

Hetton Town Council - 16 November 2020

Item 11: Community Aid at Christmas

Report of: G Keedy, Town Clerk

This report is tabled following requests received by the Town Clerk from some Members.

Council will be aware from media coverage of the financial difficulties faced by many communities adversely affected by lockdown in response to Coronavirus; and the high-profile campaigns aimed at providing support for the hardest hit families, impacted by reduced income.

Many local councils have been in a position to provide practical assistance "on the ground" during the pandemic, but as a council without responsibilities for front-line services, opportunities for Hetton Town Council to help are limited.

Some Members have suggested that the Town Council may wish to provide direct financial assistance through the provision of targeted funding to some community groups with a focus on helping those families most in need; especially in the run up to Christmas when spending pressures are more acute.

Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure.

The S137 funding limit for 2020/2021 (set by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) is £8.32 x the electoral roll number for HTC as at 1 April 2020 (11,420). This amounts to £95014, far in excess of the financial capacity of the Town Council.

Council is asked to consider if it wishes to make any financial awards at this time of unique challenge to communities. Awards cannot be made to individuals, or organisations operating on a commercial basis and must be restricted to charities or 'not for profit' local organisations.

Should Council determine to proceed, appropriate organisations will need to be identified, with a justification for its' selection and careful consideration given to the level of any financial award(s).

Any decision should be made in the context of the Council's budget position and expected commitments, including the potential for future applications to the Community Grant Award scheme.