

PETITIONS IN RELATION TO CORE GRANT TO HILLINGDON AUTISTIC CARE AND SUPPORT (HACS) TO RUN THE RURAL ACTIVITY GARDEN CENTRE TEAROOM.

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Douglas Mills
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Officer Contact(s)	Kevin Byrne – Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships.
Papers with report	Appendix A – Excerpts from Cabinet papers (15 th December 2022) in relation to the grant award to HACS.

HEADLINES

Summary	To inform the Cabinet Member that two petitions have been submitted by residents requesting that the Council continue to fund Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support (HACS) to provide training provision at the rural tearoom.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the Council's commitments to residents in the 2022-2026 Council Strategy of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A thriving economy• Thriving healthy households• A green and sustainable Borough
Financial Cost	There are no financial implications directly associated with the recommendations to this petition report. The grant requested for funding the employment and skills service was £51.8k, of which £40k related to the tearoom.
Relevant Select Committee	Finance and Corporate services
Relevant Ward(s)	All Wards - centre is based in Colham and Cowley ward

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services meets with petitioners and listens to their request for the Council to continue to fund HACS to provide a training facility at the rural tearoom.

Reasons for recommendations

The Petition Hearing will provide a valuable opportunity to hear directly from the petitioners of their concerns and suggestions.

Alternative options considered / risk management

None at this stage.

Select Committee comments

None at this stage.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Two petitions were submitted to the Council in relation to the Cabinet Decision made on 15 December 2022 not to award HACS core grant funding to deliver the training facility at the RAGC tearoom.

Details of the two petitions received are:

1. An ePetition, which ran on the Change.org online petitioning website, was formally received on 7 March 2023 by which time 3330 people had signed in total, of which 1259 were valid as residents of the Borough:

“The London Borough of Hillingdon is contemplating withdrawal of funding for the Rural Tea Rooms, based within the Rural Activities Garden Centre and this petition is for those who wish to object to this proposal to have their voice heard.

The Rural Tea Rooms is operated by HACS (Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support) as a training cafe, open to the public as part of their Skills & Employment service with all proceeds re-invested to support their learners.

The funding from the borough is used to provide paid staff to manage the tea rooms and oversee the trainees. Without this funding, the tea rooms will be unable to continue to operate. With so few employment and training opportunities available for those affected by autism, not only within Hillingdon but in the UK generally, every opportunity to support this endeavour should be encouraged. As well as providing a unique opportunity for HACS clients, it is also a valuable commodity within the wider community, with many people across the borough regularly visiting and enjoying the facilities. If you believe the Rural Tea Rooms should continue to receive funding to allow them to continue their inspirational work, please sign”

2. An ePetition ran on the Council’s online petition facility from 2 March to 3 April 2023 inclusive, which received 139 responses, of which 128 were valid as residents of the Borough. The petition stated the following:

“We the undersigned petition Hillingdon Council to recognise the very low level of employment that autistic people have. The Rural Activities Garden Tea Room provided a vital workplace which provided jobs and support for disabled people. We formally request that Hillingdon Council reconsiders its decision to cut the grant funding to HACS in respect of the Tea Room.

The Tea Room helps as it also increases footfall to the Garden Centre, and so enhances the Council's strategy of making a green and sustainable Borough. With the closure of Wyevale Garden Centre in Pield Heath Road, it means residents do not have to drive as far to get to garden centres further away, thus saving pollution and fossil fuels."

The Council's decision in relation to the HACS grant application is set out in full in the Appendices to the December 2022 Cabinet report, with relevant parts attached to this report.

In summary, the tearoom was loss-making and the core grant of £40k with 20 people benefitting from training was considered not to offer good value for money. The Appendix B assessment also identified significant levels of reserves held by HACS and the Appendix C equality impact assessment recognised that removal of the grant support would lead to HACS needing to consider how it intended to deliver its employment and skills support services, including the active work underway to increase numbers benefitting from Project Search and other schemes. The Council now knows that HACS has decided not to continue to operate the tearoom as part of their ongoing employment and skills work and the facility has been handed back to the Council.

In addition, the Council has received a number of information requests and correspondence from residents regarding the tearoom. In response, the Council has confirmed it will look at options for a new café or coffee shop arrangement with a view to making it self-funding. It has also been made clear that the decision on grant funding to HACS does not impact on the wider work of the RAGC as a centre for community learning and work experience.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly associated with the recommendations to this petition report. The grant requested for funding the employment and skills service by HACS was £51.8k, of which £40k related to the tearoom, however, the funding request was not awarded.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities

To allow the Cabinet Member to consider the concerns raised by petitioners.

Consultation carried out or required

The request for grant was submitted in September 2022 in line with the grant process announced in June 2022, along with detailed guidance. This followed a number of briefing meetings open to potential applicants to set out the approach the Council would be taking to the grants award process for 2023/24.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs that there are no direct financial implications associated with this report relating to hearing the petitioner's views.

Legal

The Head of Legal Services confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Comments from other relevant service areas

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Petitions received.

TITLE OF ANY APPENDICES

Excerpt Cabinet Report December 15th 2022

Cabinet Report December 15th 2022:

- Appendix A assessment
- Excerpt Appendix B
- Excerpt Appendix C Equality impact assessment

Excerpt from Cabinet report 15th December 2022 (Agenda Item 8)

29. Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support.

For 2022/23 HACS received £91,800 grants made up of the core grant (£40k) and a grant for Rural Activity Garden Centre Tea Rooms, Brookfield Café (£40k and £11.8k). The Brookfield centre is now closed and has been repurposed. The Council will need to consider how its new direction in core grants signalled earlier in the year and the move to commissioning of early intervention support should reflect work with people with autism and ADHD and what should be in place from April 2024. The employment support project at Brookfield is no longer needed. As an employment support programme benefitting 20 residents at £40k, the RAGC tearoom project is expensive. The tearoom needs to become self-sustaining in some way. A grant of £40k for core costs is recommended again 2023/24. Funding of employment support programmes need to be supported by external funding routes such as ECHP or access to work support from DWP or even personal budgets rather than grant funded.

Cabinet report 15th December 2022 - Appendix A

Appendix A Organisations	Grant Requested 2023-24	Grant Recommended 2023-24
Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent*	679,140	600,000
Harlington Hospice (Respite Care)^	90,000	45,000
DASH	98,000	98,000
Heathrow Travel Care	45,000	45,000
Hillingdon Brain Tumour & Injury Support Group	30,000	15,000
Carers Trust Hillingdon^	105,000	52,500
Hillingdon Citizens Advice	285,000	285,000
Hillingdon MIND	150,000	120,000
Hillingdon Women's Centre	50,000	30,000
Bell Farm Christian Centre*	99,675	90,000
Centre for ADHD and Autism Support	27,109	15,000
Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support	91,800	40,000
Home-Start Hillingdon	120,000	120,000
Crane Valley CIC Partnership	10,000	10,000
London Wildlife Trust (Hillingdon)	10,000	10,000
Dovetail Community Outreach	20,000	10,000
Ruislip Northwood Old Folks Association	90,000	30,000
Subtotal	2,000,724	1,615,500

*Dining centre included in main grant application for 2023/24
 ^Carers Trust and Harlington Hospice cost calculated at 6 months.

Excerpt Cabinet report 15th December Appendix B

CORPORATE GRANTS 2023/24 CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Organisation: Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support (HACS)				<i>Amount Requested and Use</i>	
Description Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support (HACS) provides support in five main areas to those affected by Autism: Family support, Training service for parents/carers and professionals, Recreation service, Employment training and support and Autism awareness. Services support people with autism and their families. The organisation also works with schools, colleges, employers, social services and mental health services to improve the response to and, therefore, the experience of those with autism. It offers practical and supported work experience for people with autism via two community cafes.				£91,800 for core staff salaries	
				Recommendation:	
				£40,000	
<i>No of Service Users</i>	<i>Active Volunteers</i>	<i>Volunteer hours p.a.</i>	<i>Previous yr targets</i>	<i>Corporate Grant 2022/23</i>	<i>Total Spend 2022/23 in Hillingdon</i>
1168	30	1,500	Partially met	£91,800	£668,650
Planned Activities for 2023/24 Highlights include:					
AUTISM AWARENESS					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in 4 Hillingdon Autism Partnership Meetings per year Exhibit HACS services at 6 community events per year (<i>subject to Covid restrictions</i>) Annual Autism Acceptance event (<i>subject to Covid event size restrictions</i>) 					
FAMILY SUPPORT					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate a telephone helpline for 43 hours per week 52 weeks Respond to 500 family support referrals (information, advice and guidance) Facilitate 33 autism surgeries per year (online/face-to-face blended approach) 3 well-being events for parents/carers 10 Behaviour Support Clinics per year 10 Anxiety Support Clinics per year 					
TRAINING					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 "Understanding Autism" workshops/webinars per year 10 specialist workshops / webinars per year Provide Autism training to 3 employers per year 					

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

- 19 Saturday clubs per year "EXPLORERS" (7-13)
- 19 Saturday clubs per year "ADVENTURERS" (7-13)
- 19 Saturday clubs per year "YOUTH" (14-25)
- 33 weekly youth club sessions at Harlington Young People's Centre for young people aged 11 – 25 years
- 33 weekly youth club sessions at South Ruislip Young People's Centre for young people aged 11 – 25 years
- 16 Playscheme sessions per year "EXPLORERS" (6-13)
- 16 Playscheme sessions per year "ADVENTURERS" (6-13)
- 16 Playscheme sessions "YOUTH" (14-25)
- X 1 cohort specialist Girls Support Group

SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

- 60 people will receive IAG relating to further education, training or employment
- 20 people will complete a supported work placement
- 38 workshops per year in CV building, interview preparation, job application
- Provide in work support to 6 autistic people who have secured employment through our Skills and Employment pathways
- Provide job coaching support for 12 interns on Project Search (full time programme)

ADULT SERVICES

- 45 social activities for autistic adults using an in-person/virtual hybrid approach
- 90 fitness (body conditioning)/yoga sessions per year for autistic adults
- 60 autistic adults without intellectual disability will access wellbeing support
- 3 x 8 week open-access group learning programme per annum for autistic adults who have recently received a diagnosis of autism
- 12 monthly general advice/guidance drop-in sessions for practical issues e.g. letters/welfare/benefits
- 12 monthly discussion groups for autistic adults

Officer Comment

In line with the briefings held earlier in 2022, HACS have been notified that the Council now wishes to see changes to the way in which financial support is provided to the voluntary sector so as to:

- Ensure better outcomes for residents
- Achieve the best value for money
- Reduce dependency on grant support

To achieve this the Council will move towards commissioning of early intervention and prevention services and away from core grants. For 2023/24 groups have been advised that core grants programme will run and applications will be considered on their merits against the criteria set, with greater emphasis on some elements:

Demonstrating clear need – HACS is able to meet a local need for families and individuals who may be coming to terms with a diagnosis or need support and guidance to reduce isolation and lead fulfilling lives.

Value for money – HACS delivers services for 1579 clients (across a number of different services as above). The grant splits into two categories; £40k for core costs plus £51.8k for employment projects at RAGC and Brookfield. For the core element this equates to unit cost of £25.30. (40,000/1579). For the employment programme 20 places are proposed for the £40k allocated for the RAGC tearoom producing a unit cost of £2,000. However, it is noted that monitoring reports for 20/21 cite numbers as reaching 46 which would then be £869. This assumes that the £11.8k payment previously allocated for Brookfield is no longer needed as now closed.

Viable and sustainable – HACS's business model is viable and sustainable. They have generated a diverse range of income support from trusts and donations to spread risk of programmes struggling should funding cease.

Support Council services – Early intervention and support for autism and/or ADHD and for families helps reduce likelihood of need for high costs interventions in social care, NHS and in schools and in justice services. HACS support for 2 x individuals on the PREVENT programme has been welcome.

Lever in external funding – HACS has achieved investment from a range of external funders, charitable trusts and lottery, as well as donations and earned income total for 2022/23 is expected to be approx. £579k which would imply a return on social investment of 13.4:1 on core grant (£40k) or 5.3:1 on full grant.

Explain reserves - Unrestricted reserves are stated as £616k. Reserves policy is to hold 6 months running costs (although this is also stated as £104k). Amount held would seem to cover nearly 12 months of all expenditure.

Work in collaboration - HACS collaborates with a wide range of partners across the borough including CAAS.

For 2022/23 HACS received approximately £91,800 grants made up of the core grant (£40k) and a grant for Rural Gardens Tea Rooms, Brookfield Café (£40k and £11.8k). The latter grant was subject to the sites opening post Covid, the Brookfield centre is now closed and has been repurposed.

The Council will need to consider how its new direction in core grants signalled earlier in the year and the move to commissioning of early intervention support should reflect work with people with autism and ADHD and what should be in place from April 2024. The core grant element is recommended to be funded for 2023/24 for £40k.

The employment support project at Brookfield is no longer needed. As an employment support programme benefitting 20 residents at £40k, the RAGC tearoom project is expensive the tearoom needs to become self-sustaining in some way. A grant of £40k for core costs is recommended again 2023/24. Funding of employment support programmes need to be supported by external

funding routes such as ECHP or access to work support from DWP or even personal budgets rather than grant funded.

Corporate Finance Comment

The charity is requesting £91,800, the same level of grant funding as awarded in 2021/22. It is unknown what the profit/loss for 2021/22 was. Total reserves increased by £220,102 from £454,076, as reported in the voluntary grant workings, to £674,178 for 2021/22. Unrestricted reserves, totalling £616,442, increased by £200,553, compared to £415,889 reported for the prior year.

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

STEP A) Description of what is to be assessed and its relevance to equality

What is being assessed? Please tick ✓

Review of a service Staff restructure Decommissioning a service

Changing a policy ✓ Tendering for a new service A strategy or plan

Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support: proposal to reduce core grant for 2023/24 to £40,000.

Who is accountable? E.g. Head of Service or Corporate Director

Kevin Byrne – Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships
Dan Kennedy – Corporate Director

Date assessment completed and approved by accountable person

26/11/2022

Names and job titles of people carrying out the assessment

Kevin Byrne – Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships

A.1) What are the main aims and intended benefits of what you are assessing?

Review of the Council Core Grants Programme

As set out in the main Cabinet report the Council wishes to see a change of direction to its support to the voluntary sector. Overall, the Council's intention is to see changes which:

- Ensure better outcomes for residents
- Achieve best value for money
- Reduce dependency on grants

Groups were informed that the Council would move towards commissioning of services from the voluntary sector rather than awarding of grants. This process would enable services to focus more directly on early intervention and prevention and over a more stable longer contract period. This

process of commissioning services which support council operations will take time to come to fruition. It is anticipated that services that will be required to be commissioned will be in place by April 2024. It is not envisaged that the current grants programme should run again for 2024/25.

During the interim, it was agreed that the 2023/24 grants programme would run, with applications being considered on their merits against the stated criteria, with a particular need for groups to :

- demonstrate clear need
- offer good value for money
- be viable and sustainable
- support Council services and approaches e.g. through early intervention
- seek and lever-in external funding
- explain excessive reserves
- work in collaboration : not replicate

It was also stated that the Council wishes to phase out smaller grants, broadly £10k and below and to see self-sustaining business models developed by those groups, rather than reliance on Council support.

An assessment of Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support grant application is contained at appendix B with a recommendation to reduce support for 2023/24. This EIA sets out the impact of that proposed decision on residents with protected characteristics in light of the Council's public sector equalities duties.

A.2) Who are the service users or staff affected by what you are assessing? What is their equality profile?

80 services users of employability & adult support in 2021/22.

Breakdown not provided – highly likely that service users will have learning disabilities and/or autism.

Forecast for 2023/24 is for:

60 to receive information and advice on education and training
 20 to complete a supported work placement

A.3) Who are the stakeholders in this assessment and what is their interest in it?

Stakeholders	Interest
Cabinet Members and Leader	Ensure value for money in service delivery.
Users of Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support employment support services	Access to employment support services
Supported work placement trainees	Access to RAGC and other sites/employers to receive placements

A.4) Which protected characteristics or community issues are relevant to the assessment? ✓ in the box.

Age	✓	Sex	✓
Disability	✓	Sexual Orientation	
Gender reassignment			
Marriage or civil partnership		Carers	
Pregnancy or maternity		Community Cohesion	
Race/Ethnicity		Community Safety	
Religion or belief		Human Rights	

STEP B) Consideration of information; data, research, consultation, engagement

B.1) Consideration of information and data - what have you got and what is it telling you?

The data tells us that about 20 people with learning disability and/or autism are currently benefitting from work placements at the tea rooms at RAGC and other sites.

In addition, a further 60-80 are receiving information, advice and guidance on employment and training on a one to one basis.

Consultation

B.2) Did you carry out any consultation or engagement as part of this assessment?

Please tick NO YES

All recipients of core grants were invited to briefing sessions in July 2022 and sent information including Q&As and then received an application pack which set out the Council’s intentions and the criteria for core grant.

B.3) Provide any other information to consider as part of the assessment

Legal context
 The council has a public duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations (Equality Act 2010).

Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to “incur expenditure which in their opinion is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, their area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants” provided that “ the direct benefit accruing to their area or any part of it or to all or some of the inhabitants of their area will be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred”.

C) Assessment

What did you find in B1? Who is affected? Is there, or likely to be, an impact on certain groups?

C.1) Describe any **NEGATIVE** impacts (actual or potential):

Equality Group	Impact on this group and actions you need to take
Work placement candidates with a learning disability and/or autism.	Potentially not able to receive employment experience/support at RAGC tea rooms or other schemes. Candidates would need to consider alternative options for placements.

D) Conclusions

The proposal to reduce grant to Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support for 2023/24 is based on assessment of application as set out in Appendix B.

The proposal is to remove grant support for employment support programme at RAGC and the project which ran a similar operation at Brookfield Adult education centre. This is based on value for money and the cost of subsidising the tea-room operations.

HACS will wish to consider how it seeks to deliver its employment and skills, work placement and job coach activities outside of core grant funding. It is suggested that they should seek to fund schemes through formal funding routes for employment support such as Education, Health and Care plans, access to work schemes etc. This approach has been successfully applied to the Council led Project search scheme at the civic centre which HACS provides job coach support funded via ECHP income. This scheme is not therefore impacted by these proposals.

Should it transpire that HACS is not able to continue its employment support activities in some way then clients would need to approach other providers or schemes to see what else might suit them best.

Signed and dated:.....*Kevin Byrne*30 November 2022

Name and position:...Kevin Byrne Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships