



Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee - 4 March 2024
 Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing
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Report Summary	
Report Title	Review of Grant Funding Arrangements
Purpose of Report	To review the range and impact of regular council funding (through Service Level Agreements (SLA's) supporting charities and community groups.
Recommendations	<p>That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the current range of charities supported by the Council through Service Level Agreement/ Grant Allocations; ii. the impact of funding charities for the residents of Newark and Sherwood (section 1.6-1.12); iii. the move to modernise and standardise the agreements currently in place with charities (section 2.3); b) the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee recommends to Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the move to a rolling three-year grant allocation to provide charities with confidence and stability in their funding (section 2.4-2.5); and ii. a 10% inflationary uplift is applied to the current SLA values with Citizens Advice, HomeStart, Newark and Sherwood CVS and The Furniture Project, with a 3% increase in the subsequent years.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Policy & Performance Improvement Committee has requested a review of the impact of Council grant funding. This report sets out a review of key Service Level Agreements the Council holds with charities and not-for-profit groups through a regular annual payment. The scope of this review does not include one off grants through the Community Grant Scheme (GF) or Community Chest (HRA) or those grants administered by the Council on behalf of others for example, flood relief or household support grants.

1.2 The Councils Vision, as set out in the 2023-27 Community Plan states:

“The ethos of Newark and Sherwood District Council is ‘Serving People, Improving Lives’... We exist for the benefit of others and we are accountable for making things better. We accept this responsibility and recognise that our Community Plan can only be achieved by working in partnership with others and at a variety of different levels – sometimes street based, sometimes regionally, nationally and internationally...”

1.3 It is in this ethos of partnership, that we recognise that at times others (charities, voluntary bodies or community groups) may be best placed to deliver services on behalf of the Council. This may be because they have the experience or infrastructure to deliver an economically advantageous service, or that they have a specific expertise or represent an independent trusted voice in the community with strong relationships and reputations already in place.

1.4 To support the success of these groups and to help build a wide and resilient network and infrastructure of support for the residents of Newark & Sherwood, the Council has agreements in place to support a number of charities. These include:

Body	Services provided under agreement	Funding/Annum
Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark	The Council supports the core running costs for Citizens Advice including discounted desks at Castle House and a payroll function.	£68,330
Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark	Utilising funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant and budget from Housing Services, the provision of specialist debt services, welfare benefits advice and engagement with hard-to-reach tenants to support tenancy sustainability and prevent homelessness.	£90,000
Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark	An additional commission in 2023-24 under the Council’s cost-of-living action plan to deliver an outreach service to residents across the district at community hubs, food clubs etc.	£40,000 (one year only)
Home Start Newark & Sherwood	The provision of a core volunteer home visiting support programme to families on a weekly basis.	£19,060
Live and Local	A contribution to the provision of a programme of arts, music and cultural events through ‘Live & Local’ (a not-for-profit arts organisation working with a network of voluntary groups) directly in local communities.	£5,400
Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union	Funding to deliver a dedicated Newark & Sherwood resource providing savings and borrowing services.	£20,000

Newark & Sherwood Community Hub	Provision of a community engagement and play leadership service programme for all sections of the community who require support including through the delivery of services at Mill Gate Community Centre.	£12,000
Newark & Sherwood CVS	The provision of a coordination service for volunteer opportunities across the district.	£11,260
The Furniture Project	An affordable furniture provision and moving service to all residents with priority given to those experiencing distress and hardship e.g: homelessness, domestic violence, fire/flood victims, or those returning into the community from institutions, prison or hospitals.	£10,000

1.5 In considering the Service Level Agreements currently in place, it is right and proper to review the value and impact that these deliver for the Council and residents, to determine if funding should be continued. The following sections demonstrate the impact assessed through each SLA.

1.6 **Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark**

1.6.1 Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark is a long established and trusted partner delivering a range of front-line services to our residents. The Council supports Citizens Advice through grant funding and in return can evidence direct impact for our residents. The Council supports Citizens Advice through a 'core grant' and funding for specific projects such as the cost-of-living project.

1.6.2 The core grant supports offices in Newark and Ollerton to open for two days a week with a dedicated Citizen Advice Adviceline five days a week. The advice service helps people to resolve their problems and advisors are equipped to deal with a wide range of issues including:

- Undertaking a comprehensive benefits check (to include the councils priority focus on council tax reduction), exploring the range of available state entitlements
- Advice and assistance with benefit application completion
- Support with challenging benefit decisions
- Identification and assessment of eligibility for grants and other one-off support
- Assistance with grant applications as appropriate
- Debt, budgeting, and household expenditure/cost issues
- Housing issues
- Employment issues
- Relationship issues
- Immigration issues
- Community care provision issues
- Mental healthcare provision issues

1.6.3 Citizens advice are set to deliver the following outputs annually:

Outturn	Target
Number of clients seen per year	5,000
Number of problems dealt with per year	16,000
Income Maximisation per year (Benefit Claims)	£2,000,000.00
Debt Handled per year	£7,000,000.00
Number of volunteers recruited and trained per year	8
Cost-of-Living - total number of people supported	150

1.6.4 Outputs are managed on a quarterly basis through SLA performance meetings however, the outcomes for individuals and households are better demonstrated through individual case studies which show the true impact of the work. One such example is Paula* (*not their real name).

1.6.5 *Paula came to Citizens Advice in a very distressed state not knowing where to start with her problems. She had recently split with her husband and had no money, fearing she would lose her home. CA supported Paula with a number of issues including liaising with the Local Authority to have her tenancy amended from a joint tenancy; helped her claim Universal Credit; completed her Personal Independence Payment (PIP) form; Universal Credit capability to work questionnaire and supported her to access cost of living support payments. They also advised on her future state pension and pension credit payments. As Paula was struggling to buy food, she was referred to the food bank. Citizens Advice could see Paula had poor mobility so helped her apply for a blue badge. Paula was successful in both her PIP and UC applications. She received a one-off payment of £188 and extra monthly payments of £721 or £8,652 a year additional income. Paula was incredibly grateful for the help she received and she said she would never have coped with sorting her issues out alone.*

1.6.6 In 2023/24, Citizens Advice is delivering a further project under the Cost-of-Living action plan to specifically target those households who may be unable to access support during core working hours i.e. households who may work or those who may be unable to travel for support. Citizens Advice is therefore offering services outside core hours and at local community hubs including food banks and community centres.

1.6.7 It is **recommended** that the Council continues to fund this service level agreement.

1.7 Home Start Newark

1.7.1 Home Start Newark provides vital support to local families living predominantly in Newark and more recently in Ollerton, Boughton and Bilsthorpe. Unlike many other services, Home-Start provides ongoing support for up to a year with weekly sessions between families and a matched volunteer. Three main services are available – home visits, a family group that meets twice per week and supports families to come together and a ‘Step Up for School’ which is embedded across both offers and empowers parents to support their child’s learning and development.

- 1.7.2 Working with families for up to a year, with weekly visits, allows trust to be built up between volunteers and families and allows families to sustain and embed positive changes through a supportive and consistent framework.
- 1.7.3 In 2022/23 Home-Start Newark received 52 referrals which, alongside existing caseload led to 74 local families and 150 children being supported. In 2023/24 so far, data suggests an increase of over 50% in referrals to the service.
- 1.7.4 As with Citizens Advice, the full value of service outcomes can be seen through real life case studies. One such case study is Julie* (*not their real name).

Julie moved to the area a few years ago in order to access more affordable accommodation. When she arrived in the area, she met her partner and went on to have a child with additional health needs. Unfortunately, Julie became a victim of domestic abuse with her partner often holding her hostage in the home. Eventually she was able to flee back to her family for a while in order for the relationship to dissolve. Julie has now become a single parent, homeowner, unemployed and isolated due to circumstances beyond her control.

A match with a volunteer was made in June 2023 and she has supported the family by:

- *Providing reassurance, social connection and emotional support*
- *Making contact with Citizens Advice to look at consolidating and writing off some of mum's debt that her ex-partner had put in her name.*
- *Sourced stairgates to keep the child safe*
- *Sourced a bed guard so that child can sleep in their own bed safely.*
- *Applied for the household support fund for Julie*
- *Supported to apply for PIP for Julie*
- *Supported to apply for benefits for child.*
- *Offered support around Julie's mental health*
- *Applied for a new boiler and heating system through an online grant as property had no central heating or hot water, this has now been installed.*

- 1.7.5 Home Start is keen to expand its service to Home Start Newark & Sherwood and is in discussions with the Council to develop a proposal that will see this valuable service expand.
- 1.7.6 It is **recommended** that the Council continues to fund this service level agreement with a further paper being brought forward in due course to consider expansion of the existing services across the district.

1.8 **Live and Local**

- 1.8.1 Live and Local is a not-for-profit arts organisation working with a network of voluntary groups across Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Rutland and Leicestershire. In addition to grant funding by the Council, Live and Local receive grant funding from Arts Council England, the British Film Institute and other local authorities.

1.8.2 The annual contribution to Live and Local secures touring shows and community events across the district that would otherwise be unaffordable, connecting people to the arts in their own communities. For a contribution of £5,400 Newark & Sherwood benefits from circa 30 shows per annum. Upcoming shows include 'Underdogs' at Rolleston Village Hall on 7 March 2024 and "From the Albert Hall to The Music Hall" at Clipstone Social Club on 16 March 2024.

1.8.3 Live and Local confirmed in September 2023 that they have received additional Arts Council England funding to work in rural towns located in Levelling Up for Culture Places (LUFC). As part of the Live and Local network we are delighted that Ollerton (and by extension Edwinstowe) has been chosen as one of just five towns in the East and West Midlands to benefit from this funding which will see investment of approximately £92,000 over a three-year period.

1.8.4 It is **recommended** that the Council continues to fund this service level agreement, in particular recognising the additional funding and investment leveraged into the district by being a part of this organisation.

1.9 **Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union (NLCU)**

1.9.1 Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union is 'a fair and ethical local provider of financial services' and has been established for over 25 years. They provide simple savings accounts, affordable loans and pre-paid debit cards throughout Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire, Lincoln City and Lincolnshire.

1.9.2 The Council supports NLCU through an annual grant to:

- Actively promote Credit Union Services to residents of Newark and Sherwood.
- Increase and maintain Credit Union membership throughout the district.
- Provide relevant training to volunteers and staff of the Council, Sherwood and Newark Citizens Advice and any other key partners to ensure the smooth running of the service.
- Attend established Food Clubs and Feeding Britain Network events to promote financial resilience linked to food poverty areas.
- Agree targeted promotion of service to NSDC tenants as agreed by management teams.
- Promote payroll savings at NSDC in line with payroll agreement.
- Work collaboratively to develop initiatives which will assist residents to establish and sustain tenancies.
- To report each quarter on the Activity Outputs.

1.9.3 The Council provide support to NLCU to add value to their service offer by:

- Promoting a Payroll Scheme to all staff through the Council internal mechanisms and assisting the Credit Union in their promotion to staff at the necessary council venues.
- Promoting the presence of the Credit Union and available service through all available communication streams to reach as many residents as possible.

- 1.9.4 Whilst the ethos of the Credit Union is strongly supported, the current model does not appear to be delivering value for money in Newark & Sherwood. There are currently only 248 active members of the Credit Union (November 2023 data).
- 1.9.5 Whilst this data does demonstrate a slight increase since the previous year (30 active members increase) it is considered that this increase does not provide value for money for the £40k invested.
- 1.9.6 In addition, NCLU has struggled to recruit to the Community Business & Development Manager role which is now being shared with Nottingham City – providing significantly less dedicated resource for the funding.
- 1.9.7 It is **recommended** not to continue with this SLA funding at this time. The unfortunate timing of the launch of this initiative has impacted on its success; it is hard to persuade residents to save in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. For the foreseeable future it is anticipated that residents are likely to opt for the most advantageous borrowing/savings rate rather than prioritising a more socially conscious offer.

1.10 Newark & Sherwood Community Hub

- 1.10.1 Newark & Sherwood Community Hub is based in Millgate Community Centre in Newark. The charity is supported by the council through a grant to:
- Provide free play opportunities for children in Newark & Sherwood including play days, play clubs and play in the parks using local park facilities.
 - Work with NSDC Community Development Officers on joint community projects.
 - Provide volunteer opportunities for residents and young people with suitable supervision and ongoing training alongside qualified staff.
 - Manage the running of Millgate Community Centre, making this a community hub for positive activities for all age groups to use.
- 1.10.2 During 2022/23, over 3000 children were engaged through the Hub including 'Play in the Parks', Chatham Court after school club, craft workshops and outreach play events at Newberry Road, Beacon Heights, Edwinstowe, Cleveland Square, Thorpe Oaks Coddington, Yew Tree Ollerton, Vicar Water at Clipstone and the Skate Park in Bilsthorpe. In 2022/23 the charity was supported by 13 active volunteers.
- 1.10.3 Newark & Sherwood Community Hub has advised that they are unable to continue their SLA delivery from 2024. Whilst it is anticipated that a number of the current groups utilising the centre will continue to run independently, the Community Development Team will work with the hub to determine if any additional support is required.
- 1.10.4 Funding for this SLA will cease in 2024.

1.11 Newark & Sherwood CVS

- 1.11.1 The Council contributes £10,000 per annum to Newark & Sherwood CVS. The CVS co-ordinated volunteer opportunities for all sections of the community who either require voluntary assistance or who want to offer their time and skills as a volunteer.

The Council's grant supports CVS to:

- Lead a volunteer coordinator network for managers of volunteers.
- Deliver training sessions for new or potential volunteers.
- Promote volunteering at community events across Newark & Sherwood.
- Match volunteers and placements.

1.11.2 During 2022/23, the CVS processed over 100 enquiries from new volunteers and made successful placements including at HealthWatch, Southwell Workhouse, Citizens Advice, the Butterfly Project and Door to Door.

1.11.3 These placements provide a range of positive outcomes – from supporting the groups where volunteers are placed, to the benefits to volunteers themselves – from gaining experience, confidence, friendships and life skills to tackling loneliness.

1.11.4 It is **recommended** that the Council continues to fund this service level agreement.

1.12 **The Furniture Project**

1.12.1 The Furniture Project is a charity run by volunteers and provides households with good quality, second hand or excess stock furniture, new clothing and electricals. In addition to supporting households with essential furniture, their work ensures that through recycling and reusing, less waste is sent to landfill.

1.12.2 The Council's contribution to The Furniture Project supports this charity to maintain prices at an affordable level, providing a lifeline for those in need, the examples below all include free delivery:

- Three-Piece Suite - £20
- Dining Table - £5
- Set of Pots/Pans - £1
- Freezer/Fridge - £20
- Washing Machine - £30
- Microwave - £5

1.12.3 In 2022-23, Newark & Sherwood District Council made 103 referrals to The Furniture Project of which 101 were accepted and delivered. Referrals can also come into the project from a wide range of partners working with households in need.

1.12.4 It is **recommended** that the Council continues to fund this service level agreement.

2.0 **Proposal/Options Considered**

2.1 It is proposed that in recognition of the value demonstrated above, that the Council continues to fund:

- Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark
- Home Start Newark & Sherwood
- Live and Local
- Newark & Sherwood CVS
- The Furniture Project

- 2.2 The Policy & Performance Improvement Committee are asked to recommend that funding to Live and Local remains at the existing level reflecting their current success in securing alternative external funding.
- 2.3 The alternative of ceasing funding to these charities would cause a significant detriment to the service users and would also place additional pressure on the charities themselves (to cover their overheads) and the Council and other service providers when residents cannot access support and may reach a crisis point.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Council ceases to fund:
- Notts and Lincs Credit Union in response to the value for money demonstrated
 - Newark & Sherwood Community Hub which is closing its SLA provision
- 2.5 It has been noted as part of this review that many of the existing SLA's in place are historic. The current agreements will be standardised and modernised, moving from a service level agreement to a grant agreement.
- 2.6 The existing SLA allocations have been determined historically and represent organisations the Council works closely with and has deemed a partner best placed to deliver services locally as a result of their experience, experience or reputation. The Council will continue to identify partners who can add value in service delivery and consider any additional grant funding on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.7 The Policy & Performance Improvement Committee are asked to recommend to Cabinet moving to a three-year grant agreement for all aforementioned grants/SLA's, to provide security and stability of funding.
- 2.8 The Policy & Performance Improvement Committee are asked to recommend that a 10% inflationary uplift is applied to the current SLA values with Citizens Advice, HomeStart, Newark & Sherwood CVS and The Furniture Project, with a 3% increase in the subsequent years.

3.0 **Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Body	Services provided under agreement	Funding/Annum	Increase @ 10%	2024-25 inc. uplift
Citizens Advice Sherwood and Newark	CORE	£68,330	£6,830	£75,160
Citizens Advice Sherwood and Newark	SERVICE	£90,000	£9,000	£99,000

Citizens Advice Sherwood and Newark		£40,000 (23/24 only)	N/A	£0
Home Start Newark and Sherwood		£19,060	£1,906	£20,966
Live and Local		£5,400	Maintain	£5,400
Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union		£20,000	NA	£0
Newark and Sherwood Community Hub		£10,000	NA	£0
Newark and Sherwood CVS		£11,260	£1,126	£12,386
The Furniture Project		£10,000	£1,000	£11,000

Financial Implications – FIN23-24/9828

3.1 A number of the charities and not for profit organisations that the Council support are funded from annual budgets within the Council and others are funded from Homeless Prevention Grant which the Council receives on an annual basis from the Government as follows :-

3.2 General Fund Budget

- Citizens Advice Sherwood and Newark
- Home Start Newark and Sherwood
- Newark and Sherwood CVS
- Newark and Sherwood Community Hub
- Live and Local

3.3 Homeless Prevention Grant (General Fund)

- Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union
- Citizens Advice Sherwood and Newark
- The Furniture Project

3.4 Based on the proposals detailed in paragraph 2.1 to 2.8 above, the financial implications both on the General Fund budgets and the Homeless Prevention Grant for 2024/25 are as follows:

3.5 The General Fund budget would save **£138**. This is achieved from the following :-

Body	Current allocation	Proposed allocation	Change in allocation
Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark	£68,330	£75,160	£6,830

Home Start Newark & Sherwood	£19,060	£20,966	£1,906
Newark & Sherwood CVS	£11,260	£12,386	£1,126
Newark & Sherwood Community Hub	£10,000	£0	£-10,000
Live and Local	£5,400	£5,400	£0
Total	£114,050	£113,912	£-138

3.6 The Homeless Prevention Grant would save **£9,000**. This is achieved from the following :-

Body	Current allocation	Proposed allocation	Change in allocation
Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark	£90,000	£99,000	£9,000
The Furniture Project	£10,000	£11,000	£1,000
Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Credit Union	£20,000	£0	£-20,000
Total	£120,000	£110,000	£-10,000

Therefore, the total savings resulting from the proposals would be **£10,138** split over the two funds.

3.7 The 10% increase for 2024/25 has been included within the proposed General Fund budget to be approved by Full Council on 7 March 2024. The proposal to increase by 3% in subsequent years has not been included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan also due to be approved on the same date. Should this be approved, subsequent increases to the value of £3,250 in 2025-26 and £3,350 in 2026-27.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.