

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 21 November 2022

Title: Discretionary Grant Request - Sandbag Store

Contact Officer: Operations Manager - Angus Whitburn

Background

Officers have been meeting with Riverside Gardens residents and Witney Flood mitigation Group to see where Witney Town Council can help with the flooding issues they have. Already, the council has agreed to make its public halls available to the District Council in emergency situations and use the Town Council's in-house maintenance team in flooding preparations during normal working hours.

Current Situation

There are many engineered solutions which would help with the flooding situation, but all are expensive, take time to review, install and seek funding. An option presented to Riverside Gardens was the provision of sandbags on site after a review of the issues present during the 2020 flooding.

It is important to realise that the installation of a sandbag store is not the ultimate solution for Riverside Gardens. It is only a solution that will help tackle a raised issue with the 2020 flood. Residents were not able to collect sandbags from UBICO's depo. With this solution, there are situated on site, so the fire brigade, volunteers, and residents have a local store they can utilise.

This report is to support a grant request from the residents, but it is also understood they have put a request in for a porting of Cllr Coles County Councillor Priortiy fund and also West Oxford District council have now offered them sandbags on site.

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.

Due to climate change, these flooding events would be expected to become more frequent and the infrequent flooding across witney may become more common.

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 freehold of Riverside gardens is owned by Grange who are also the riparian owners of the riverbank alongside Riverside Gardens. Riverside Gardens residents pay a maintenance cost to Grange which covers grounds & building maintenance, gritting salt etc. In a certain context, this reads as Grange is ultimately responsible to install safety measures for the residents. With this understanding, the question has to be raised that if it is the responsibility of the Town Council to assist with flood protection in this area.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- 1 x SOLMHA™ KDC+ Garden Motorbike Container £1,978.80
- The installation of the storage unit would be handled by Town Council operatives including ground preparations.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Due to some of the recent confusion over multiple parties' grant funding and assistance, Witney Town Council agrees to supply a grant sum to cover the cost of procurement and installation of one storage unit (subject to the completion of a grant form) and;
2. Riverside Gardens will then communicate with the District Council in order to fill the unit with sandbags.