

Shipton Parish Council

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Policy concerning the Parish Council response to requests for grants or the making of charitable donations.

1. Introduction

Shipton Parish Council (SPC) recognises the importance of supporting initiatives that benefit the local community. However, as custodians of public funds raised through the annual Precept (a local tax on residential properties), Councillors have a duty to ensure that all expenditure is lawful, justified, and in the best interest of the parish as a whole.

This policy outlines the Council's position on responding to grant requests and making charitable donations.

2. Legal and Financial Context

Parish councils operate under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972. Section 137 of this Act allows for financial contributions to activities or projects that provide demonstrable benefit to the local community. Councillors must also be mindful that:

- The Precept is intended for delivering statutory and local responsibilities.
 - All financial decisions are subject to public scrutiny and audit.
 - Precedent-setting grants must be carefully considered to ensure fairness and sustainability.
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3. Funding for Religious Organisations

Under Section 8 of the Local Government Act 1894, parish councils are restricted in providing direct funding to ecclesiastical charities or church buildings. While exceptions exist under Section 137 (if the wider community benefits), any such support must be justified.

For example, if a church-owned village hall is regularly used by the general public and a refurbishment project is largely funded through other channels (e.g. church fundraising, diocesan grants), a modest Parish Council contribution could be considered, provided a clear community benefit is demonstrated.

4. Case Study: Shipton Reading Room Refurbishment

A recent example of appropriate Council involvement is the refurbishment of the Shipton Reading Room—an independent community facility managed by a separate charity.

Although SPC did not contribute funds directly to the project, it facilitated a £300,000 Public Works Loan (repayable over 50 years at 1.5%) to support the charity's efforts. This loan was only possible because such loans are restricted to local government bodies.

Before proceeding, the Council:

- Held a public village vote to gauge community support.
- Ensured the process was audited and approved by the County Council.
- Acted transparently and in the long-term interest of the parish.

5. General Principles for Grant Consideration

5.1 Third-Party Buildings and Infrastructure

SPC will not normally fund buildings or refurbishment projects not owned by the Council, particularly those affiliated with religious organisations. Exceptions may apply in cases of significant, proven benefit to the broader community.

Key considerations include:

- Risk of setting unsustainable precedents.
- Ensuring taxpayer funds are not used for assets outside Parish Council control.

5.2 Community Events and Celebrations

The Council recognises the importance of supporting key cultural and national events. Past examples include:

- **King Charles III Coronation (2023):** A joint initiative with the Reading Room Charity to fund and organise a village celebration.
- **Centenarian Celebrations:** In rare cases where a resident reaches 100, the Council may support a public event in coordination with the family and local organisations, including a modest gift such as flowers.

Such events must be:

- Inclusive and open to the community.
- Proportionate in cost.
- Approved through a Council resolution.

6. Application Process and Approval

All grant or donation requests must:

- Be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk.
- Demonstrate a clear and measurable benefit to the community.
- Include relevant financial details (e.g. total cost, funding from other sources).
- Be discussed and approved at a full Parish Council meeting.

7. Review and Adoption

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued relevance and compliance with legislation.

Policy Adoption Date: ____16th May 2025____

Chairperson Signature: ____*David Hellens*____