
Agenda Item: Grants & Subsidised Lettings

Meeting Date: Monday, 3 February 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk/RFO

The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with grant requests from local organisations so they may agree dispersal.

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. For this meeting, they are covered in a separate report.

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

Current Situation

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

At the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 10th June 2024 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 (1-3) 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	Friends Of Witney Community Support Service	Towards the purchase of a "Wheelchair Accessible Swing".	Yes	Yes	Grant
2	Springfield School	Purchase of new sensory equipment for the children.	Yes	Yes	Grant
3	Witney Grandparent & Toddler Group	Arts & crafts supplies for several activities each week.	Yes	Yes	Grant
4	Witney Youth Council	The Youth Council members would like to purchase lanyards for identification at events.	Yes	n/a	
5	2120 Squadron Air Cadets	Towards the set up of a Squadron Marching Band.	Yes	No	

Applications 4-5 have been received with no supporting documentation so the applications are attached for reference as **Appendices A & B**. Information has been requested from Applicant 5.

The Committee will be aware Witney Youth Council has separate terms of reference to the Town Council and is accounted for under its accounting procedures. It has a modest budget of £500.

16 x £50 grants have previously been awarded under this scheme. If the 5 requests above were to be endorsed/agreed, there would be £1450 remaining. The scheme has already been extended once and the 50th anniversary year end on 31st March so further extension is not recommended.

Discretionary Grant Applications

1. Witney Dramatic Society – A request has been received for £7,300 to upgrade the groups lighting stock. Further details are included in the application and supporting information **Appendix C**.

From the 2025-26 Budget (£20,000)

2. Oxfordshire Lowland Rescue – A request for £2,495 has been received towards, *“purchase a new water trailer that would provide a number of functions for the team. It would enable to team to use it as a sonar data analysis area, providing a space to sit and review captured data during deployments. In addition, it would be set up as an office and kit hub which could serve as a secondary incident control point.*

This dual functionality would enhance our operational flexibility and readiness in case of vehicle breakdown or multiple deployments. The water team also believe that having a craft within the trailer to deploy the sonar, without needing to bring a separate boat, would be a huge operational benefit. This would streamline our process and improve efficiency during deployments.”

Further details are included in the application and supporting information attached as **Appendix D**.

Subsidised Letting

1. Witney Allotment Association – To formally note the agreement of a subsidised letting to hold an AGM discussed at the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee on 11 November 2024.

From the 2025-26 Budget

2. Witney Bus Users Meeting - A request for subsidised letting from the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee to cover the cost of Corn Exchange hire room hire for an evening in 2025 (date tbc) to the sum of £80.00 has been received. A meeting was held in October 2024 and received positive feedback from 75-80 residents who attended.
3. Witney Photo Group - An application for subsidised hire of the Corn Exchange for a day's photographic exhibition of members' work on 5th July 2025 has been received to the sum of £399.

The full application form and accompanying supporting documents are attached as **Appendix E**.

4. Film Screening – To note the recommendation of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee allowing subsidised use of the Gallery Room Main Hall for the screening of a film produced by a Witney resident in Witney to the sum of £160.

Correspondence

To note the letter of thanks from Witney & West Oxfordshire Foodbank concerning the social Christmas grant provided by the Council. (Attached as **Appendix F**)

To note the letter of thanks from Witney Food Revolution concerning the social Christmas Grant provided by the Council. (**Appendix G**)

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 – the groups applying for the 50:50 grants reach a large demographic of the town
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact from the contents of the report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct impact from the contents of the report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from the contents of the report.

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 policies 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.

The Council must ensure they are satisfied with the information provided in order to award funds and request further information if not. To not do so could incur reputational risk.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

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.

- The remaining grants budget balance is £10,920 (4100/407)
- The remaining subsidised lettings budget for the Corn Exchange is £4,606.50 (4110/407)
- The remaining £50 for Fifty grants budget is £1,700.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Endorse the award of grants of £50 to Friends of Witney Community Support Service, Springfield School, and Witney Grandparent & Toddler Group from the Town Council 50th Anniversary grants fund '£50 for Fifty.'
2. To consider the '£50 for fifty' applications from Witney Youth Council and 2120 Squadron RAF Air Cadets.

3. To consider the grant applications from Witney Dramatic Society and Oxfordshire Lowland Rescue.
4. To note the awarding of subsidised letting at the Corn Exchange for the Witney Allotment Association AGM.
5. To consider the subsidised letting applications from the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and Witney Photo Group for a subsidised letting at the Corn Exchange Witney.
6. To note the recommendation of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee in respect of a subsidised letting at the Corn Exchange for a local film screening.
7. Note the correspondence from Witney Food Revolution and Witney West Oxfordshire Foodbank.