
Agenda Item:	Grants & Subsidised Lettings
Meeting Date:	Monday, 28 September 2026
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk/R.F.O

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. No requests were received for consideration at the June meeting, and the Council therefore focused on the allocation of the Youth Services Grant.

In the current year the budgets are as follows:

- Discretionary Grants (4100/407) - £20,000
- Subsidised Lettings – Corn Exchange/Burwell Hall (4110/407) - £2,000
- Subsidised Lettings – The Leys/Other (4110/202) - £5,980
- 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.

Current Situation

Subsidised Letting Applications

The Council's subsidised letting policy can be viewed here [SubsidisedLettingPolicy2025.pdf](#)

1. Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA)

An application has been received for the cost of Corn Exchange Hall hire on 15 October 2026 (**£147**) for a Funding Surgery aimed at charities, community groups and voluntary organisations in the west of the county. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix A**.

2. Burwell Seniors Christmas Party

A request has been received for the cost of Burwell Hall hire on 18 December 2026 for the annual Burwell Senior's Christmas Party (**£116**). *The Council has supported this event in previous years.* An application is attached as **Appendix M**.

3. The Station - Detached Youth

At the Council meeting held on 13 July, it was agreed the Council would provide subsidised (free) letting for six parenting course sessions at the Corn Exchange in September. A grant form is attached for information as **Appendix B**, the total hire cost being **£441** (6 sessions @ £73.50). It is understood the group have enquired about the possibility of subsidised hire for a further six sessions.

4. West Witney Sports & Social Club

The Club will hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Burwell Hall on 6 November 2026. Following a meeting held jointly by the Club and the Town Council in August, it was been agreed that the **£129** hire fee for the meeting would be offered at a subsidised rate. This reflects the fact that the facilities at the Clubhouse are not yet complete and that the AGM is expected to support the Club's future progress.

5. West Oxfordshire Performing Arts Foundation

At the meeting of this Committee on 2 February 2026, the Committee recommended approval of a subsidised let for two days for the above organisation to hold an inaugural Festival of Speech at the Corn Exchange.

The event is booked for 21-22 November 2026 and the amount for this hire equals **£1,698**.

Discretionary Grants

The Council's grant policy can be viewed here [GrantAidPolicy202526.pdf](#)

1. Cotswold Rivers Trust

A grant application has been received asking for **£740** to undertake targeted chemical analysis of the watercourse [Colwell Brook]. This will provide the essential evidence base required to:

- identify key contaminants of concern
- inform appropriate restoration and management interventions
- support future funding applications and partnership work

'This represents a small but critical investment that will directly enable evidence-led restoration planning and help move the project from long-standing community concern to practical action.' The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix C**.

2. Ducklington Sports Club

A grant application has been received asking for **£2,000** to fund the purchase of new training and match footballs and first aid kits for all 14 teams ahead of the 2026/27 season. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix D**.

3. Witney Mills Cricket Club

A grant application has been received asking for **£1,700** to purchase a new mobile batting cage. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix E**.

4. Witney Congregational Church

A grant application has been received asking for **£3,000** 'To transform an area of the walled garden into a Tranquillity & Sensory Garden'. This aims to have level access to cater for all disabilities and will be available to any/all at times when the building is open. (9/5 weekdays – 9/1 weekends).' The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix F**.

5. Little Oak Preschool

A grant application has been received asking for **£1,150** towards replacing kitchen appliances that have broken and add a washer dryer to clean flannels and soft toys etc. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix G**.

6. Parent SENse Witney

A grant application has been received asking for **£866** towards the first year of free, parent-led peer-support meetings and information sessions to parents and carers of children with SEND. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix H**.

7. Clean Slate

A grant application has been received asking for **£500** to provide subsidised counselling sessions for adults experiencing mental health and emotional wellbeing challenges. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix J**.

8. Sounds of Support

A grant application has been received asking for **£200** towards an annual community live-music event in Witney which brings local people together while raising awareness of mental health and male suicide prevention and raising funds for Tough To Talk. The full application and supporting is attached under **Appendix K**.

Other Grants

1. Witney Music Festival (WMF)

In accordance with the Council's internal processes, grant funding is reviewed and monitored annually to assess delivery, outcomes, and the use of Council funds.

The Memorandum of Understanding Partnership Agreement between WMF and the Town Council, together with a report provided by the event organisers, is attached under **Appendix L** for Members' consideration.

At the Council meeting held on 8 December 2025, representations were received from members of the public regarding the Council's financial contribution towards the event, the cost of tickets and the value and outcomes arising from the Council's funding. Comments were also raised as to whether other community groups had an opportunity to host a community festival with a similar level of Town Council funding.

Members recognised the importance of retaining a music festival as a community event, while also identifying the need for greater scrutiny of financial performance, including income, expenditure, profit, and any losses incurred. Consideration to stating that no additional funding would be provided in the event of a loss beyond the annual £10,000 contribution was discussed. As with some other organisations receiving Council funding, it was also suggested that a Council Member could act as a representative in relation to WMF.

A report for the Council on the 2026 event is anticipated to be tabled ahead of the meeting, **Appendices L (i), (ii) & (iii)**. Members are asked to consider the documentation and make any recommendations considered appropriate to inform the Council's budget-setting process for 2027–28 with regards to subsidised letting and the annual partnership grant towards the event.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillars of the plan:

2. An Engaged and Supported Community
3. An Empowered Community
4. A Respectful Community

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** – Providing grants to local groups and organisations may have a positive impact on equality by supporting inclusive activities and services for people from diverse backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics.

- b) **Biodiversity** – the application concerning Colwell Brook will help mitigate against damage to the local eco-system and habitats.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** - no direct impact from the contents of the report although support for disadvantaged young people may lead to fulfilling lives.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – the application concerning Colwell Brook will help towards maintaining that environmental area.

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.

Providing funds for community events strengthens community cohesion, reduces isolation, supports wellbeing, and encourages connections, helping build a more inclusive and resilient community.

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 total value of the requests in relation to discretionary grants totals £10,156. The current balance of the discretionary grants budget (4100/407) is £20,000. Note that there is also an earmarked reserve which includes a sum of £11,252 in relation to grants, available if there are special circumstances or to provide for grants for which the remaining budget in any financial year cannot meet and which it considers needs to be provided.
- The total value of the requests in relation to Halls subsidised lettings totals £833 (£570 of which is for noting). The current balance of the Halls subsidised hire budget (4110/407), including sums committed for hirings later in the financial year is £1,289.
- Youth Services Grant 2026-27 (4169/408) – There is a ringfenced budget of £3,500 for youth projects/services within this financial year.
- In 2026-27 the Council provided WMF with grant funding of £10,000 and provided subsidised letting at the Leys to the value of £3,244.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Consider the subsidised letting requests as presented, and award as agreed.
2. Note the subsidised hire for the initial six parenting course sessions by The Station, a meeting of West Witney Sports and Social Club, and for West Oxon Performing Arts Foundation.
3. Consider whether to support further subsidised hire funding for the next six session parenting course sessions.
4. Consider the discretionary grant requests as presented, and award as agreed.
5. Consider the Partnership Agreement with Witney Music Festival and resolve accordingly as to whether further review is required and/or budget for the event in 2027-28.