

Hetton Town Council - 27 April 2020

Item 9: Coronavirus 1 - help from Hetton Town Council

Report of G Keedy, Town Clerk

Background:

The Coronavirus pandemic is having a devastating effect on individuals and communities nationwide.

Local councils across the country are looking at ways to help their communities in these difficult times.

Since the March meeting of Town Council, the country has been placed in lock-down, with media headlines highlighting the day to day difficulties faced by families, the NHS, businesses and charities.

Town Council position

With no premises, land or plant and only a single, part-time staff resource, the Town Council, other than through volunteering by Members on an individual basis, is limited in what it can do to assist.

Town Council is fortunate however, in having financial liquidity and some budget flexibility which would enable financial support to be targeted to where it could have direct benefit in the health crisis.

Legal restrictions prevent local councils from routinely offering financial assistance to businesses, however it is permissible to provide financial help to charities.

Local need

Local intelligence has indicated that Hetton Home Care Services (Registered charity no. 1072294) is experiencing difficulty in sourcing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that due to current demand outstripping supply, there is a cost premium.

Comprising aprons, masks, gloves, shoe covers and goggles, PPE is essential kit for employees to be able to fulfil their caring roles in the current circumstances, and for their personal wellbeing.

The Town Council now has an opportunity to provide financial help to a well-regarded local charity delivering frontline services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Funding sources

The Council's current financial position includes a surplus of circa £3500 which represents the unused allocation of the Community Grant Awards Scheme from financial year 19-20; and the agreed allocation of a similar amount for Community Grant Awards 20-21.

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Council should note:

- 1) The 19-20 surplus has previously been ring-fenced for community projects - Finance & Resources Committee recommendation 11 March 2020 meeting and ratified by Full Council at 16 March 2020 meeting.
- 2) The Community Grant Award allocation was agreed at Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 27 January 2020. Use of this financial resource will curtail the amount of money available for Community Grant Awards for the remainder of 20-21.
- 3) Council has discretion to amend its spending priorities.
- 4) Any financial award will be within the spending limits for 20-21 of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Action

Town Council is asked to consider if it wishes to provide direct financial assistance to Hetton Home Care Services for the provision of essential PPE kit to staff, and if so, determine the amount within a ceiling of £3500.00.

GK 21 April 20