

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 25 March 2024

Title: Grant Monitoring 2023/24

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

The Council's current Grants Policy states, 'organisations receiving grant-aid, as a condition, are required to provide the Council with a written report within 12 months of the award date to demonstrate how the funds were expended'.

A 2023/24 end of year grant monitoring evaluation can be found below however, grant monitoring takes place by officers throughout the year, with updates requested and reported to the relevant committees where appropriate. For ease of transparency and good governance practice, committee updates have been included here.

A number of grants were awarded at the meeting of the Committee on 5 February 2024; these recipients will be asked to provide a report later in the calendar year.

Current Situation

1. Bright Futures Oxfordshire

The Council entered into a Service Level Agreement with BFO during 2023. For the sum of £28,000 over the course of 12 months, a detached youth service would be created filling a gap vacated by Got2B CIC and limited youth support by Oxfordshire County Council.

The Council has released £10,000 towards the set-up of the project and further updates and payments are scheduled throughout the next 12 months. Reports (including on the agreed metrics) will be provided at regular intervals to the Stronger Communities Committee.

An initial update was provided to the Stronger Communities Committee at the meeting of 18th March by the Project Lead of 'The Station' project. All policies, procedures and the website are in place and recruitment of youth workers is underway. Detached youth sessions will begin shortly, and they will attend town council events at the end of March. Please see the service's website here <https://www.thestation.life/>

2. West Oxfordshire Community Transport

The Council has provided £21,000 to the organisation in the last fiscal year to help with the running costs of the town centre services.

Following the submission of documents to the Council's budget meeting, this has been increased to £23,500 for the next three years.

In addition to the document tabled at the meeting of the Council in December, last year's accounts are included as part of grant monitoring. Town Service usage figures will now also be supplied.

3. Home Start Oxford

The Council awarded £10,000 to Home-Start in Autumn 2023 following request to support its group work and agreed that they *'were an essential part of the service mix needed locally, intrinsically linked to your desire to address the needs of young people locally.'*

A report on the services provided for the £10,000 awarded by the Council is attached.

4. Witney Music Festival

The Council entered into a Service Level Partnership Agreement with WMF in 2022 which commits the Council to provide of £10,000 annually for the community event held on The Leys in June.

An update on the 2023 event was provided at the Stronger Communities Committee meeting on 18th September 2023 and Members were able to query aspects of the event. These documents are re-attached as part of this report.

5. Witney Carnival & Christmas Lights

The Council awarded £4,200 (2 x £2,100) towards each of these events.

There is usually no official report provided by the organisers of these events as their running is evident via several channels. They are used to help facilitate these key community events which were run successfully in 2023.

6. Nature Now/Where The Fruit Is

The Council awarded £2,000 towards the facilitation of six forest school training sessions at the Witney Lake & Country Park during the autumn.

A report on the scheme provided by this sum was provided as an accompanying document for the grant application for the 2024/25 year and is re-attached here.

7. Volunteer Link- Up

The Council awarded VLU with a grant of £2,000 in the current year towards running costs. The award was only provided at the end of 2023, so no update is provided.

8. Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire

The Council awarded CAWO with a grant of £2,000 in the current year towards running costs.

The application explaining the need for the grant and ward data from 2023 are attached here.

9. APCAM

The Council awarded APCAM with a grant of £1,200 in the current for providing youth mental health drop-in sessions at the Corn Exchange during the summer holidays.

Feedback on this short-term service was provided to the Council via the Youth Services report of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 18 September 2023.

10. Oxfordshire Play Association

The Council awarded OPA £1,000 towards the costs of a free Annual Play Day during the summer holidays last year.

A report on the event provided for the £1,000 awarded by the Council has already been referred to the Stronger Communities Committee but is reattached for information.

11. Windrush Bike Project

The Council awarded £800 towards the costs of spare parts needed to make donated bikes roadworthy for sixteen asylum seekers in Witney in order for them to leave an externally funded bike maintenance course with a roadworthy bike.

A report on the services provided for the £800 awarded by the Council is attached.

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.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The value of these schemes and projects have already been considered when awarded.

Financial implications

The funds for the above schemes and projects have already been allocated. There are no implications unless the Committee decides any project has not been undertaken to its understanding or satisfaction.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Whether any further information is required in relation to any listed grant award.