



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

**REPORT TO:** Grants Advisory Committee

30 October 2020

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER:** Cllr John Williams

**LEAD OFFICER:** Jeff Membery

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## **Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic 2020 on recipients of the Service Support Grants (SSGs). Paper 3.**

### **Executive Summary**

1. Since the onset of the Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, voluntary organisations have been impacted both negatively and positively, initially attracting greater volunteer interest and uptake but also in many instances this has been tempered by increased demand for (advice) services with negative impacts on fund raising opportunities.
2. This paper explores the impact of the pandemic on the recipients of our Service Support Grants.
3. Exploring the impacts will enable committee members to more accurately determine budget allocation in the short to medium term.

### **Key Decision**

1. No

### **Recommendations**

2. The Grants Advisory Committee is asked to note the content of the report and give consideration to additional and future funding to the Service Support Grant scheme.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

3. Budgets were agreed for the financial year 2020-2021 long before to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, based on historical performance/budget allocation. However, since the pandemic, these organisations have had to adjust their services to reflect the changing nature of the environment, moving from physical face to face appointments and services to remote support. Increasingly the impacts of Covid on personal finances, jobs and housing stability, and mental health begin to take their toll. Budgets

may need to be adjusted to provide greater support to those organisations on the frontline supporting residents in this time of crisis.

## Details

4. The impact of the pandemic has been varied on the Grant recipients and this is largely dependent on the service provided and other sources of funding they receive.
5. According to CCVS, the bigger charities who are largely reliant on fund-raising activities and charity shop income have been impacted more in terms of income streams.
6. On the whole there has been a greater financial burden for all schemes, relating to increased demand (particularly for advice services), additional cleaning, PPE equipment, ongoing overheads.
7. All schemes have had to change the way they deliver their services as many offered face to face advice or activities.
8. To adapt, organisations switched to telephone and zoom based appointments which has overall been successful. For example, CAB have increased the number of clients receiving advice in this manner. However, the disability charities have reported that this has discriminated against many of their clients who fall into the demographic least likely to have or use digital technology.
9. Advice charities are seeing a sharp rise in issues relating to benefits and tax credits, universal credit, redundancy, personal independence payments and employment support allowance (see appendix 1). They are expecting demand to continue to increase as the DWP have now released the appeals process which had been on hold and as more families suffer financial hardship relating to furloughing and job losses.
10. The community transport schemes have seen demand drop off considerably. One scheme lost 80% of its drivers (aged over 70) but have successfully managed to recruit a team of new younger drivers. They run 3 mini-buses which they have been unable to use but the service and maintenance costs remain the same. Additionally, some funding sources reimburse these schemes by mileage undertaken, as a result they have seen a huge reduction in their income. Essential trips to medical appointments and for shopping continued throughout lockdown and beyond and they are beginning to see a steady increase in demand from their clients again. Survival of these schemes over the next 12 months will be critical.
11. Some SC organisations were eligible for rate relief but this affected few as most of the charities are registered outside of SC so difficult to ascertain if they were successful from their own Councils.
12. Historically the budget allocated for funding the Service Support Grants has remained static for many years except for annual inflationary uplifts.

## Options

The Grants Advisory Committee could make any of the following recommendations to the Lead Member for Finance for a decision:

1. It is recommended that GAC note the content of the report, requesting further financial or other information from grant recipients if necessary.
2. It is also recommended that GAC give consideration to whether this Council is in a position to provide additional financial support to organisations currently in receipt of

SSG grants to March 2022 given the impacts of the Covid pandemic on service delivery.

3. It is further recommended that GAC give consideration to the budget for SSG from April 2022-March 2025.

## **Implications**

13. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

### **Financial**

14. Additional financial resource may be required dependent on the decision made by committee.

### **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

#### **A modern and caring Council**

Ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents: the mobile warden schemes promote a good quality of life for vulnerable residents, assisting directly in supporting independent living, addressing social isolation and loneliness and a wrap around service, connecting residents to other sources of help and advice within the community.

### **Appendices**

None

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