

WELSH CHURCH ACT ESTATE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 11th September 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chair); Councillor P. Drake (Vice-Chair); Councillors C.E.A. Champion, J.E. Charles, H.C. Hamilton, M.J. Hooper, and M.J.G. Morgan.

Also present: Councillor C.P. Franks.

292 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

293 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

294 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

295 APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE 2023/24 TRANCHE 2 (DCR) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report, the purpose of which was to consider second tranche applications for financial assistance funded from the Welsh Church Act Estate.

The officer advised that projections for 2023/24 made provision for grant allocations to the total of £69,000 in 2023/24. This included a sum of £12,120 which had been carried forward for grant allocation from 2022/23. Grants allocated by the Committee during Tranche 1 had totaled £10,150 and a further award of £13,813 was recommended for Tranche 2. Should all Tranche 2 applications be approved, a significant sum of £45,037 would be available for Tranche 3.

The Chair subsequently led the Committee through the four applications in turn, as set out in Appendix A of the report, with the following comments of the Committee being raised in relation as follows:

Councillor Champion noted that the recommended grant amount for both applications 1 and 2 in Appendix A of the papers were both £5,000 and queried if this was a coincidence. In response, the Operational Manager for Accounting advised that a grant cap amount of £5,000 had previously been agreed by the Committee and therefore both applications were recommended for the maximum grant allowance. However, the maximum grant cap amount could be reviewed by the Committee if deemed necessary.

Several Members then expressed their support for application 4 received from Cardiff Lions RFC LGBT+, in relation to essential bus transport services, however raised concerns in relation to the application on the following matters:

- The exact intended use of the funds as applied for in relation to “transport costs”;
- The application referring to a financial revenue matter rather than capital i.e. open-ended transport costs rather than funds to purchase a transport vehicle;
- A lack of timescales stated within the application; and
- Whether any consideration had been given by the club in relation to more permanent and sustainable transport arrangements.

In reply to Member comments, the officer advised that to their knowledge the grant as applied for related to the hiring of coaches for members of the club to attend related matches and added that the application did not specify any vulnerable groups in relation to transport requirements and therefore it was assumed that requirements related to the whole of the relevant team in order to travel collectively. It was recognised that the team would need to identify a more sustainable solution going forward. The officer subsequently offered to seek further clarification from the applicant.

As a supplementary point, Councillor Champion queried why two of the four applications put before the Committee had been recommended by Cardiff Council. To which the officer advised that the Welsh Church Act Estate covered both the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan areas and therefore recommendations were also raised, as entitled, by the Cardiff Local Authority.

Councillor Champion then noted that the application had likely been submitted in a timely manner to meet the start of the next rugby season and therefore the Committee would not wish to decline the application and delay the funds being received by the club. However, it was recognised that certain assurances over sustainability were required. To which the officer confirmed that there was not a particular timeline specified within the application, but it was assumed that the funds were required for the upcoming sporting season.

It was also recognised by multiple Committee Members that it would likely be difficult for the club to cover the costs of hiring and maintaining its own vehicle and that

hiring vehicles could also be problematic and therefore the grant amount as applied for was unlikely to cover all the transport costs required by the club.

The Chair then offered a suggestion that the application be approved by the Committee subject to further assurances being sought from the applicant within ten working days of the Committee meeting and that the assurances be passed to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for approval prior to the grant being awarded to the club. The Chair's suggestion was subsequently accepted by the Committee.

On the Chair's request, the Operational Manager for Accountancy then drew the Committee's attention to Appendix C of the papers and in particular to the information in relation to grant funds available and noted that the balance remaining to allocate in year was currently £45,037. In reply, the Chair noted the significant sum and suggested that an increase in publication of the availability of the Welsh Church Act funds should be undertaken to increase the number of applications being put forward for the Committee's consideration.

Furthermore, approaching Church organisations in the Cardiff and Vale areas and other umbrella organisations with connections to said Churches could be a useful way forward. The Chair's suggestion was subsequently agreed by the Committee and the officer advised that they would reach out to colleagues in Cardiff Council to ensure that information was passed on as agreed.

As a separate point, Councillor Champion queried progress in relation to the Committee's application for the CCLA investment. In reply, the officer offered apologies for the delay in the process being completed and advised that there had been a certain degree of back-and-forth communication in relation to background checks for the Committee Members as Trustees as personal data had been requested to enable background checks to be performed as part of the application. However, it was hoped that the matter would be resolved soon.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the applications for financial assistance, as numbered 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix A of the report, be approved.
- (2) T H A T the application for financial assistance, as numbered 4 in Appendix A of the report, be approved subject to further assurances first being sought from the applicant within 10 clear working days and said assurances being received and accepted by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.
- (3) T H A T information on the charitable Welsh Church Act Fund be distributed to Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan church organisations as well as other umbrella organisations.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the content of the report and subsequent discussion at the meeting.

(2) To avoid delaying approval of the application to the third tranche of applications should further assurances on the exact use of the fund in relation to transport costs as well as future sustainable transport plans for the Rugby Football Club be accepted by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

(3) To raise awareness on the availability of the fund and invite further applications for consideration by the Committee.