

St Nicholas with Bonvilston Community Council

Financial Assistance Programme for Community Organisations

Reviewed December 2020

Overview

As a Community Council we support grass roots activities within our community. Therefore, we will be providing a financial assistance programme to support community organisations who are active in our community. Funding can be provided to existing or newly formed organisations. The types of organisation that will be considered for financial assistance include:

- Charitable groups
- Sports clubs
- Youth groups
- Playgroups
- Arts groups
- Free advice organisations
- Environmental groups
- Community / Voluntary transport scheme

Below are examples of some of the many activities that can be supported:

- The provision of opportunities for older people
- Activities for young people and helping to meet their social, educational and leisure needs
- Community involvement in local arts and cultural activities
- Participation in local sports and leisure activities and enabling clubs to develop and improve sporting infrastructure
- Access to sustainable transport schemes
- Schemes to improve the appearance of our Community e.g. nature conservation, planting, decorations, etc.

Applications can be made throughout the year. Each application will then be assessed on its merits and subject to resources being available.

Please note that this programme, replaces our previous policy of giving generalised donations. As such, in future we will be unable to provide an organisation with funds, unless they specifically apply for funding by submitting a completed an application form.

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Detailed breakdown of Financial Assistance Programme for Community Organisations

1. Responsibility

The Community Council as a group will be responsible for reviewing and approving all applications for financial assistance received from community organisations.

2. Budget

The Community Council will set an annual budget for the amount that can be awarded in total during each financial year for financial assistance. Hereby referred to as the "Financial Assistance Fund". See Appendix 1 for details of the current budget.

The Community Council will be responsible for ensuring that this budget is adhered to and that the Financial Assistance Fund is allocated fairly throughout the financial period and in accordance with this policy document.

The Community Council may decide to increase the Financial Assistance Fund in the event of:

- a. A large exceptional request being received (see below for definition) and / or
- b. A higher than anticipated volume of community requests / projects.

If such a request is approved, the Community Council may grant either:

- A one-off increase for an exceptional request, or
- An increase in the budget in the event of an increase in the volume of requests.

3. Who is eligible to apply for financial assistance from the Community Council?

- Groups or organisations (not individuals) who have a connection with our Community Council area and / or have members who live within the boundaries of our Council. Please refer to the attached map which outlines the boundaries of our area.
- Groups must be properly constituted and non-profit making.
- Applicants must have a bank account as successful applications can only be paid by cheque or bank transfer
- Applicants can only apply if they have less than £5,000 of their own funds available to them.

4. Process to apply for financial assistance

4.1. Application process

All requests for financial assistance MUST be:

- Made by the applicants themselves or their adopted advisor.
- Made in writing using our "Financial Assistance Request Form" (Copy attached). This document will be available on our website for applicants to complete. For any applicants without internet access, hard copies will be made available via the Clerk.
- Accompanied by the organisation's latest bank statement to enable us to verify eligibility. Failure to include a bank statement will automatically lead to a request being declined
- Submitted directly to the Clerk of the Community Council.
- Made by email if possible, but we will also accept applications by post or by hand for those that do not have access to electronic means.

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4.2 Internal review and verification

Upon receipt, all applications will be reviewed by the Clerk to ensure:

- That the applicants are eligible to apply
- The specific application is for a project, initiative or activities that is in line with the objectives of the Community Council.

The Clerk will then prepare a covering statement for each request to inform the members of the Community Council of the following items:

- The eligibility of the applicant has been verified and meets the criteria set out above.
- The specific application is for a project, initiative or activities has been verified as being in line with the objectives of the Community Council.
- Whether the application is a standard request or an exceptional request (see below for explanation of these categories).
- If it is a standard request, the financial value applicable to that specific request.
- Under which section of legislation, the Community Council would be permitted to make such expenditure should the Council wish to do so, and any specific restrictions / requirements associated with such legislation. E.g. s137 Power of Well Being Act which advises £8 per resident as applicable for certain subjects.

The Clerk's covering statement will then be forwarded along with the original application form and any supporting documentation to the community Council for their review and consideration.

4.3 Approval of Standard Requests

Local organisations to receive amounts based on a tiered structure depending on how many people living within the Community Council area will benefit. Standard award to be as follows:

Number of members living within the Community Council's boundaries	Value of standard award
5 members	Up to £150
6 - 20 members	Up to £250
20+ members	Up to £400

National organisations with a local branch or working on a local initiative or project within our community will receive up to £100.

A simple majority of the members of the Community Council present at the meeting is required to approve a standard request for financial assistance.

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4.4 Approval of Exceptional Requests

The Council may on occasion decide to make special exception to the above and award values in excess of the standard amounts or to organisations that would not usually be eligible under this policy.

Such situations should only be made in the event of an exceptional circumstance and when such a decision is supported by a 75% majority of the Council members in attendance at the meeting.

N.B. Any exceptional request must still:

- *Follow the application process outlined above.*
- *Be within the scope of the Council Council's authority and scope.*

4.5. Decisions

Decisions will be made to award financial assistance or not.

In the event that approval is granted, the Committee must evidence the relevant legislation under which they are authorised to make such expenditure. This must be recorded in the minutes.

4.6 Notification of decisions

Applications will be notified of the result of their application by the Clerk within 7 days of the Community Council's decision. Notifications will usually be sent by email, unless the applicant does not have access to email. In such cases, notification will be by telephone with confirmation sent by post.

4.6. Appeal Process

In the event that an applicant feels that their application has not been given due consideration or they are dissatisfied with the result, the following process will apply:

- The applicant can appeal in writing to the Chair of the Community Council to request a second review and submit any additional supporting documentation. Such requests must be made via the Clerk and must be received within 21 days of being notified of the original decision by the Council.
- The Community Council will have 21 days from receipt of the appeal to consider this request and any additional documentation. Their second decision will be communicated to the applicant by the Clerk within 7 days.

In the event that the applicant is still dissatisfied with the second decision, any further appeals will be considered under the Community Council's Complaints Procedures. Details of which can be obtained from the Council's website or by contacting the Clerk.

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5. Meetings to discuss requests for financial assistance

The Community Council usually meets monthly (except July) and will discuss such matters as and when applications are received.

Meetings, discussions and decisions will be documented in the form of minutes to provide transparency and an audit trail. For approvals, the minutes must note the section of legislation, under which the Community Council is permitted to make such expenditure.

6. Payments

Requests for financial assistance will only be paid once the applicant has:

- Completed the event / activity and
- Provided the Clerk with suitable evidence to confirm expenditure has been made by the applicant. Such evidence will consist of invoices and / receipts from third parties (not usually receipts or invoices created by the applicant themselves).

However, exceptions to this rule may be made. For example, for smaller organisations that are unable to self-fund the initial expenditure.

7. Receipt of payment

Applicants will be required to provide within 28 days a written receipt / report to the Clerk to confirm:

- The applicant has received the money in full and the date it was received.

Plus:

- a) Either, the money was spent on the specific item or topic outlined in the application submitted to the Community Council.
- b) Or, if the money has yet to be spent, confirmation that the money will only be spent on items consistent with their original application and will be spent within one year of their application being approved. See section 8 for exceptions.

In the case of b) a second written report will be required from the applicant within one year of the date that the application was approved to confirm that the money was indeed spent on the approved item / activity.

8. Limitations – Change of use and timelines

As a public body, expenditure by the Community Council is tightly regulated and monitored. Therefore, any monies awarded or paid by the Community Council to an applicant can only be spent in specific pre-approved ways within a defined period being within one year from the approval date of the application.

In the event that an applicant's need or intention or timelines changes, they must receive PRIOR approval from the Community Council before using the money for a different purpose and / or spending it beyond the one year period.

If an applicant fails to seek and / or does not receive prior written approval, they may be liable to repay some, or all, of the money received.

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For example, a newly formed Parent and Toddler Group applied for funding of £250 to buy second hand play equipment. They received approval from the Community Council and the £250 was paid into their bank account. But before they could buy the play equipment, they receive a separate donation of play equipment from another organisation.

*In such a situation, the Parent & Toddler Group may wish to use the money to buy something else instead say for example, safety equipment. **Prior to spending the money** on the safety equipment, the Parent & Toddler Group would need to seek approval in writing from the Community Council (via the Clerk) that it was acceptable to spend the money in this way, as this type of expenditure was not originally approved by the Council.*

9. Reporting

The Clerk will be required to submit a report of any activities in this area before each meeting of the Community Council. This report must include details of:

- Any new applications received
- The name of the applicant
- The nature of the application
- The value of the request
- Any changes to previous applications already approved
- An update on monies awarded and / or spent for the current financial year on a cumulative basis against the Financial Assistance Fund for that period.

10. Publicity

The Community Council is a public body, funded by a Precept, which is a small share of the Vale of Glamorgan's Council Tax payable by residents in our local area. As such, the Community Council is accountable to local residents and the wider public for our activities and expenditure. The Community Council, therefore, reserve the right to publicise any activities or events where it has contributed funds.

By accepting financial assistance from the Community Council, any applicant is specifically agreeing to allow the Community Council to publicise the details of their application. Any publicity would be done in accordance with the requirements of GDPR and may include, but not be limited to:

- The organisation's name and general location
- The amount of funding provided
- Details of what the funding was used for
- When the money was spent

Example: The Community Council may choose to publish on its website or in local press that it awarded a grant of £250 to ABC Parent & Toddler Group, located in St Nicholas. The money was used to purchase additional play equipment for children aged 0-5 years in June last year.

The Community Council also reserve the right to request photographs of any launch event and / or of the items funded as part of their publicity. If the applicants are unable to provide photographs, the Council reserve the right to request access either directly or via an authorised third party or member of the Press, in order to take photographs for publicity purposes.

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Appendix 1: Current budget of the Financial Assistance Fund

The Community Council approved a budget of the following amount for the Financial Assistance Fund:

Amount approved:	£2000
Date approval granted by Community Council:	May 2019
Expiry date for granting approval of any funding requests for this budget: N.B. Unless otherwise stated, expiry date will be 364 days after approval date.	March 31, 2021