



## **BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS & FUNDING POLICY (Adopted by Council ??? 2016)**

### **Introduction**

Biggleswade Town Council have given grants for many years, mainly to the community and voluntary sector whose activities directly benefit the Town and its communities. The Council is committed to supporting and strengthening the many networks and community groups that help to make a positive difference to Biggleswade as a vital place to live, work and relax. We know that the Council can make a difference through our grants process, but it is also important that we seek a relationship with many of these groups to explore other ways in which they can develop and grow as they need to.

At the discretion of the Council, grants are awarded where a clear need for financial support can be demonstrated and the project contributes towards the vision and purpose and main priorities of the Town Council, as set out in its Corporate Strategy "Doing the Best for Biggleswade 2016-2020".

The Council have now reviewed the Policy to reflect it current priorities.

### **Our vision:**

Our Town will be vibrant and continually developing. One community, working collaboratively to deliver a shared blueprint of an improved local environment. The Town will seek to become Master of its own Destiny and through localised planning will shape its infrastructure, ensuring the protection of its amenities and open spaces.

To achieve this, we will strive to satisfy the needs of our community in work, rest and play. We will stimulate new economic growth within our town. We will develop the confidence and presence to positively influence others whilst acting in a culture of honesty trust and openness.

### **Our purpose:**

is to build the success of Biggleswade, creating a single town community, identifying the economic, physical and social needs and delivering services to meet those needs, working collaboratively with the community and partners.

To achieve this, all members of the council will work together and with others, to serve and lead the community with a determination to undertake the fullest range of services, responding to the wider need of its residents with fair and proportionate governance.

### **Main Priorities:**

#### **PRIORITY 1: STIMULATING NEW GROWTH WITHIN THE TOWN WHILST PROTECTING AMENITIES**

1. Engage with trade groups, local businesses and others to develop the town with a focus on bringing empty shops back into use.
2. Create more parking facilities for the town by enhancing existing car parks and investigating the purchase of land for the provision of additional ones.
3. Investigate and encourage options for attracting commercial leisure facilities into the town.
4. Prepare a guide to recreation and leisure facilities within the town, promoting the information on the Town Council website.

5. Use Biggleswade leisure facilities flexibly, to meet the needs of the community.
6. Protect, maintain and enhance open spaces.
7. Produce a design guide for the town.

#### **PRIORITY 2: BUILDING THE SUCCESS OF A SUSTAINABLE BIGGLESWADE**

1. To become an influential participant in dealing with others, working with partners to manage and improve local services. Develop the ethos of partnership working whilst aligning all activities with the Corporate Strategy.
2. Focus on gaining the powers important to the people of Biggleswade by working with the principal authority on devolution of services to the Town Council.
3. Develop a Neighbourhood Plan, seeking more control over local planning issues and providing an effective voice for the council in planning decisions.
4. Use the planning system to the benefit of the local community by commenting on applications and lobbying for amenities and funding.
5. Encourage the principle authority to develop a Biggleswade sustainable transport strategy which ensures all communities and facilities are linked to the town.
6. Protect and enhance the heritage of the town by supporting organisations which develop the knowledge of local history and take a proactive role in managing the conservation area and listed buildings.
7. Protect and enhance our local environment by preserving the natural environment, biodiversity and important landscapes
8. Develop the longer term sustainability of the town by setting ourselves high environmental standards and working with others to address wider environmental issues and concerns.

#### **PRIORITY 3: CREATION OF A SINGLE BIGGLESWADE COMMUNITY**

1. Enable the setting up of a Biggleswade Community Forum to coordinate community effort towards delivering priority projects.
2. Facilitate and support the community to work better together with the council and partners.
3. Encourage more people to take an active interest in the town, its local council and voluntary sector.
4. Develop a communication strategy ensuring the council develops efficient and effective communication with the local population and partners.
5. Engage with Central Bedfordshire Council to help it understand local needs with the aim of providing improved services and facilities.
6. Work to make our communities as inclusive as possible.
7. Recognise the diversity of the Town's communities.
8. Facilitate and support community events which build community cohesiveness or promote the town.
9. Work with others to ensure we have a healthy community.
10. Strive to make our town safer.

#### **Process**

- The Council will set an annual Grants Budget, identifying approximately the split between specifically authorised expenditure & Section 137 expenditure, until such time as it obtains the General Power of Competence. It may ring-fence specific grants within the budget, where it has made a decision in principle.
- Subject to funds being available, applications will usually be considered once each year, however if any projects for approved grants are not completed, other applications may be considered.
- Grant applications are invited in December each year during the Budget cycle and must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> December. It is usually expected that projects will be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March of the following year. The Council will advertise its Grant and Financial Assistance Scheme widely to ensure an equitable distribution of resources.

- During January, the Finance and General Purposes Committee will appraise each application provided that all supplementary information has been supplied. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Grants will not normally exceed **£1000**. Committee has authority to approve grants up to this amount. Grants above this figure may be recommended to Council for approval.
- Where an organisation requests a commitment of funds over a period of years an explanation of the reasons for medium term funding is required. The commitment to funding would not normally exceed two years.
- The Council may seek a meeting with the applicant to explore what the organisation is applying for and trying to achieve before deciding the application.
- Payment will not normally be made until a project has been completed. Payments will then only normally be made against a formal receipt or invoice. Stage payments may be approved for larger projects
- If payment or part payment is made in advance, the recipient will need to provide proof that the project has been completed or activity undertaken. If the project is not completed in a reasonable period of time or the organisation is discontinued, the Council reserves the right to reclaim any grant paid.
- The Council will decline further grants in any year when the appropriate budget has been committed.

## **Policies**

1. An award of a grant must give direct benefit to all or some of the inhabitants of the Town, and the size of grant will be commensurate with the benefit delivered, and the need for funding.
2. The Town Council as a body does not affiliate to any political party and legally cannot provide grant or support to any party political activity.
3. The Town Council does not affiliate to any religious group, however applications will be considered where there is a clear community wide benefit.
4. Request for grant aid will only be considered from the following categories of applicant:
  - A charity based inside or outside the Town, the activities of which are of direct benefit to residents or communities of the Town.
  - A not for profit organisation, based within or outside the Town, which serves the needs of the citizens or communities of the Town.
  - Citizens of the Town requesting grant aid with a project/event, which will be for the benefit of a wider group.
  - A Town based club/association/organisation serving specific sections of the community or the community as a whole.
  - Applications from commercial organisations will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
  - National appeals will not normally be eligible to apply.
5. Applications will only be considered when made on a formal application form.

6. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their activities or the particular project for which financial support is being sought, will benefit the residents of Biggleswade Town.
7. The Council will give priority to the projects/organisations which progress one or more of its corporate priorities set out above.
8. The Council will normally require details of the structure and funding of the organisation, and may request copies of budget/accounts and business plans.
9. The Council will require details of any project which is the subject of the application, including standards to be attained, costs, timescales and how the remainder of the funding will be provided.
10. The Council will not normally fund the whole of a project.
11. Applicants will be required to state the amount of grant sought from the Council.
12. Where projects cross financials years, the Council may “ring fence” an approved amount of grant. It will reserve the right to withdraw approval where a project does not look likely to go ahead within a reasonable time.
13. The Council will usually only consider requests for specific projects, not on-going or core costs. The exceptions to this will be “pump-priming” to help organisations get established or organisations which deliver a substantial part of the Council’s priorities. Even in these cases, the ability of the organisation to obtain core funding from other sources will be considered.
14. The Council may, where it appears to be a more cost effective or efficient use of resources, prefer to act in partnership with another organisation, or provide support “in kind”, rather than provide grant assistance.
15. The Council will require as a condition of grant, the organisations to advertise the fact that grant aid has been provided by the Council.
16. The giving of a grant one year does not set a precedent for another year.
17. The Council will identify against each grant approval, the power under which it gives the grant if it does not hold the General Power of Competence at the time of making the decision.
18. Organisations are not restricted to the number of grant applications submitted to the Council for grant aid over a period of time, however the history of previous applications will be considered in the decision making process.
19. Where ear marked reserves have been allocated to specific organisations, prior to the adoption of this Policy, these will be honoured as long as the Organisation concerned remains operational.