

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
DELEGATED DECISION MEETING – WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE 2018
COMMUNITY REVENUE GRANTS
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND COMMUNITIES

(Contact: Dene Robson, Tel: (01993) 861481)

(The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism is authorised to make any residual grant awards subsequent to the annual application round acting in the context of the available residual grants budget, the grant scheme guidance and in consultation with appropriate officers)

1. PURPOSE

To consider and determine a Community Revenue Grant award for 2018/2019

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Health approves the recommended Community Revenue Grant (2018/19) award of £950 to Witney Woodland Volunteers.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Council's Community Revenue Grant application process was introduced following a review of revenue grants management and Cabinet's recent (January 2018) consideration of proposals for the future management of this voluntary and community sector funding. The Council's new grant scheme guidance incorporates criteria that govern eligibility for funding and the further assessment of grant applications.
- 3.2. As summarised in the grant application for guidance, the key assessment criteria are:
- Evidence of need.
 - Relevance to meeting the Council's priority aims.
 - The extent of the community benefit and impact that the project/ activity will deliver.
 - How the applicant organisation will monitor and evaluate the activity supported.
 - The assessment of risks (financial and other) associated with the project/ activity.
 - The application demonstrating a financial need for grant support.
 - Whether the grant represents value for money.
- 3.3. The current grant application has been assessed against the qualifying and assessment criteria for funding support as summarised above. The application has been assessed through a Grants Panel and the recommended funding is brought forward in this report for Cabinet Member approval.
- 3.4. The Witney Woodland Volunteers meet weekly to plant trees, shrubs and bulbs in and around Witney. The Group also clears undergrowth and over-hanging vegetation on footpaths, riverbanks and green spaces across the town, as well as litter picking where the work takes place. Witney Woodland Volunteers also manages (through agreement

with West Oxfordshire District Council) eleven acres of woodland (Deer Park Wood). In 2016/17, the Group undertook 1,038 person hours on its environmental work.

- 3.5. The Witney Woodland Volunteers provide an effective co-ordination of volunteer effort and operate with only very limited financial resources. The Community Revenue Grant application seeks funding to help meet the cost of essential outgoings such as the cost of new and replacement tools, Public Liability Insurance, publicity material and certain other small operational costs as detailed in the application form.
- 3.6. Whilst the funding sought represents more than 33.3% of the organisation's recent annual running costs and is in fact over 50% of annual project expenditure (above the guideline percentages in the Grant Scheme Criteria), the project evaluation still considers that the activity represents value for money. This is due to the significant value of the in-kind contribution of volunteer effort that has been drawn together and maintained (the Group has been in existence for 12 years). It is estimated that the voluntary effort, if costed, equates to a value of over £8,000 per year and including this element meets the evaluation test. The Grant Scheme provides for an assessment of each case on its own merits.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 4.1. The current report sets out the funding recommendation that results from the Grant Panel's assessment of the Community Revenue Grant application. The approval of the grant award would endorse the evaluation process and allow the grant award to proceed as advised.
- 4.2. An alternative option would be to not accept the report's recommendation and reject the application for funding.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The recommended grant award in this report can be financed from the Council's Community Revenue Grant budget (Landscape Initiatives).

6. RISKS

- 6.1. Any risks associated with the project activity are considered as part of the funding application and evaluation process. Where relevant, appropriate mitigation measures are considered. In this case, risks are deemed to be limited with appropriate measures already in place to manage practical risks, whilst the level of financial award is modest.

7. REASONS

- 7.1. The award of revenue grants and the support of voluntary and community activity provides an effective way for the Council to support the achievement of Council Plan priorities. In this case, significant volunteer activity is co-ordinated through the Witney Woodland Volunteers and this delivers a positive impact on the local environment.

Diana Shelton

Head of Leisure and Communities

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Background Papers:

None