

GRANT AID POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. BACKGROUND

Hexham Town Council is funded by the residents of Hexham and therefore only has limited funds to assist community organisations located and working in Hexham for the benefit of the community.

Subject to funding being available, Hexham Town Council is committed to providing assistance and support to local community groups which are set up to promote community life for Hexham residents. The Council's financial support is provided by way of grants which are decided against criteria set by, and which may be amended from time to time by, Hexham Town Council.

Hexham Town Council is committed to following best practice in grant giving in order to provide sustainable funding and support to voluntary and community groups, whilst providing value for money for local taxpayers and ensuring that public money is spent in a responsible manner.

So the Council can assess applications rationally and objectively, as many will inevitably be dissimilar in content, it is both necessary and helpful to assess all applications received against a range of criteria. These are designed to be a general indication of need but are not exclusive and can be flexibly applied.

The Town Council's policy on grants is based on the principle of promoting the development of partnerships which encourage and enable local community organisations to deliver local projects to the residents of Hexham. In general, the following principles apply:

- Assistance will be given on the basis of need, merit and contribution to the local community.
- Applicants must clearly show how any assistance given will benefit Hexham residents or the environment of Hexham.
- Any assistance given may be subject to ongoing monitoring and subsequent evaluation of the outcome of the grant.
- Organisations should not make a presumption that funding will continue on a year to year basis.

All successful applicants will be expected to demonstrate their work/services and the benefit experienced by the grant to the Finance and General Purposes Committee or by making a presentation at the Annual Town Meeting.

2. THE AIMS OF THE COUNCIL'S GRANT AID POLICY

Hexham Town Council provides grants to support the following aims:

- To enable local people to participate in voluntary groups and activities.
- To help the Town's voluntary groups to improve their effectiveness.

- To ensure the provision of services, needed by the Town's residents, via the voluntary sector.
- To support organisations which meet the needs of people experiencing social and economic difficulties.
- To ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity for all Hexham Town residents to the services it provides and funds.
- To improve or enhance the local environment.
- To achieve value for money.

The Town Council defines a voluntary group as a non-profit making organisation, set up and run by a voluntary, unpaid management committee.

3. THE GRANTS PROCESS

To apply for a Town Council grant you must be a charity, community group or local voluntary organisation with a constitution and dedicated bank account, operating or providing a service to the community in Hexham. All funding requests must use the Council's application form and applicants should provide all information requested. The form can be downloaded from the Council's website or is available from the office.

Applications (in triplicate please) should be posted or hand-delivered to the Town Council office at the address on the application form.

If necessary a completed application may be emailed to meet the closing date but this should be followed by hard copies together with supporting documents.

Applications must be received by 1 September for the next financial year so that provision can be made in the following year's budget.

All valid grant applications will be assessed by the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee in September/October of each year, and be ratified at the January Full Council meeting when the budget is agreed. All applicants will usually be notified of the Council's decision in January.

The F&GP Committee will award a grant at a figure it deems suitable, taking into account this policy, and not necessarily the figure that has been applied for.

Grants will be paid as soon as is practical after 1st April (larger grants may be paid in two equal instalments, the second after 1st October).

There were 10 applications received in 2020 and a Grant Aid budget of £78,850 was agreed in January 2021 as part of the overall Council budget for 2021/22.

Hexham Town Council supports a wide variety of grants which have been used to fund both revenue and capital projects, core costs and specific project work. The Council particularly welcomes applications from small or newly formed groups and those that have not applied before.

4. THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA IS USED FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS:

- Whether the group/project has followed the grants process and meets the Council's requirements and grant giving policy.
- Level of benefit to Hexham and the impact the grant will make.
- Evidence of a well-managed group, including previous experience and track record.
- Financial sustainability and viability of the group and/or project.
- Evidence of partnership working.
- Evidence that funding has been sought from other sources and the level of match funding available.
- Evidence of compliance with previous grant award conditions (if applicable).

5. HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL WILL NOT FUND THE FOLLOWING:

- Organisations that do not provide a service to the community in Hexham.
- Individuals or appeals supporting an individual.
- General appeals.
- Statutory organisations or the direct replacement of statutory funding.
- Political groups or activities promoting political beliefs.
- Religious groups where funding is to be used to promote religious beliefs.
- Arts and sports projects with no community or charitable element.
- Medical research, equipment or treatment.
- Animal welfare.
- Projects that may take place before an application can be decided.
- Organisations that have a closed or restricted membership.
- Equipment or other costs that have already been purchased or incurred prior to the application being considered.

6. CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

Grants will be made subject to the following conditions:

- They can only be used for the purpose of the application.
- If the Town Council's grant is part of the overall cost, no monies will be paid until there is evidence that the entire objective is funded.
- No monies should be spent in advance of the application. Evidence of expenditure may be requested.
- Grants will be paid by cheque or bank transfer to an organisation or group.
- The recipient must agree to participate in suitable publicity to note the Town Council's contribution.
- Applicants must submit a copy of the organisation's constitution, latest bank statement and a copy of last year's accounts with their application.
- Organisations are expected to provide the Town Council with written evidence of what the grant has been spent on and the benefit it has brought to Hexham. Such evidence should include copies of invoices and receipts and, where applicable, photos, attendance numbers, press clippings, etc. This information should be submitted within one month of the event/project end or by the end of February each year (whichever is sooner), so that it can be reported at the Annual Town Meeting.

Grants for capital projects will be paid after proof of the project being completed has been received (which must be within the financial year that the grant has been applied for).

Application forms and any information submitted to support an application will be held on file as follows before being destroyed:

Successful applicants: for two years following the year in which the grant was awarded.

Unsuccessful applicants: until the approval of the minutes of the meeting which declined the application.

It is anticipated that some organisations may ask for a guarantee of funding for a number of years. Whilst this is legally possible, it is recommended that no such binding commitments are given. This is because there is the potential for significant changes in the legislative obligations placed on local Councils. It would be possible to give an indicative, but non-legally binding, assurance that a continuation of a grant is likely to be a priority when budgets are set each year.

Amendments to this Policy and Procedure can be made at any time.

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