

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	17/02/2025
Heading:	INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2028
Executive Lead Member:	CLLR CHRIS HUSKINSON, EXECUTIVE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	YES
Subject to Call-In:	YES

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to share an update of the work completed in the first six months of this financial year by the infrastructure organisations in receipt of a grant from Ashfield District Council and propose future funding arrangements from April 2025 onwards.

Recommendation(s)

The recommendation is to continue to fund four infrastructure organisations, offering a 3-year funding arrangement, with a 5% increase year on year.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The recommendation recognises the value the Council places on the work of the infrastructure grants in supporting residents and communities within Ashfield. The 3-year offer provides financial security to the organisations, enabling them to better plan for the delivery of the services.

Alternative Options Considered

(with reasons why not adopted)

Not to give grants and offer savings to the General Fund. There could be a negative impact on the groups who have previously been supported by the Council if funding wasn't granted. It would have a potential impact on the service users of those organisations.

Not to alter the grant awards from the current offer. This would not recognise changes that have happened within these organisations over the last funding period, such as the merger of Ashfield Citizen’s Advice, and the growth of service and advocacy/support that AVA now offer.

Detailed Information

The Council currently provides infrastructure grants to 4 organisations as outlined below:

Organisation	Annual Amount (2024/25)
Ashfield Voluntary Action	£7,500
Our Centre	£20,000
Ashfield Citizen’s Advice	£46,550
Hucknall and District Voluntary Sector Partnership (Under One Roof)	£4,750
TOTAL	£78,800

The grants detailed above are funded from the Council’s General Fund except for:

- £9,500 of the grant to Ashfield Citizens Advice is met from the Council’s Housing Revenue Account.
- £2,500 of the grant to Ashfield Voluntary Action is met from the Kirby Wind Turbine Fund.

The recommendation for the new funding agreements is outlined in the table below:

Organisation	Annual Amount (2025/26)	Annual Amount (2026/27)	Annual Amount (2027/28)
Ashfield Voluntary Action	£15,000	£15,750	£16,538
Our Centre	£21,000	£22,050	£23,153
Ashfield Citizen’s Advice	£38,800	£40,740	£42,777
Hucknall and District Voluntary Sector Partnership (Under One Roof)	£5,000	£5,250	£5,513
TOTAL	£79,800	£83,790	£87,981

Our Centre

In 2024-25, Our Centre’s grant was increased from £16,000 to £20,000 per annum. It is recommended that the grant rises by 5% for 2025/26. Between April – September 2024, Our Centre achieved:

- 1645 journeys through their Ring and Ride scheme, transporting 5179 passengers, of which 1224 were wheelchair boardings
- 1084 bus journeys, transporting 8,793 passengers, of which 263 were wheelchair boardings
- 3,225 journeys through the car scheme, transporting 3709 passengers

In addition to the community transport service Our Centre provide, they also provide 20 community-based sessions at their premises in Kirkby.

Ashfield Voluntary Action

In 2024-25, Ashfield Voluntary Action (AVA) received a grant of £7,500. This was the second year of this level of investment. Between April – September 2024, AVA:

- Delivered weekly groups, with 1381 attendances: Chatty Crafters, Garden Games Chat, Grief and Loss, LGBT, Men's Met up, Job Centre, Taking Tuesdays, Tuesdays Together (Willets Court), Women's Wellbeing Group
- Supported 2722 hours of volunteering as group facilitators, admin, gardeners, kiosk staff, sandwich makers, befrienders and trustees
- Set up and supported a new Residents Group on Coxmoor (known as the CRAG), since their inception, they have delivered two fun days on the estate, been regularly litter picking, and encouraging residents to be 'neighbourly'.
- Supported other organisations to apply for funding, for example secured £23,675 for Ashfield Spartan's Boxing Club
- Created a new directory of activities for the District, which was launched in January 2025.
- Secured funding to deliver services to Ashfield residents, including Futures funding, Health Inequalities Investment Fund (HIIF), One Step at a Time funding etc.
- Attended, supported and advocated on behalf of other community and voluntary sector organisations at a wide range of meetings and networks, including but not limited to Discover Ashfield Board, Be Healthy, Be Happy Management Group, Kirkby Town Board and Safe and Happy Kirkby subgroup, Mid and South Notts Place Based Partnerships.

It is recommended that AVA's grant increases to £15,000 in 2025/26 as a recognition for the role they provide in advocating for and supporting the community and voluntary sector in Ashfield, their ongoing work in supporting the delivery of the Be Healthy, Be Happy strategy and the delivery of weekly groups targeting some of our most vulnerable groups in the District.

Ashfield Citizens Advice

In 2024-25 Ashfield Citizens Advice received a grant of £46,550. During this period Ashfield merged with Broxtowe and Newark & Sherwood to create Central Notts Citizen's Advice. This merger was completed to drive efficiencies, reduce costs and share expertise.

Between November 2023 and October 2024, Ashfield Citizen's Advice have:

- Secured an additional £1.8m in additional income for Ashfield residents, helping 3,370 people with 3,370 problems
- Attracted £232,590 investment into the District for delivery of programmes
- Created 15 jobs, with 9 volunteers moving into employment
- Received positive feedback from clients with 75% saying they have an improved ability to self-manage problems, and 88% saying they feel more financially resilient
- Delivered a mixed service of face-to-face, phone and web support
- Delivered 2928 hours of advice at community venues and GP surgeries within Ashfield
- Generated £2.7m of social value

The proposal to reduce the grant to Ashfield Citizen's Advice is not a reflection on the value of their work. They provide an invaluable service to residents. It is based on the efficiencies they aimed to achieve in their merger, and the new organisation being able to apply for larger pots of money to support the work they do.

If this proposal is accepted, officers would look for options to work with Citizens Advice to see if there are other funding sources (e.g. Homelessness Prevention Grant, UK Shared Prosperity Fund) which may be able to be used to top up the funding to the previous level, even on a one-off basis.

Under One Roof

In 2024-25, Under One Roof received a grant of £4,750. During this period, they

- Provided accommodation to 6 services, including CGL (Change, Grow, Live), the Furniture Project, Food Bank, IT for All and Cottage Crafts
- Had 5,867 visitors into the building for support
- Signposted 300 people to other services

The proposal is to increase their grant to £5,000 in 2025/26. This continuation of their grant, enhanced by the small increase will enable Under One Roof to continue to provide a base for several services in Hucknall that support residents, many of whom are vulnerable.

Alternative Options Considered

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Implications

Corporate Plan:

The investment will support the Council's Health and Happiness priority. The four Infrastructure Organisations provide support and services to some of Ashfield's most vulnerable residents.

Legal:

The grant funding awarded must be spent on delivering the projects in accordance with the proposals/bids and any terms attached, failure to do so could result in a requirement to repay the grant. The use of the grant must comply with subsidy control rules, both in terms of direct receipt of funds and intended use/expenditure of those funds. Legal Services will provide advice and assistance to ensure the transactions are formalised by way of the correct legal documentation. [RLD 22/01/2025]

Finance:

Provision for these grants will continue to be made in the General Fund budget with an annual contribution of £9.5k (plus 5% uplifts) allocated to the Housing Revenue Account in respect of the Citizens' Advice grant. Budgets will be uplifted for the additional costs. [PH]

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	<p>£221.6k over three years (01 April 2025 – 31 March 2028), net of contribution from the HRA.</p> <p>£7.5k of this to be funded from the Kirkby Wind Turbine Fund.</p> <p>Net additional cost of £13.7k over 3 years compared with the 24/25 funding.</p>

General Fund – Capital Programme	£0
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	£29.9k over three years (01 April 2025 – 31 March 2028) Net additional cost of £1.4k over 3 years.
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	£0

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Infrastructure organisation ceases to exist.	Officers work closely with the organisations so would be able to highlight any concerns to Leadership
Infrastructure organisation doesn't deliver expected key performance indicators	Service Level Agreements with monitoring expectations will be in place for the funding. Performance will be monitored by Officers quarterly.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications. Monitoring of the grants will be carried out within existing duties by the Wellbeing Team.

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no environmental implications.

Equalities:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. The assessment evidences that the investment positively impacts on equalities.

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Not applicable

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