full time equivalent and had back-office volunteers. The total staff of the organisation was therefore approximately eleven to thirteen paid and volunteer staff at any one time. In addition, the panel asked what areas the people they supported were from. The response to this secondary question was that Didcot and its neighbouring communities were the main areas in which the people they supported were from.

A second question was then posed, asking if there were any other organisations offering the same service in the area. The response to this question explained that some of their former staff had gone on to work with the South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance, but this was not a duplication of charity models.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Didcot Train Inspiring Young People.

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Mark Upton spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked whether The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB) engaged with other organisations to support enabling visually disabled people attending other services offered by different organisations. The response from the speaker was that they wanted to work with other local charities and organisations to help achieve this should they be willing to engage with OAB. The speaker expressed his view that it could be daunting for organisations who do not have prior experience with those with visual disabilities to help support them, and therefore they wanted to support the expansion of available services offered by charities in South Oxfordshire which could support those with visual disabilities.

In response to an additional question on how OAB had raised its brand awareness across the district, the speaker explained that some were referred from the eye hospital and also by the county council's visual impairment team. The speaker expressed optimism that the project they had sought funding for would help grow awareness for the charity.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Oxfordshire Association of the Blind.

Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre

Caroline Wade spoke in support of the application.

A question by the panel was raised on the number of volunteers and also on staff retention levels. The response to this question was that they had seven staff at the centre with a further four in the offices helping clients daily. One of the staff also offered English lessons to a foreign client. In regard to retention levels, the speaker explained that there was a difficulty with this, as changing childcare needs impacted the ability for volunteers to offer their time.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre.

The Maple Tree

Jane Lightfoot spoke in support of the application.

The speaker was asked for clarification on the district reach of the organisation. The speaker responded that their premises were in Wheatley, but they based their reach on the families who attended their events and where they resided. The speaker added that they lacked the capacity to visit a lot of the villages regularly, but they had families registering to attend the centre from numerous areas in the district.

The panel also sought information about remote services offered for new parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and whether this has resulted in any permanent changes. The response from the speaker was that they had conducted partnerships with Florence Park and Botley centres and held weekly events via Zoom which had over seventy mother and babies registering to attend. The speaker added that they

were considering this as an option for future events, but any expansion would need to be considered due to the Maple Tree being a small charity.

The panel asked a final question on whether the services offered had a fee. The speaker explained that there was a £2.50 voluntary fee per session, but they considered it open access as the fee was not mandatory.

RESOLVED: to note the application of The Maple Tree.

Chiltern Centre Ltd

The panel noted some confusion on the scoring criteria for district reach as they felt there was some discrepancy between applications on area coverage. It was agreed that clarification on this would be provided when members and officers worked out the final scoring and award amounts.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Chiltern Centre Ltd.

Riverside Counselling Service

Hilary Arthur and Amanda Collins spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the speakers whether they considered themselves to share a similarity with Abingdon Bridge. The speakers responded that their work was focused on Berinsfield, Henley, and Wallingford, but that some of their former team had subsequently worked with Abingdon Bridge which they considered to be a demonstration of positive crossover benefits for both organisations.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Riverside Counselling Service.

The Berin Centre

Laura Harte spoke in support of the application.

The panel sought clarification on the relationship and difference in activities with Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre. The speaker responded that they had recently distributed a leaflet which made clear the difference between the two organisations. While it was within walking distance to one another, the Berin Centre was described as more of an activity hub which supported early year activity programme and invited other organisations in to provide services.

A secondary pairing of questions then followed and asked how many staff and volunteers were employed by the Berin Centre and also on how they have sought to build relations with Berinsfield and Dorchester. The response from the speaker was that they had three staff, and four volunteers. They were also looking to expand in the coming year. In relation to growing relations with other communities, the speaker explained that they provided a welcoming environment for people from different communities and as people initially used services provided by the Berin Centre, they then enjoyed their experience and used more services provided that were on offer by the organisation.

RESOLVED: to note the application of the Berin Centre,

Makespace Oxford

A question was posed to officers on whether they knew how many buildings were currently being dealt with, and how many were currently in use. Officers indicated that they did not have the information to hand, but it could be provided following the conclusion on the public meeting but before a final scoring had been completed.

RESOLVED: to note the application of the Berin Centre.

The Chinnor Village Centre

RESOLVED: to note the application of The Chinnor Village Centre.

Community First Oxfordshire

RESOLVED: to note the application of Community First Oxfordshire.

Earth Trust

Ian Nutt spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the speaker if they could provide more information on the green spaces that the Earth Trust currently supported. The speaker responded that alongside the Wittenham Clumps and its surrounding green space, that they also supported other locations including Broad Arboretum, Neptune Wood. Additionally, the speaker added that approximately every two weeks they were receiving requests to take on the management and conservation of other green spaces of varying scales which they currently were having to decline.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Earth Trust.

The Thomley Hall Centre Limited

Ewan Shinton spoke in support of the application.

The speaker was asked whether they were a limited company to which the speaker responded that they were a charity limited by guarantee. Additionally, the panel asked whether they currently supported those with visual impairments. The speaker responded that they do not discriminate against those with sight issues, and that while their facilities were not designed for those with visual impairment, they would be willing to accommodate individual needs and try to provide support if someone requested it.

RESOLVED: to note the application of The Thomley Hall Centre.

Sue Ryder Palliative Care Hub South Oxfordshire

The panel requested clarification from officers on where the care hub was located. The officers responded that this was in Wallingford, with a member adding that there were two beds, which had been difficult to gain.

The panel commented that they wanted to consider the direct community benefit and inclusion score further. The officer's response in the report had stated that the organisation supported up to fifty residents 'which appears to include

vulnerable/priority groups', however the panel expressed the view that those in palliative care should be considered a priority care group.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Sue Ryder Palliative Care South Oxfordshire.

Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire

The panel asked officers whether they could comment on the number of staff, areas currently covered, and future areas they would like to expand to. The officer responded that they did not have this information to hand but could provide information after the public meeting had closed and before final scores were decided.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire.

Be Free Young Carers

RESOLVED: to note the application of Be Free Young Carers.

River Thame Conservation Trust

Nigel Davenport spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked where the income for the River Thame Conservation Trust came from currently. The speaker responded that the two biggest funding received came from the environment agency and from Thames Water. In response to a further question from the panel seeking clarification on the type of working relationship the River Thame Conservation Trust had with Thames Water, the speaker responded by describing the relationship as a strong working relationship where they also acted as a 'critical friend' to Thames Water. The speaker further commented and added that strong relationship enabled them to provide advice and recommendations on issues impacting communities such as raw sewage entering the river.

RESOLVED: to note the application of River Thame Conservation Trust.

The Abingdon Bridge

Gary Hibbins spoke in support of the application.

The panel requested the speaker to provide information on the current length of the waiting list for Abingdon Bridge. The speaker explained that they had a current six month waiting list and other organisations also had waiting lists which were longer in length.

The panel followed with two further questions on whether Abingdon Bridge worked with Riverside Counselling Service currently and also on the number of staff that Abingdon Bridge employed. The speaker responded that they welcomed the opportunity to have conversations with Riverside for future collaboration and that Abingdon Bridge had an existing track record of working with other organisations. Additionally, the speaker clarified that they had a board of trustees and youth ambassadors, and that they had fourteen staff members and twenty active volunteers.

RESOLVED: to note the application of The Abingdon Bridge.

Thame Players Theatre Company

RESOLVED: to note the application of Thame Players Theatre Company.

Wild Oxfordshire

Roselle Chapman spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the speaker for clarification of why £1 had been requested for fundraising and income diversification for the 2023/24 financial year. The speaker explained that they did not have the reason available as they would need to speak to their colleague for the answer which they offered to send the panel after the public meeting concluded.

RESOLVED: to note the application of Wild Oxfordshire.

Following the conclusion of all applications submitted for the revenue grant scheme, a motion moved and seconded was declared carried on being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: To agree for further discussion to take place between officers and members, and for a final recommendation to be presented at the next meeting of the Community Grants Panel.

The meeting closed at 12.34 pm