

Report on Swimming Costs & Business Funding

Introduction

For the sake of clarity business funding refers to all income and expenditure incurred by the Town Council generated through its own activities and through Precept funding. There is little to argue that we in the middle of an Economic Crisis and that along with countless other businesses and the residents of the town we need to look at our priorities for funding. By simply increasing the Precept every year we are failing to achieve best value with our funding and simply increasing the Tax burden onto the majority of our residents.

The Town Council has great expectations and ambition for future projects, including the extension to the existing hall which will require a PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) loan. In order to obtain the PWLB loan the Town Council will need to prove its affordability for the loan and produce a business plan for sustainability which the Local Council Association will need to sign off before being submitted to PWLB. As part of this application the Town Council will need to produce 3 year of accounts which is made up of two previous years and the coming financial year.

As the potential new Town Clerk of Elstree and Boreham Wood one thing that has leapt from the pages at me is the contribution this council is making toward swimming in the Town to 4 schools. As a Clerk of 15 years and having run 9 Town and Parish Councils previously but never seen funding allocated with no limit on what that spend may be.

The current budget has provided an allocation of £31,000 but the 2022-23 budget was already at £34,000, a control mechanism is essential to the future plans of this council. There has been NO LIMIT set on the 15% contribution toward this activity.

Recommendation

A budget cannot be set, where final costs have not been agreed and where expenditure appears to be limitless and currently costs this council around £34,000 and rising. In addition this is an LEA (Local Education Authority) responsibility and not the responsibility of the Town Council.

By providing this funding there are other organisations in the town who might be precluded from future funding opportunities because there are no more funds available. Grants of this kind should be capped and should not be provided as on going funding with no end date and needs to be addressed before this council seeks to expand its projects in other areas.

Recommendations are:

That this funding be phased out as soon as practical, so:

- Advise all schools that the funding will cease at the end of this financial year 23/24 (they will have a year to seek other funding with our support)
- That a simple allocation of £2000 per school will be made in the 2024-25 financial year.
- That beyond this allocation schools will need to make their own grant applications per school for grant funding for all types of projects.
- That the savings provided be used to recruit a new Grants Officer who will work to attract funding for the council and for local community organisations and groups. In particular for new projects and events to enhance the town.

The costs 2020 – 2023

Month	Travel	Cowley	Parkside	St Nichols	Woodlands
1	£3780	£243.20	£171.60	£85,80	£85.80
2	£1627.50		£198		£85.80
3	£2940				
4	£2782.50				
5	£1785				
6	£3255	£369.60		£184.79	£184.80
7	£2465.50				
8	£2467.50		£145.20		£184
9	£4830				£158.40
10	£2800				
11	£3570	£356.40	£177.90		£95.55
Total	£32,303.00	£969.20	£547.50	£270.59	£610.35

Summary

The current allocation of funding toward school swimming lessons is not an example of good practice,

- it has no controls in place for expenditure
- it jeopardises the future budgets of the council
- opportunities to attract further funding.
- It hinders the opportunity to expand staffing levels to meet future demand
- Councils should not be paying for things that are the responsibility of the LEA

Conclusion

By withdrawing in stages the Town Council still demonstrates its support to local schools and families and gives them more than sufficient time to put in place other funding streams to cover this. In addition once the Town Council is able to recruit a Grants Officer the council will be able to support applications being made by schools to other funders and will be able to sign post schools toward relevant funding. Essentially by recruiting an effective fund raiser the Town Council will be able to attract funding to improve, increase and provide new events and activities not just for the Town Council but for local schools, organisations, groups, business and individuals.