

Wootton Parish Council

Section 137 Grants policy (Revised April 2024)

1 Background

The Parish Council can only spend money where it has the legal power to do so. These powers are contained in various Acts of Parliament, most usually the Local Government Act of 1972. Section 137 of this Act grants powers to parish councils to incur expenditure where they have no other power or duty but are satisfied that the expenditure would be reasonable and in the interests of the Parish either, as a whole or in part. The maximum amount that the Council can spend on Section 137 in any one year is set annually by government and usually increases marginally every year. The amount available depends of the numbers of registered electors in the parish and currently amounts to about £4962.

Any spending using S.137 powers has to fit within the budget constraints of the Council. Accordingly, the Council will, when setting its overall budget each November, allocate a sum (either at or within the maximum permitted) to be available in the following financial year for grants to be made to local organisations for activities which would be of benefit to the parish and/or its inhabitants and for which the Council has no other powers available.

2 Definition of 'grant'

A grant is defined as an award to an organisation or group to undertake voluntary or community activities for the benefit of the Parish. The organisation/group themselves determine their activities and procedures and the Council makes a financial contribution towards their costs.

All grants made by the Council are discretionary. The Council cannot be required to award any grant to any group or organisation. Grants are made subject to the conditions set out later in this policy and the award of a grant in one year does not imply that a similar grant will automatically be made in a subsequent year. Grants can only be made to organisations, not to individuals.

3 Availability of funds

The availability of funds to support voluntary activity is dependent on the Council's overall financial position and the choices it makes when allocating its resources. The Council will only consider supplying direct support in the form of grants to eligible bodies as set out below.

4 Eligible groups

These will usually be based in the Parish, delivering activities or services to Wootton. Regional or national charities are thus unlikely to be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the project is specific to the parish of Wootton, with an obvious benefit to the area. Newly formed groups in the process of setting up will be eligible to apply but a grant will not be paid until they are able to meet the criteria set below.

Groups will usually be a non-profit making body (or if not ,then one where accrued income is recycled for the benefit of the Parish) which works primarily for the benefit of the parish, is independent and formally constituted, with a governing committee made up of volunteers.

Eligible groups may also include voluntary organisations which employ paid staff for their expertise where the group does not have the necessary skills.

The Council will only award a grant to eligible groups which have clear plans for the grant and the organization, and have common and transparent arrangements for agreeing objectives.

In order to maintain a consistent approach and to ensure value for money, all applications for grant funding will be reviewed in the following areas -

- The need for Council assistance
- The levels of service and quality provided
- Does the project/service cover gaps in existing provision? or meet new or changing needs? or reduce duplication? Will the Council's funding help to attract other external funding?
- The financial management of the project/service

5 Decisions

Decision making will be on the basis of the information provided in the completed application form, and fulfilling the requirements of this policy. A decision will usually be made by the Council at the first meeting after receipt of the grant application, agenda timing permitting, or at the one immediately after, unless further information is required. If further information is required the applicant organisation will be offered a meeting with councillors.

6 Monitoring & reporting

The Council's grant aid counts as public expenditure, and therefore needs to be properly monitored and accounted for. Accordingly, the Council expects the organisation receiving the grant to be able to keep suitable accounts recording its income and expenditure, to account for the grant received, showing how it has spent the money, and to report each year at the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on its activities and how the grant has helped these. In requiring this, the Council does recognise that the accountancy standards and the financial monitoring need to be proportionate to the amount of grant aid, that the key purpose is to demonstrate what has been achieved, and that the annual information reports should be as simple as possible.

7 Risk management

There are associated risks involved with providing funding support. Voluntary and community groups will be encouraged to carry out risk assessments to identify possible areas of concern, for example audit processes and systems to minimise fraud and purchasing public liability insurance. There may be other areas to consider allied to proposed activities.

8 Acceptance of a grant award

Accepting an award means the recipient:

will provide a report for Parish Council for presentation to the Council and the following Annual Parish Meeting (at the discretion of the Parish Council) outlining how the grant has been utilised, how it has assisted the organisation and what it has achieved.

agrees to the Parish Council publishing the above report and/or its own article about the grant as the Council sees fit;

will be accountable for funds and if requested will provide a receipt;

will sign a disclaimer releasing the Council from any responsibility for the event or activity;

acknowledges that the grant does not imply or constitute any employer/employee relationship;

will provide the necessary information to enable the grant to be paid within two months of its approval, and where the grant is to support a specific event, will do so to enable the grant to be paid at least 21 days before the date of the event.

Application forms may be obtained from the Parish Clerk - clerkwpc0@gmail.com – to whom any further queries about this policy should be directed.

WPC (+ date)