

HENLEY-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL



GRANTS AND FREE USE POLICY

| Version ID | Description of change | Version sponsor | Policy Owner | Creation date | Approval date | Next review date |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| 0.1 | Initial draft | Town Clerk | FSM Committee | 17/02/2020 | n/a | n/a |
| 0.2 | Amendment to 4.1.1(d) | Town Clerk | FSM Committee | 25/03/2020 | n/a | n/a |
| 1.0 | Numbering amendment (4.2.5) | Town Clerk | FSM Committee | 22/05/2020 | 26/05/20 | May 2022 |

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 Henley-on-Thames Town Council recognizes the hard work of the many organizations that help improve and enrich the Henley community. The Town Council is committed to supporting such organizations in their work, and allocates sums each year to provide assistance in the form of grants and in-kind support through free use of Council facilities.
- 1.2 The following policy sets out how the Town Council considers and makes grant awards, and enables the Council to make an informed assessment of grant and free use applications, so that decisions from the grant budget are made in a way that is both fair and transparent.

WHAT AND WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY

- 2.1 The policy covers all grant and free use awards made by the Town Council. *Grant and free use* are defined as follows:
 - (a) *Grant* – any payment made by the Town Council to be used by an organization for an activity or service (not directly controlled or administered by the Council) in the furtherance of the well-being of the local community,
 - (b) *Free use* – any use of Council hireable rooms which would usually attract a fee, but instead of charging the hirer, the Council charges itself, paying the hire costs from its grant budget.
- 2.2 The policy covers all current and potential grant and free use applicants and recipients, eligibility for which is defined below.
- 2.3 The Council currently operates three grant / free use schemes:
 - (a) Community Grants Scheme (up to £2,500)
 - (b) Larger Grants Scheme (between £2,500 and £20,000)
 - (c) Free Use Scheme

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Grants from town and parish councils are usually made under the powers given to them by s137 Local Government Act 1972, which places a statutory limit on the total amount that can be given by the authority in any one year (for 2019-20 this was £8.12 per elector). It also limits the giving of grants solely for purposes that (a) bring a direct benefit to all or some of the inhabitants of Henley, and (b) is commensurate with the direct benefit the inhabitants receive.
- 3.2 However, under the powers of the Localism Act 2011, the Town Council has adopted the General Power of Competence. This, in essence, removes the cap and restriction in the amount that can be given in grants, and the purposes for which the grants can be given. However, there are still some statutory restrictions (i.e. grants to the Church) that the Council is still required to observe, and s137 is still a useful benchmark against which to assess applications.

POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Eligibility

4.1.1 Organizations are eligible to apply to any of the Council's grant or free use schemes, as applicable, if they meet the following criteria:

- (a) They are a local charitable or non-profit-making organization, providing services or carrying out activities or projects that directly benefit the Henley community;
- (b) In the case of a regional or national organization, where they can demonstrate that the funding will ringfenced for use specifically to benefit the Henley community;
- (c) The amount of funding or free use is commensurate with the benefit provided to the Henley community;
- (d) For grant funding, the amount requested should not exceed 50% of the total cost of the service or activity; and
- (e) The work of the organization and the funded activities or services complement the values and aims of the Town Council.

4.1.2 The Council will neither fund nor provide free use for (as applicable) the following:

- (a) Individuals;
- (b) Political groups (other than free use of meeting rooms for political groups of the Town Council for private meetings relating to Council business);
- (c) Activities promoting specific religious beliefs;
- (d) Any works on property relating to affairs of the church or an ecclesiastical charity;
- (e) Activities that do not complement the aims and values of the Town Council;
- (f) Projects completed before the application has been considered;
- (g) Projects that cannot demonstrate a direct benefit to the Henley community;
- (h) Organizations that have a disproportionately high level of uncommitted reserves;
- (i) Repayment of loans; or
- (j) Costs for service, equipment, or provision incurred before the grant is awarded.

4.2 Grants

Applications

- 4.2.1. All applicants are required to complete the relevant application form, including supplying any requested supporting documents. Incomplete applications may not be considered.
- 4.2.2. All applicants are advised to contact the Council to discuss their proposals prior to submitting an application. For larger grants, a meeting may be arranged between the Council and the applicant before the grant is determined by the Committee, to address any questions members may have.
- 4.2.3. Applications may be for running costs or capital expenditure.
- 4.2.4. *Community grants of up to £2,500* will be considered by the Council's Finance Strategy & Management Committee twice a year, in September and March. The closing date for applications are:
- (a) 15th August in any given year (for the September meeting); and
 - (b) 15th February in any given year (for the March meeting).
- 4.2.5. *Larger grants of £2,501 to £20,000* will be considered by the Council's Finance Strategy & Management Committee once a year, in December, to be paid the following April. The closing date for larger grant applications is 1st November in any given year.
- 4.2.6. Applicants may apply for a recurring annual amount of up to £20,000 per year for up to three years, with such applications being considered as part of the *larger grant* scheme.

Grant conditions

- 4.2.7. On request, any successful applicant may be required to provide proof of expenditure relating to the grant; signed accounts for the year(s) covering the period of funding; and / or periodic reports on the progress of the activity.
- 4.2.8. All successful applicants will be required to display the Henley Town Council '*Supported by*' logo on all promotion for a supported activity or service, and acknowledge the Council's contribution in any press releases or other announcements about the activity or service.
- 4.2.9. Any grant amount not spent within a prescribed period will be repayable upon request.
- 4.2.10. Grants can only be used for the purpose stated in the application. If an organization wishes to vary how the grant funding is spent, they must seek approval in writing to the Council.
- 4.2.11. Organizations are responsible for ensuring they comply with all applicable statutory and other legal requirements.

Larger Grants Scheme only – additional provisions

- 4.2.12. All applications for capital expenditure must include up-to-date quotes for all items over £1,000.
- 4.2.13. The Council reserves the right to impose a legal charge over any asset being financed by the grant application worth in excess of £10,000, with the legal fees paid by the applicant. The charge would be called should the organization cease to exist, or cease to provide the facilities for which the funding was originally sought within a prescribed period.

4.3 Free Use

Principle

- 4.3.1 Free use is intended to maximize the value of the Council's buildings by offering hireable rooms to valuable community groups at no charge, when not otherwise in use.
- 4.3.2 Instead of charging the hirer, the Council charges itself, paying for the room hire from its grant budget.

Applications

- 4.3.3 All applicants are required to complete the relevant application form, including any requested supporting documents. Incomplete applications may not be considered.
- 4.3.4 Free use applications will be considered by the Council's Finance Strategy & Management Committee twice a year, in September and March. The closing date for applications are:
(a) 15th August in any given year (for the September meeting); and
(b) 15th February in any given year (for the March meeting).
- 4.3.5 Until an award has been made, all normal charges shall be applicable. No retrospective free use will be granted.

Hire conditions

- 4.3.6 Free use will only apply to hires by approved organizations for private meetings or free-to-attend public events. All other hires are chargeable. An organization may apply for a grant through the Council's grant schemes to offset any chargeable hire costs.
- 4.3.7 Free use is on a room-only basis, and any chargeable extras will be charged to the hirer.
- 4.3.8 Free use may be applied for on any hireable rooms in the Town Hall and King's Arms Barn.
- 4.3.9 All room bookings must still be confirmed by completing a booking form, and must adhere with the standard terms and conditions of hire.

4.3.10 All free use is subject to normal booking constraints and booking times must be strictly adhered to, including any time for setting up and taking down. Excess usage time will be charged at the normal local users' rate.

4.3.11 Free use is only applicable at the following times (times include all set-up / clearing away). All hires outside these times will be chargeable:

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Town Hall | Weekdays | 9:00am to 4:30pm |
| | Monday evenings | 4:30pm to 10:30pm |
| Barn | Weekdays | 9:00am to 4:30pm |
| | Mon and Tues evenings | 4:30pm to 10:00pm |

4.3.12 A maximum value of £1,000 per financial year (April to March) per organization shall apply, based on the room hire prices in effect at the time. All hires in excess of this limit are chargeable. The Council shall have an obligation to inform the organization if it approaches this limit.

4.3.13 All free use organizations will be required to display the Henley Town Council 'Supported by' logo on any publicity material and website.

Cancellations

4.3.14 The free hire organization must inform the Council as soon as possible of any cancellation of room hire.

4.3.15 Bookings cancelled with less than two weeks' notice may be subject to the Council's standard room hire fees.

4.3.16 Failure to notify the Council of cancellations on three or more occasions will result in automatic removal from the free use list.

4.3.17 Whilst we will endeavour to accommodate all free use requests, paying hirers will take precedence over free use hires. The Council reserves the absolute right to cancel free use hires at any time, and will not be held liable for any costs incurred by the free use organization. The Council will inform the free use organization of any potential conflict as soon as possible.

Review

4.3.18 All organizations benefitting from free use will be reviewed on an annual basis.

4.3.19 The Council reserves the right to remove free use from any organization. If so, charges will only be due for any hire taking place after the organization has been informed of their removal.