

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 22 July 2024

Title: Grants & Subsidised Lettings

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

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 £1,000 has been received which will go towards play therapy equipment at the school (**attached as Appendix A**)

Members will recall a grant request for £4,500, to help fund the therapy sessions was declined at the last meeting on 10 June 2024. The Committee invited the school to make the request for equipment under minute no. F321(2).

2. Dementia Active

A request for £2,580 has been received to “buy the equipment needed for the new group as well as the hire costs of the building. It will pay for a member of staff for 10 weeks while member numbers build.”

Further information received states: “The plan will be to build from one weekly group in Freeland (Thursdays) to three weekly groups. We have booked to hall for 12 months. We will focus in Witney to prove the need, as we did in Banbury. Our aim will be to find and fund a Dementia centre in Witney within a year. “

Further details of the application and what the services are provided can be seen on the attached forms and supporting information. This includes the receipts and payments account for the year ended 31 December 2022 (the 2023 are not available yet) and the financial projection for the year ended 31 December 2024. (**Appendix B**)

Subsidised Lettings

1. Charity Quiz Evening – 14 June 2024

At the Full Council meeting held on 15 April 2024, the Council awarded subsidised letting at the Corn Exchange for the above, with proceeds going to Bridewell Gardens and Oxfordshire Mind. As a condition, the promoter had to provide proof of fundraising – this is attached as **Appendix C**.

Annual Grants

1. Witney Town Band

A request for £660 has been received for the current year. Awarding of this grant covers running costs and performances by the Band at events during the Council's year including, Remembrance Sunday, St George's Day Parade and the Mayor's Carols Service.

Further information can be found in the accompanying application form. **Appendix D**

It should be noted that after the last meeting, Officers have also been in contact with the Band about a summer performance at The Leys and a subsidised let at the Corn Exchange for fundraising in October.

Youth Services

To note the recommendation of the Stronger Communities Committee on 15 July concerning a grant of £11,000 to Home-Start Oxford (referred to in Spending Committees report).

Correspondence

To note messages of thanks from Be Free Young Carers, 1st Witney Rangers Girl Guides, Lowland Rescue Oxfordshire, Witney Music Festival, and Witney Fairtrade Action Group 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 £11,520 (4100/407)
- The remaining subsidised lettings budget balance is £434 (4110/407)
- There is a budget line for the Witney Town Band annual grant for £660 (4112/408)
- If Members wish to award a grant note there is a sum of £1,000 at code 4107/407 "Witney Dementia Alliance" which Members may consider using. There is also £1,000 from the 2023-24 unspent budget in earmarked reserves (committed sums).

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Consider the grant requests from Windrush C of E School, Witney Town Band, and Dementia Active,
2. Note the correspondence regarding the subsidised let fundraising event on 14 June 2024,
3. Consider the recommendation of the Stronger Communities Committee concerning a grant of £11,000 in the current year to Home Start Oxford,
4. Note the correspondence from Be Free Young Carers, 1st Witney Rangers Girl Guides, Lowland Rescue Oxfordshire, Witney Music Festival, and Witney Fairtrade Action Group.