

## POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 10 June 2024

**Title:** Grants & Subsidised Lettings

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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### Background

The Council maintains budgets for general discretionary grants and subsidised letting grants for groups or organisations which require financial assistance towards projects, costs and venue hire in order to provide services for the 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

At the beginning of this financial year there was no underspend from the previous 2023/24 year.

### Current Situation

#### Grants

1. Windrush C of E School

A request for £4,500 has been received towards play therapy to support 3 children at the school.

2. 1<sup>st</sup> Witney Rangers Girl Guides

A request has been received for £500 towards supporting their first international trip in February 2025. Total cost £10,000+.

3. Lowland Rescue Oxford

A request for £2,500 has been received towards mental health first aid and trauma incident management training.

4. Be Free Young Carers

A request for £3,950 has been received towards expansion of services into West Oxfordshire – funding would advertise services in local schools, costs of petrol for youth workers to reach locations and provide 1-2-1 emotional support.

Further details of the applications and what the services are provided can be seen on the attached forms and supporting information.

The Council's Grants policy is attached for Member's information. Consideration will need to be given as to whether they consider the applications meet the criteria, particularly in relation to:

*5.1 Applications will only be accepted from Charitable and/or non-profit-taking organisations; the Council regrets therefore that applications from Commercial organisations will not be considered. National appeals are, with limited exceptions, regrettably outside the legal scope of the Council's grant-aid scheme.*

*5.2 Organisations applying to Witney Town Council should be local to Witney or, if just outside the boundary, its work should be of significant benefit to the Town and its residents.*

*5.4 The Council is prevented by statute from giving financial assistance to individuals, charities operating overseas or to a fund established to help persons outside the UK*

*5.6 Schools and educational establishments may apply to the Town Council for assistance but must demonstrate that community engagement has taken place to support their application.*

## **Subsidised Lettings**

### **1. Witney Area Fairtrade Action Group (WAFTAG)**

A request has been received for subsidised letting at the Corn Exchange totalling £199.50 on 14 September 2024, to hold a public meeting to celebrate 30 years of fairtrade, to remind people that Witney is a Fairtrade town, and to spread awareness of the issues surrounding small farmers and their challenges in obtaining a fair price for their products.

The Town Council does not provide any other grant funding towards this local group.

### **2. Mayor of Witney**

A request has been received for subsidised letting for approx. £300 to help fundraising efforts for the Mayor's charities in 2024/25.

### **3. Witney Traffic Advisory Committee – Bus User Meeting**

Members are asked to consider a request from the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee to hold a free Bus User meeting in the Corn Exchange during the summer, minute no. T22 of 26 March 2024 refers. The cost for the Main Hall hire is £78.50.

### **4. CoHSAT Oxford Traffic Filter Meeting**

Members are invited to note the resolution at Full Council on 15 April 2024 to facilitate a public meeting providing information on the new Oxford Traffic Filters, minute no. 209 refers. The cost of this hire is £157.00.

### **5. Witney High Street Consultation (OCC)**

Oxfordshire County Council will shortly be entering into further design engagement on this and provisionally have 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July booked at the Corn Exchange. During the last engagement,

the Town Council provided 1 4-hour session of each full day booking free which equated to approximate 48% reduction on the whole charge.

Members are asked if they would like to consider further subsidised letting at this rate of discount.

### **Other Grants**

#### 1. Witney Town Band – Extra Ordinary Grant Assistance

The Council has been advised the band is sending a delegation of musicians to its twin town of Unterhaching this summer, to represent Witney on 5th-8th July. 18 players will perform at the civic ceremony, and also provide entertainment during the town's festival.

Due to increasing travel and subsistence costs for the trip, it is anticipated the cost will be in excess of £10,000. The band approached the Mayor to ask if there was an extra-ordinary grant which could be provided, possibly of 10%.

As the event marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of twinning (the 30<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to Covid) and the band will be representing Witney, the Mayor has looked favourably on the request and has proposed that an underspend in his 2023/24 Mayor's allowance of £1,000 is provided.

#### 2. Witney TC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Grant Scheme (£50 for 50)

During 2024/25 budget-setting, the Council resolved to run an award scheme of £50 for 50 organisations to mark the occasion. The grants being for groups or organisations who would typically find it difficult to apply for other grant funding.

Draft criteria are attached for consideration. Although a small amount, financial controls such as providing receipts etc. are required for audit purposes.

### **Correspondence**

To note letters of thanks from Witney Day Centre, West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice and West Oxfordshire Community Transport in relation to previously issued grants.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind 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.

The Council has a policy and criteria for which it uses to award its grants to ensure public funds are allocated and used appropriately. If awards are deviated from these criteria, a robust reason should be given and agreed by the Committee.

### **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Benefits provided by the above items are:

- Benefits to Witney's community - young, elderly, disadvantaged and vulnerable people within the town are all covered both independently and jointly by several of the applicants.

### **Financial implications**

At the Annual Council Meeting held on 17 May 2023, the Council invoked the General Power of Competence under which the ability to award these grants is made.

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The remaining grants budget balance is £17,020 (4100/407)
- The remaining subsidised lettings budget balance is £1,169 (4110/407)
- The request from Witney Town Band for extra-ordinary financial assistance can be covered from the underspend of the Mayor's allowance (4000/401)
- The £50 for 50 Anniversary Grants scheme is funded from the anniversary events budget (4149/408) - £2,500.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to:

1. Consider the grant requests from Windrush C of E School, 1<sup>st</sup> Witney Rangers Girl Guides, Lowland Rescue Oxford, and Be Free Young Carers.
2. Consider the subsidised letting requests from Witney Area Fairtrade Action Group, Mayor of Witney, and the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee.
3. Note the subsidised hire for the CoHSAT public Oxford Traffic Filter Meeting.
4. Consider whether to offer a discount to Oxfordshire County Council for Witney High Street consultation events in the Corn Exchange.
5. Note the proposed extra-ordinary grant assistance to Witney Town Band.
6. Consider the grant criteria for the £50 for 50 Anniversary Grant Scheme.
7. Note the correspondence from Witney Day Centre, West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice, and West Oxfordshire Community Transport.