

Background

The Parish Council has to have a legal power or duty before it can incur any expenditure. There is no specific power which allows the Council to give public money to groups and organizations. The Council relies on a general power contained in Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council may only use this power if, and only if, it is satisfied that the expenditure is in the interests of the Parish as a whole or part thereof. The maximum amount that the Council can spend on Section 137 is fixed by the Government and the maximum amount possible per elector is currently £9.93 per elector set for the year 2023-24. There are currently 484 electors giving a S137 Grant maximum expenditure of £4772.83 for the year. Any award has to fit within the budget constraints of the Council.

1. Definition of a 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 as a grant award.

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 cannot be made to individuals.

2. Scope of funding

Funding support may be available for voluntary and community sector organisations and local bodies which:

- are based in the Parish, delivering activities or services to our parishioners (Regional/National charities are 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);

or

- are newly formed groups intending to provide facilities not yet available to residents;

and

- have not previously applied for a grant from the Parish Council for the current financial year (1st April to 31st March).

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 in Section 4 (Eligible groups).

4. Eligible groups

These will usually be:

- a non-profit making body or one where accrued income is recycled for the benefit of the Parish;
- working for the benefit of the Parish;
- independent, determining their own aims and objectives;
- formally constituted, with a committee made up of volunteers comprising the governing body;
- groups with a formal constitution and/or which have charitable status.

Eligible groups may also include voluntary organisations which employ paid staff for their expertise where the group does not have the necessary skills. Individuals are not eligible for grant support from the Council.

The Council will only award a grant to eligible groups which:-

- have clear plans for the grant and the organization;
- 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 document. A decision will usually be made by Full Council at their next meeting, agenda time permitting, or at the one immediately after, unless further information is required.

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 to the Council 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 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 claim the grant within two months of approval;
- 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.

9. Application forms may be obtained from:

Wootton Parish Clerk clerkwpco@gmail.com