

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 25 September 2023

Title: Grants & Subsidised Lettings

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

The Council maintains budgets for general discretionary and subsidised letting grants for groups or organisations which require financial assistance towards projects, costs and venue hire to provide services for residents of Witney. Grant requests are usually considered by this Committee bi-annually at meetings in June and January, however there is occasion when they need to be considered at other times of the year due to Council Committee timeframes. In the current year the budgets are as follows:

- Discretionary Grants (4100/407) - £20,000.
- Subsidised Lettings – Corn Exchange/Burwell Hall (4110/407) - £1,800.
- Subsidised Lettings – The Leys/Other (4110/202) - £10,000.

Current Situation

Subsidised Lettings

Oxfordshire County Council – Witney High Street Community Engagement

At the Full Council meeting held on 1 August 2022, the Council agreed to support the County Council by offering subsidised hire of the Corn Exchange for community engagement workshops on the future of Witney High Street, minute no. 417 refers,

That, the Corn Exchange should be put forward as a location for the workshops. Arrangements and a discounted price being delegated to the Deputy Town Clerk.

Due to other bookings, some of the workshops are unable to be held in the Corn Exchange. There are however two full days of hire and one evening, totalling £910.50 inc. VAT for varying stakeholder sessions. Three sessions, totalling £441.00 have been agreed as subsidised hire towards these workshops and the Town Council's contribution for the engagement towards this project.

Friends of the Cemeteries

By way of historic agreement, this recognised outside Council body is provided with subsidised hire at the Corn Exchange to facilitate its meetings. The Friends is a focus group which often acts as an intermediary on complaints regarding burials/cemeteries and provides an information exchange for residents and officers of the Council.

A meeting of the Friends was held in the Gallery Room on 6 September 2023.

Additional Matters

St Mary's – NHS 75th Anniversary Civic Drinks Reception

A letter of thanks has been received from the Benefice of Witney for the £500 towards a Drinks Reception for local NHS staff (past and present) on 4 July 2023 to mark its 75th Anniversary.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Subsidised hire for both Oxfordshire County Council and the Friends of the Cemeteries Group shows residents the Council is committed to engaging and listening to the public on items under its remit, and in supporting their voice on items that is not.

Financial implications

- The current balance of the public halls subsidised letting budget (4110/407) is £976.00
- The subsidised hire for Oxfordshire County Council is £441.00
- The subsidised hire for Friends of the Cemeteries is £42.35

Recommendations

1. To note the subsidised hire for Oxfordshire County Council and Friends of the Cemeteries,
2. To note the letter of thanks from St Mary's Church.