

## Budget and Grant Allocation - Proposal

### Introduction

St Albans Parish Council have traditionally issued grants to local groups and services based on applications for funding submitted to the Parish Council. Applications for funding have been discussed at Parish Council meetings and either agreed or denied depending on the outcome of Councillor votes. This approach was positive and allowed local community groups to leverage the power of volunteers and provide much more value to the Community than direct intervention from the Parish Council would ever be able to provide. In September 2023, a new Grants Policy was adopted by the Parish Council to limit the amount of grants that community groups could apply for at any one time.

The aim of the Council will be to review this new grant policy so to allow the freedom of financing community projects that benefit everyone in the area and are connected to the overall aims of the Council. At the same time direct involvement of the Council in organising events and creating value in the community will be considered whenever there is value for money and no group is organising the same activity.

The objectives of this proposal are to;

1. Enable St Albans Parish Council to **take the lead** in fulfilling its duty as a local council to work towards improving community well-being and providing better services.
2. Set out a clear strategy on how funding is allocated by St Albans Parish Council from 2024 and going forward in the future.
3. Encourage wider engagement from businesses, providers, schools and local community groups across the Parish Council area.
4. Deliver services to impact on Parish Council priorities across the Parish Council area and provide sustainable improvements for Parish Council residents.
5. Provide value for money for St Albans Parish Council residents.
6. Promote a positive representation of St Albans Parish Council across the local community and improve communications and engagement between the Parish Council and its residents

### Proposal

"Local councils work towards improving community well-being and providing better services. Their activities fall into three main categories; representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs; striving to improve quality of life and community well-being."

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/about-local-councils>

A significant proportion of the Parish Council's budget is currently allocated to local services from applications for grants submitted. These have been submitted by local Providers for activities that the Provider has decided to offer and often form one off events / activities. Traditionally, applications have been received from a small number of Providers and have focused on specific areas in the Parish Council. Events / activities were very well received in the community as delivered by the Providers, often formed by volunteers who are passionate in what they are doing on behalf of Parish Council residents and that are an integral part of the community, and we aim to keep partially financing these events within the limits of the budget and if they fall within the aims of the Council.

This proposal seeks to build upon the engagement of traditional Providers in their delivery of local activities and services and to seek to extend the local groups involved. Activities will be carried out within the objectives decided by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council should agree their key priorities for delivery for the year 2024/25. As an example, this may be improving community safety, providing activities for children and young people, supporting vulnerable adults, and improving community cohesion. In line with these priorities, the Parish Council will then finance projects that help achieve progress against those priorities. Again, as an example, this may include installation of CCTV, keeping the alleyways clean and well lit, providing defibrillators, providing events and activities throughout school holidays, facilitating local parent and baby groups, seasonal community events e.g. Easter, Christmas, Diwali and running community fayres. Whilst some of these projects would be agreed by and delivered by the Parish Council (similar to the installation of benches and noticeboards), others would benefit from a community partnership approach. This may include engagement with the local Police / Community Safety Officers, businesses, nurseries and schools, Youth Service, Churches and the local voluntary action groups. In these instances, the Parish Council could invite local services to bid for funding and resources to deliver that project. There may be instances where only one Provider is required and others where a partnership approach would achieve the best outcomes.

By adopting this approach, the Parish Council will enhance the way in which its available budget is used to improve service provision across all of the Parish Council area. It will help the Parish Council become more robust in its duty to improve community wellbeing and to provide better services and will elevate the presence of the Parish Council across the area. In turn, this will help facilitate engagement between the Parish Council and residents which would lead to a stronger representation at Parish Council meetings.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This proposal sets out an enhanced approach for St Albans Parish Council to decide on their budget and grant allocation. Local Providers will be encouraged to submit applications for grants within the overall aim of the Council, and the St Albans Parish Council will get directly involved if that offer good value for money and provide services that are not organized by local groups.

This proposal recommends:

1. That at the next St Albans Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 27 February 2024, the key priorities for 2024/25 are discussed and agreed
2. That the focus for the St Albans Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 27 February 2023 should be agreeing a number of activities / projects that the Parish Council would like to deliver during 2024/25 and the process by which they will deliver those activities / projects
3. That the Grant Policy is reviewed to support this proposal and agreed by the St Albans Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 26 March 2023