
Agenda Item: Grants & Subsidised Lettings

Meeting Date: Monday, 30 September 2024

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

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
- Witney Town Council 50th Anniversary (4149/408) – “£50 for Fifty” - £2,500
- Subsidised Lettings – Corn Exchange/Burwell Hall (4110/407) - £1,800
- Subsidised Lettings – The Leys/Other (4110/202) - £10,000
- Annual grants - There are also specific budgets for a number of annual grants to organisations.

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

Current Situation

Grants

1. Dementia Active

Your officers have been in communication with Dementia Active who it is understood are now looking organise meetings in Witney. Your officers will report further either at this meeting or a future meeting.

2. Witney Vikings FC

At the meeting of 22 July 2024, it was minuted: “...the Town Clerk/CEO tabled a request from Witney Vikings Youth Football Club which had been received the previous working day requesting a grant of £3,000 for a new on-site container to be located at Wood Green School in order facilitate two new floodlit grass pitches. Members were unable to reach a decision without any financial information as outlined in the Council’s Grant Policy. Members also asked that confirmation of permission from Wood Green School to site the container on their land be provided.”

Further to the meeting your officers have requested the requisite information from Witney Vikings FC but to date the necessary information has not been received and consequently this application is still pending.

Witney Town Council 50th Anniversary - £50 for fifty grants

At the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee it was agreed to delegate authority to officers, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to consider and approve grants under this scheme.

The following grants have been approved and Members are requested to note and endorse these awards:

	Group or Organisation	Reason for Request	Application Form Completed	Supporting Documents Received	Recommendation From Chair
1	Witney Fairtrade Action Group	Funds requested for production of A-Board poster in support of public event in Corn Exchange on 14 th September for Fairtrade's 30 th anniversary.	Yes	Yes	Grant
2	West Oxfordshire Levellers	Our current representation of female players is considerably lower than we wish. If successful in our bid, we would like to use the grant money to increase the number of girls and women in our team. Often, player recruitment campaigns can inadvertently result in male-orientated imagery, language and colour schemes. We have recently contacted a Female Rugby League Podcast requesting advice on female recruitment and have been invited on as guests to their forum. Following this we feel we will be better equipped to encourage female participation in a positive and non-discriminatory way. The club as a whole will assist our 3 female coaches in engaging with girls and women of all ages by using appropriate materials and channels. This will entail producing player packs including myth-busting information and development strategies designed specifically for female players. If successful in the 50:50 funding application the donation will be able to provide approximately 13 player packs, which equates to a full team of Rugby League players.	Yes	Yes	Grant

3	Witney Pride	A couple of sturdy folding tables to use at events for displays and to sell merchandise from	Yes	Yes	Grant
4	Witney Shed	Replacement batteries for hand power tools	Yes	Yes	Grant
5	Witney Town Band	Purchase of new music	Yes	Yes	Grant

The cheque for the Witney Fairtrade Action Group has been released as their application related to an event on 14 September. The other four cheques will be raised following endorsement by this Committee.

There are a further six organisations which have applied for grants and one from which officers are expecting an application.

One of the applications pending (**attached as Appendix A**) relates to Positive Measures, a parent-led support group for children with additional needs. The group is based in Eynsham but does include parents from Witney. An e-mail with supporting information (**attached as Appendix B**) and financial information (**attached as Appendix C**) have been received.

The Committee is requested to consider this application and whether it meets the criteria, as the group is based outside of the town .

Subsidised Lettings – The Leys/Other

1. Charity Football match – 7 September 2024

A request for a subsidised letting of a football pitch at West Witney has been received from FC Mills. The letting was to host a charity football match in aid of Prostate Cancer UK. The value of the letting was £65.

The application was received too late for consideration in July 2024 and is brought forward retrospectively.

Further details are included on the application form (**attached as Appendix D**). This has been submitted together with their bank statement for July 2024 (**attached as Appendix E**).

2. Burwell Hall Seniors Christmas Party – 21 December 2024

A verbal request from Councillor Crouch for subsidised hire at Burwell Hall for a Seniors Christmas party has been received. The hire would normally cost £123.67.

The event ran successfully in 2023 for the first time and was well-received by residents.

3. Circus Ginnett

A request for one free day hire at the Leys in the first week of October has been received as this is the day they take a charity collection on behalf of the NHS. The amount for 1 day's hire is £196.60.

Annual Grants

1. Rotary Club of Witney – Christmas Lights Switch on Event 2024.

A request for £2,500 has been received from the Rotary Club of Witney to finance the Christmas Lights Switch on Event 2024. Details are in the application (**attached as Appendix F**)

The Council has supported the event in previous years. In 2023 a grant of £2,100 was awarded. The request for 2024 is based on the costs of the event in 2023.

The latest set of adopted accounts, part of the Trust Fund Trustees Report (year to 30 June 2023) have been submitted with the application (**attached as Appendix G**).

There is a specific budget line for a grant towards this event as well as the Carnival which took place in July – code 4103/408. The budget was set at £4,500. The Carnival was awarded £2,400, an increase of £300 on 2023 to reflect increased costs. This leaves £2,100 in this budget so if £2,500 is agreed then Members will need to vire this from another budget line or make a supplementary estimate.

Correspondence

To note the report and thanks from the Oxfordshire Play Association in relation to previously issued grants (**attached as Appendix H**).

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 £10,520 (4100/407)
- The remaining subsidised lettings budget for the Leys/other balance is £5,145 (4110/407)
- The remaining Carnival/ Christmas Lights event budget balance is £2,100.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Endorse the award of grants of £50 to Witney Fairtrade Action Group, West Oxfordshire Levellers, Witney Pride, Witney Shed and Witney Town Band from the Town Council 50th Anniversary grants fund “£50 for Fifty.”
2. To consider the grant application by Positive Measures for a grant of £50 from the Town Council 50th Anniversary grants fund “£50 for Fifty.”
3. To consider the application by FC Mills for a subsidized pitch let at West Witney, in the sum of £65.
4. To consider the request from Cllr Crouch for a subsidized let at Burwell Hall in the sum of £123.67.
5. To consider the request from Circus Ginnett for a subsidized day hire at The Leys in the sum of £196.60.
6. To consider the grant application by the Rotary Club of Witney in the sum of £2,500 for the Christmas Lights switch-on event.
7. Note the correspondence from the Oxfordshire Play Association.