

Grant Making Procedures Review 2020

Introduction

Wem Town Council has a long history of supporting local organisations and groups with grants and these small grants have enabled many smaller groups to develop new initiatives.

Current Small Grant Scheme

The Town Council's grant scheme was last reviewed in October 2016 and the changes made as part of this review has seen an increase in the variety of groups accessing these grants which has enabled the funds to support more varied groups and projects. Appendix A contains the current guidance issued to applicants.

As it has been 4 years since the last review it is prudent to conduct a new review of the grant application and awarding process. Outlined below are the Clerk's recommendations for amendments to the current guidelines and application form.

Timescales

Currently the deadline for applications is usually set as the Friday of the first week in January and all grants are decided at the January budget meeting which is held towards the middle of the month. Grants are being paid in late April / early May. With the deadline being set so close after Christmas we have found that groups often struggle to submit applications in time which has resulted in requests for late applications to be considered and last year several applications were refused for the first time on this basis).

The budget meeting is normally a lengthy meeting with a significant amount of reports and it is sometimes felt that insufficient time is allocated to the careful consideration of applications. Therefore to address the issue of late applications and to allow more time for Councillors to consider each application on its merits it would be more appropriate to put the deadline for grant applications as the 31st January each year with the applications being determined at the February meeting of the Town Council.

RECOMMENDATION - That

- **The deadline for applications is set at 5pm on 31st January**
- **Applications are considered at the February meeting of the Town Council**
- **No late applications will be considered for any reason**

Grant amount

Currently a limit of £1000 is set per grant. In 2020 £5000 was allocated in the budget amount for small grants and 5 of the 11 applicants requested a grant of £1000. In order to spread the limited funds available it may be more prudent to reduce the application limit to £500 as larger grants can be funded via the Connexus project (up to £5000 or National Lottery up to £10,000).

RECOMMENDATION - That grant amount is reduced to £500

Eligibility

The current policy states that the Council encourages applications from local community-based 'not-for-profit' or charitable organisations, e.g. voluntary groups, societies, clubs (including new start-

ups), sports clubs, youth clubs and playgroups. Groups within the Town Council's area may apply; those outside the Town who can demonstrate direct benefit to the residents of the town will be eligible to apply for consideration by the Council.

In recent years some national organisations have started to apply and it may be prudent to provide clarification on what is a local organisation.

RECOMMENDATION - That the eligibility criteria is amended to include the following definition of a local organisation

A local organisation is defined as an organisation based in the Wem Town Council area, or national bodies, with an independent branch in the same area, providing support to the residents of Wem Town.

Purpose of Grant

The Town Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and its aspiration is to become climate neutral by 2030. There is an opportunity through the grant application to add to the grant criteria to include climate change activities.

RECOMMENDATION - That the following is added

The Town Council is particularly keen to award funding to groups with projects aimed at addressing climate change.

Application form supporting information

Along with the application form applicants are required to submit

- A copy of the organisation's constitution, set of rules or statement of aims and objectives.
- Copies of audited or independently examined accounts for the last year.
- Supporting evidence of the cost of the project. Evidence could include: estimates (more than one) or receipted invoice.

The audited accounts for some organisations can be complex therefore in order to make it easier to clearly understand the financial picture of the applicant an additional question could be added to the application form

RECOMMENDATION - To make it easier for Councillors to read the application form it should be amended to include the following question

Please provide the following details from your most recent annual accounts

Total Income	£
Less Total Expenditure	£
Surplus / Loss	£
Savings (Reserves, Cash, Investments)	£

Newly established organisations to be asked to provide, their projected income and expenditure for the next twelve months.

Grant Awarding

Currently the grants are sent to the successful applicants via cheque or BACS during April. The Town Council could do more to promote the grants it hands out each year as this will raise the profile of the grant scheme and the recipient's projects. A suggestion would be to arrange a presentation ceremony with the Mayor as part of the Annual Town Meeting held in April. This would provide a publicity opportunity for the groups being awarded grants and provide more involvement in the Annual Town Meeting which is often poorly attended.

RECOMMENDATION - That a grant presentation evening is incorporated into the Annual Town Meeting to be held in April each year where recipients will be awarded grants by the Mayor and any groups unable to attend the presentation evening will receive grants after that date.

APPENDIX A

Wem Town Council

Community Grant Applications

Wem Town Council operates a community grant scheme, with criteria, terms and conditions as detailed below. The aim of the grant scheme is to ensure that public funds are used in ways that assist local clubs, societies and organisations to enable them to develop and achieve their respective aims and objectives where these benefit the town and the local community.

1. Who can apply?

The Council encourages applications from local community-based 'not-for-profit' or charitable organisations, e.g. voluntary groups, societies, clubs (including new start-ups), sports clubs, youth clubs and playgroups. Groups within the Town Council's area may apply; those outside the Town who can demonstrate direct benefit will be eligible to apply for consideration by the Council. All organisations applying for a grant must;

- be of a non-commercial nature,
- have a constitution, set of rules or documented aims and objectives,
- have a bank account with at least two signatures.

The Town Council cannot give financial assistance to individuals under this scheme nor will it consider retrospective applications where the activity or project has already been carried out.

2. What can the grants be used for?

The purpose for which the grant is made must be in the interest of all or some of the inhabitants of Wem.

The Town Council prefers to consider applications for assistance with capital funding needs rather than revenue costs (wages and salaries etc.). However revenue funding, if agreed, may be time limited and should not therefore be budgeted by any organisation on an annual basis.

The Council considers applications on the following basis:

- How well the grant will meet the needs of the community.
- How effectively the organisation will use the grant.
- Whether the costs are appropriate and realistic.
- Level of contributions raised locally.
- Whether there are more appropriate streams of funding for the organisation.
- How the organisation is managed.

3. How and when should an application be made?

All applications are to be made on the Town Council's grant application form which can be obtained direct from the Town Council or downloaded from the website. Applications for funding must be received by 1st April for consideration at the April meeting of the Town Council. Payment of grants will be made in payment in April/ May.

Along with the application form applicants are required to submit

- A copy of the organisation's constitution, set of rules or statement of aims and objectives.
- Copies of audited or independently examined accounts for the last year.
- Supporting evidence of the cost of the project. Evidence could include: estimates (more than one) or receipted invoice.

Organisations are advised to take a photocopy of the completed application form for their own reference.

1. General criteria – these apply to all Community Grant Applications:

- Each application to be considered on its merit; the amount of grant will be at the discretion of the Town Council, but will not exceed **£1000**.
- The grant can only be used for the purposes stated in the application and the Council reserves the right to reclaim any grant not being used for the specified purpose of the application.
- The Town Council will endeavour to treat similar projects equitably.
- The Committee will take into account any previous grant made to an organisation or group when considering a new application.
- No grant will be awarded to or for any commercial venture for private gain.
- Successful applicants must be prepared to participate in any publicity required by the Council.
- The Council will require within six months a brief outline of the benefits to the community of the grant. Failure to provide a report may result in non determination of any future application. The application must include your most recent audited accounts and constitution. No application will be considered without supporting financial information.
- Organisations are responsible for ensuring that they comply with all legal and statutory requirements relating to the proposed project to be funded.
- Should for any reason the organisation disband during the period of the grant the Council may ask for all or part of the monies to be paid back.
- Organisations can normally only make one application per year, though exceptions can be made.

Should any of these conditions not be met it could result in the grant being withdrawn, the grant having to be repaid and future grant applications being refused.