

# Waltham Parish Council

EST. 1894

Website: <https://walthampc.org.uk>

## Discussion Paper on Grant Provision for Waltham Village Hall

### Introduction:

An indicative sum of £1,350 has been identified in the Parish Council's 2020/21 budget to provide financial assistance to the Village Hall Management Committee. This discussion paper explains legislation that enables such provision; the historical background to providing grants; the potential impact of Covid-19 on this year's finances; and the Responsible Finance Officers (RFO) recommendations on this year's grant and future arrangements.

### Legislation concerning Grant Provision:

Section 133 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives local authorities discretionary powers to provide buildings for public meetings and assemblies or contribute towards the expenses of providing such buildings. Further legislation under **section 19** of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 allows councils to make a grant to a voluntary organisation so they can provide recreational facilities at village halls.

### The historical background to grant provision:

The Village Hall Trust was established in May 1927 by five local residents. A resolution was made in August 2012 to nominate three members of the parish council as trustees of Waltham Village Hall there being no other trustees in place. In August 2012 records show that a management committee was in place with the Parish Council as Custodian Trustee. The management committee (WVHMC) registered as an independent charity (no:1169160) with the Charity Commission in September 2016. Formal grants in earlier days was via the City Council's Concurrent Functions Funding (CFF). Minutes show an award of £400 in 1999 and £1,440 in 2005. With the cessation of CFF in 2015/16 the parish Council has provided £1,350 over the last four years which reflects its commitment as custodian trustee.

### The potential impact of Covid-19:

WVHMC had a relatively successful financial year in 2019/20 with a total income of £5,719; expenditure of £2,397 and a year end surplus of £1,836. The Committee is to be congratulated in achieving the purchase of the freehold mostly via fund raising.

The picture for 2020/21 may be significantly different. As a consequence of the Covid-19 lockdown hire fees will reduce by at least 25% while expenditure on utilities may only have a marginal reduction and insurance a slight increase. Very recently a £10,000 government grant to support Village Halls during Covid-19 may allay fears of financial difficulties.

### RFO recommendations:

1. Despite WVHMC having a healthy carried forward balance it is **recommended** that the sum of £1,350 be confirmed as this year's allocation. It is recognised that the impact of Covid-19 may last for an extended period and the government grant may be needed to cover future loss of income.
2. The Parish Council is also facing an uncertain future with the potential loss of City Council Concurrent Functions Funding. It is recommended that further section 19 grants are considered by Council at each budget setting round, based on a set of annual accounts for the previous year and a prediction of WVHMC's expected income and expenditure for the grant year.