



Agenda Item No:	4
Committee:	Finance & General Purposes Committee
Date:	15th April 2020
Title:	Emergency Grant Funding for COVID-19 Community Support.
By:	Isabelle Moulard, Assistant Town Clerk
Purpose of Report:	To consider emergency grant funding to the Seaford Volunteer Emergency Team and to fund and supply staple food items to Seahaven Storehouse.

Recommendations

You are recommended:

- 1. To consider granting emergency funds of £1,500 to the Seaford Volunteer Emergency Team, via St. Leonard's Church (account holder for the Team). £1,000 would be used for the 'start-up funds' on a loan arrangement as detailed in Appendix A. £500 would be granted for the Team to purchase essential PPE and shopping bags.**
 - 2. To consider purchasing and supplying up to £500 worth of staple food items to Seahaven Storehouse.**
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1. Information

- 1.1** The 2020-2021 Discretionary Financial Grants Scheme has been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. The new timetable for the Town Council's 2020-2021 Grants Scheme will be circulated when working practices are back to normal.
- 1.2** The Town Council set the 2020-2021 Grants Scheme budget at £31,000.
- 1.3** In the meantime, Officers have been investigating ways in which the Town Council could support the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report details proposals for the Committee to consider granting emergency funds (against the 2020/2021 Grants Scheme budget) to two community organisations.

Seaford Volunteer Emergency Team

- 1.4** Seaford is lucky that in the very early stages of the pandemic, the Seaford Volunteer Emergency Team was reformed. Having first been formed four years ago, initially to support flooding coordination in the town, the Team was put together by town and district councillors, churches and volunteers in the community and continues to evolve.
- 1.5** The Team has put in place a system to get food, prescriptions and other essential items and support to those who are unable to get out; largely those highly vulnerable, or self-isolating, who have been advised not to leave their homes and do not have anyone to easily call on for support.

- 1.6** Those in need can contact the group via a telephone number or via the Facebook page and set out what they require. They are then assigned a volunteer who will help them further.
- 1.7** Unfortunately, in the early stages of this system it became apparent that in order to buy items needed, volunteers had to use their own funds and in most cases, because of the vulnerable person's situation, were unable to be reimbursed. This resulted in some volunteers being unable to help further.
- 1.8** The Team has researched options and come up with proposals to set up a start-up fund for buying shopping. You will find detailed information in a report from the Team (Appendix A) which sets out how the Team would use these funds. For clarity I have also set this out below.
- 1.9** If the Town Council contributed £1,000 to the Team's start-up funds, this would be paid to St Leonard's Church who has a holding account for the Team (which is managed by a treasurer). This, and contributions from other organisations, will be used to purchase gift cards from supermarkets and other shops which will be given to volunteers to use when buying items for those in need.
- 1.10** Various payment options will then be made available to those using the 'service' such as cheque and online banking. Payments will be managed by St Leonard's Church and will go back in to the Team's holding account.
- 1.11** At the end of the Team's service (which at this stage cannot be predicted), St Leonard's Church will pay back to the Town Council the contribution made. This will be however on the understanding that if the Team unfortunately failed to be reimbursed by some of those vulnerable people who used the service, any loss would be shared across all those organisations that contributed to the start-up fund.
- 1.12** In short, the £1,000 contribution to the start-up fund would be on a loan arrangement on the understanding that the Town Council may not receive the full loaned amount back.
- 1.13** Given that these funds are being allocated from the Grants budget however, this is not funds that the Town Council would usually expect to recover as grants made through the scheme are in effect donations not loans. The Committee therefore could consider whether it wishes to donate the funds instead of accepting repayment. If so, it may be prudent to delegate power to the Assistant Town Clerk and RFO in consultation with the Chair of Finance & General Purposes to agree suggested conditions with regards to the use of the funds that would otherwise have been returned to the Town Council.
- 1.14** The other support needed by the Team is funds to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks and hand sanitiser. It is proposed that the Committee considers granting £500 to the Team to purchase and distribute these items to volunteers.
- 1.15** It is important to note that although the Team's fund is being managed by St Leonard's Church and other contributors have been from other churches, the Seaford Volunteer Emergency Team is available for all members of the public in Seaford; there are no restrictions or need to be of a particular religion or have membership with an organisation.

1.16 In line with ‘normal’ Grant Scheme processes, St Leonard’s Church has kindly sent across its 2019/2020 accounts (Appendix B) for the Committee to review when considering this proposal.

Seahaven Storehouse (Foodbank)

1.17 The Seahaven Storehouse is a highly valued, voluntary-run foodbank which provides essential food parcels to very vulnerable households within Seaford.

1.18 The Town Council has been made aware that due to the current supermarket restrictions, Seahaven Storehouse has been struggling to sufficiently re-stock on staple items in order to provide essential food parcels to households in need.

1.19 It is proposed that the Committee consider agreeing to £500 being used to purchase staple items to gift to Seahaven Storehouse.

1.20 If the Committee agrees, the items would be purchased via The View’s food supplier and Town Council volunteers would collect the items and take them to the foodbank.

1.21 All items bought would be non-perishable and therefore can be stored by the foodbank and given to the households as part of their usual weekly deliveries.

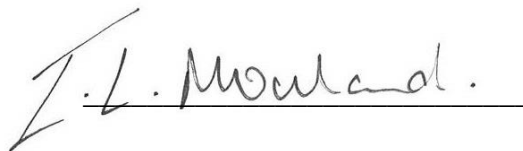
2. Financial Appraisal

The budget allocated for all grants in 2020/2021 is £31,000. The total amount of emergency grant funding being proposed is £2,000 which would therefore leave £29,000 when considering the 2020/2021 Grants Scheme later in the year.

3. Contact Officer

The Contact Officer for this report is Isabelle Mouland, Assistant Town Clerk

Assistant Town Clerk



I. L. Mouland.

Responsible Financial Officer



A. Singh