

Andover Town Council

Item
No.

12

To **consider** amending the current grants application process to make it more user friendly and accessible.

Instruct Officers to make the agreed amendments

To **review** and **approve** recommendation to the Policy and Resources Committee the updated version of the grants policy

To **instruct** Officers to see if it is possible to automate the process and report back to a future Community and Events Committee.

Produced for:
C&E Committee

By:
Communications and Events Manager

Date of Report:
22 Jan 2025

Background:

Since the grants policy was last updated in September 2023, Andover Town Council have received a decrease in applications for grant funding by local charities and organisations. Verbal feedback from some grant applicants has been that the whole process has not been easy to navigate and can be overwhelming to smaller organisations.

Purpose of the report:

- For members to consider amending the current grants policy to make it more user friendly and accessible
- To present feedback gathered from organisations who have received Grant Funding from Andover Town Council since the policy was updated in September 2023.
- To review and approve the updated version of the grants policy
- To recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee for review.

Current policy:

The current criteria set out for potential applicants has meant that some worthy organisations have been unable to apply for funding because they do not meet all criteria set out in the policy.

It is vital that a strong policy is maintained to ensure taxpayers money is used appropriately, it is Andover Town Councils duty to encourage and support the community to access this money and make it possible to do so.

During one recent application, a very large organisation said they felt our grant framework was disproportionate to the size of funding being requested and it created a difficult dynamic during the process. The applicant was frustrated with the lack of flexibility our current policy allows.

Another organisation was unable to proceed with their application as they did not have the correct insurance set out in the policy.

It is felt that our grant funding is inaccessible to smaller causes and these are the organisations which need the most help within the community.

Feedback from service users:

Limited feedback has been received so far, however what has been submitted to is useful in assessing the real-life experience of an applicant using our service.

1. Did you find the grant application process user friendly?

- Yes 0
- No 2



2. If you answered no to question 1, what did you find difficult and how can we improve.

2 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Generally the form is fine but the supplementary information requirement and in particular, bank statement information is far too cumbersome for a larger organisation. Our statements can be up to 30 pages long and to be told we had to send more than the first page meant that we had to redact 90 pages (3 months worth).
2	anonymous	This is only from the process perspective. The form was quite difficult to complete, due to how it was set up/formatted & limit on box sizes for information. This meant we had to submit supporting information in a second document, which complicated the approval process (as initially this wasn't looked at and we received questions back that were covered in this document).

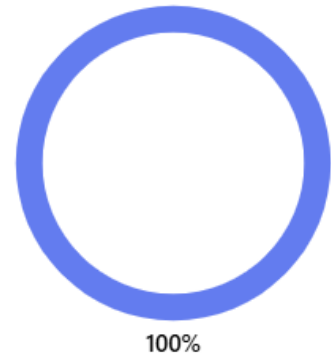
3. Would you consider the questions and documentation required:

- Excessive 1
- Fair 1
- Inadequate 0



4. Did you feel supported in your application by the Grants Officer?

- Yes 2
- No 0



5. In relation to other grant providers how did Andover Town Council's grant process compare?

2 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	The process was more comprehensive than other statutory funders and unnecessarily so. Even funders such as the Big Lottery do not require the bank statements in their entirety. It would be helpful to have a more simplistic grant application such as the form used by Romsey Town Council.
2	anonymous	As above, the online type forms were easier to complete.

Proposed changes:

Fundamentally the policy remains the same, the removal of some additional documentation is proposed, however, it can be requested **IF** it is felt relevant. In addition to this, it is proposed that the policy becomes a flexible framework instead of a hard and fast policy with no consideration to different circumstances.

Andover Town Council are still gathering vital information such a recent bank statements, accounts and constitution but it is being proposed that Councillors agree to remove/amend:

- Amend flexibility on signatories dependant on the organisation size and turnover
- Remove the need to see Safeguarding policies but to confirm that they have one.
- Remove the need to see risk assessments but to confirm that they have been done.
- Remove the need to see Insurance documentation but to confirm that adequate insurance is in place.
- Remove excessive bank statements and accept summary pages from the bank statements

It would be a huge benefit to the community the policy can be diversified to allow for new organisations who maybe unaware of Andover Town Council's grants and allow them to feel confident to apply by removing the very tight framework we currently work too. A dedicated advertising campaign needs to be considered.

Benefits:

By using a simpler framework, more opportunities will be opened and more organisations helped. Smaller organisations often rely on a smaller team of people who juggle full time jobs and families, careers and other commitments – they run worthy causes in their spare time which can be sparse, and better support should be given to these groups or causes. This means that those groups or organisations are not receiving the funding they need to thrive, grow and better our communities.

By making the process of applying for grants less onerous, Andover Town Council should be able to meet it's targets set out in the draft business plan:

2. Engage with key stakeholders in the Andover community to provide targeted support for residents, taxpayers and businesses		
2.1 Local Plan 2040	Proactively engage with TVBC on the draft Local Plan 2040	Proactively engage with TVBC on the draft Local Plan 2040
2.2 Funding for beneficial events and facilities	Promote grants policy, award funding and manage the budget throughout the year	Promote grants policy, award funding and manage the budget throughout the year

Recommendations:

- to **consider** amending the current grants application process to make it more user friendly and accessible.
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