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**Agenda Item:** Christmas Lights Social Value Fund

**Meeting Date:** 25 November 2024

**Contact Officer:** Project Officer

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The purpose of this report is to offer recommendations for the distribution and allocation of the £1,000 social value fund donated by LITE Ltd to Witney Town Council, as part of the 2024-2026 Christmas Light Contract.

### **Background**

Within the Town Councils tender for the Witney Christmas Lights contract, Officers included a “Social Value” section to give applicants the opportunity to provide added value to the community.

The successful contractor LITE Ltd have committed to donate £1,000 each year to be apportioned by the Council. This means donations could be made to one or more organisations around Witney to make Christmas a more pleasant experience for those in need. This could range from providing a meal to the elderly who might be spending Christmas alone to providing some sort of present to a child who might otherwise go without.

As Councillors are well informed on community projects and initiatives around the town, Officers invited committee chairs to provide ideas on how the Council could use this money to improve Christmas for people in Witney.

### **Current Situation**

After a successful meeting with the PSC Committee in October, several organisations were identified and engaged by officers. The following list highlights each organisation and the added value they can provide leading up to Christmas.

- **Café 1863 – Mince Pies hand out on Xmas Eve for every paying customer.**

Witney Food Revolution are happy to help the Council with Mince Pie provision on Christmas Eve (and the days leading to it). Based on the last few years there has always been large quantities of Mince Pies, however officers won't know availability until closer the time. If the worst-case scenario occurs and Witney Food Revolution doesn't have any pies officers can go out and buy some on the day.

The Corn Exchange Café is classified as a “warm space” and many of the customers are elderly people who depend on the social and warm environment, who would undoubtedly appreciate the treat.

The only risks are:

- Demographic of customers means officers can't be 100% sure treats are being provided to people in need.
- Café income could be affected as people won't purchase cake/biscuits

- **Methodist Church – Witney Community Meal**

The donation will help the volunteers provide more food to put on an extra meal during the week. The minister has confirmed they would be pleased to help enhance an existing Thursday meal (providing a nice desert or bigger dinner) closer to Christmas for £200. Any further contribution would enable them to enhance another meal the week before, or even put on another meal on a different night. The people who benefit from the meal are mostly elderly people, who are lonely, struggle to keep warm and don't have enough food in the cupboards. The meal also supports low-income families and the homeless.

- **Parish Church – Witney Food Revolution/The Larder**

The Witney Benefice would be happy to support by providing known people in need (who come to the fridge/larder) with a treat or gift (for their kids) over the Christmas period during their openings. They often receive toys, knitters can make teddys and they can purchase sweets/chocolates to give out. Whilst the service is open to all, many of the people who use The Larder are poor individuals and families. They are confident they know the people who are in need and can provide them and their families with a treat our donation has provided.

- **Iraqi Women Art and War**

The organisation is based outside of Witney and would like to help however doesn't run any regular events for Witneys Refugee/Asylum Seeker Community – therefore, this would be a bespoke event that would require engagement, planning, provisioning and delivering. There is an appetite to run an event that involves cooking and art (where attendees create artwork and eat), which would require us providing food and art supplies, which would require a larger donation. Officers have asked for an approx. amount from the organisation to deliver this event but haven't had a response however assume it would be a large donation.

- **Witney Food Bank**

The Food Bank have confirmed that they would happily accept a donation and could use it to provide for example:

- Add treats to food parcels close to Xmas
- Add Meat Vouchers to Parcels close to Xmas
- Add donation to their normal food provision fund to ensure as many people as possible get a parcel (they currently need £3,000 per month to satisfy the demand for essentials)

There is a validation process which ensures that everyone who uses the food bank is in need.

- **Witney Community Church – Something Good Campaign**

Their team are in the planning stages of arranging an event at the Witney hotel for the current residents. The event would be a meal and present giving to the adults, children and families. They would happily accept a donation to go towards the event, which they are fundraising for.

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – by recognising the diverse needs of our community, councillors have identified a variety of organisations that can add value across different cross-sections of the community who are in need.
- b) Biodiversity – n/a
- c) Crime & Disorder – n/a
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – n/a

## **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.

If a decision on donation allocation and % split isn't confirmed, organisations may not have enough time to raise invoice, plan and deliver the additional activities on the lead up to Christmas.

## **Social Value**

This generous contribution will enable us to support various local organizations and initiatives, enhancing the Christmas experience for those in need. Further information on the need is included above.

## **Financial implications**

This donation carries no financial implications. The only condition is that the receiving organisation needs to provide an invoice for the donation to enable us to pay the donation correctly.

All organisations except for "Iraqi Women and Art" can provide an invoice, therefore it is not possible to proceed with this donation.

## **Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report and:

1. Agree to support the following organisations, who are most likely to benefit from the donation, provide high confidence that the donation will aid local people in need,

present the least amount of risk and have the administrative capability to manage the donation without impacting council resources.

- **Methodist Church – Witney Community Meal**
- **Parish Church – Witney Food Revolution/The Larder**
- **Witney Food Bank**
- **Witney Community Church – Something Good Campaign**

2. To split the donation equally so each listed organisation receives £250