



CABINET - 27TH MARCH 2019

SUBJECT: WELSH CHURCH ACTS FUND

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend to Cabinet a number of changes to the operation of the Welsh Church Acts Fund (WCAF). The WCAF was established on 1st April 1996 from the former Gwent Fund and part of the former Mid Glamorgan Fund. The Fund covers the administrative areas of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen and Monmouthshire, with Monmouthshire being designated as the Lead Authority.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report will consider three key changes to how the WCAF is currently operated:
- The upper limit on the grant available to applicant organisations;
 - The introduction of formal criteria in relation to the grant scheme to ensure that applicants are fully aware of how the scheme is operated within Caerphilly County Borough Council;
 - The introduction of limited support for 'exceptional' individuals in relation to the advancement of education.
- 2.2 Each of these changes will be discussed in detail in the report that follows, together with the rationale for the proposed changes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to:-
- 3.1.1 Approve the revised upper limit of £5,000 for applications to the WCAF grant scheme from community organisations and community based projects, with effect from 1st April 2019.
- 3.1.2 Approve the introduction of a new category of grants of up to £1,500 for 'exceptional' individuals in relation to the 'advancement of education' and to determine whether to offer such grants as a one-off contribution or for up to three years to the same individual.
- 3.1.3 Note that all applications from individuals will be reported to the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel for consideration with recommendations to award to be referred to the Head of Corporate Finance for consideration under delegated powers.
- 3.1.4 Approve the introduction of Caerphilly County Borough Council criteria for the operation of the WCAF grant scheme, with effect from 1st April 2019.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the WCAF grant scheme is operated effectively, and benefits the communities of Caerphilly county borough.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Cabinet will recall that at their meeting of 28th March 2018 a report was considered on proposed changes to the WCAF. Caerphilly County Borough Council receives an annual allocation from Monmouthshire County Council of circa £62k. This allocation had not been spent in full for a number of years, leading to an unallocated balance of £263k to be carried forward to the 2018/19 financial year. Therefore, the total budget available for 2018/19 was £324,839.89.
- 5.2 The criteria that were applied when considering applications to the grant scheme prior to 2018/19 were as follows:
- i) A grant of no more than £2,000 to be given to partly fund projects of £6,000 and over
 - ii) Smaller projects less than £6,000 be grant aided up to a third of the total cost
 - iii) All organisations receiving grants produce the necessary financial records to show the expenditure has been incurred
 - iv) No organisation to apply in consecutive years
- 5.3 The Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel had raised concerns for some time regarding the high level of balances being carried forward for the WCAF. Therefore, revised criteria were proposed to increase the upper limit of funding available, in order to utilise the carried forward underspend identified in 5.1. At the Cabinet meeting on 28th March 2018 it was agreed that the criteria be amended to the following:
- i) Applications of up to £5,000 to be fully grant funded.
 - ii) Applications above £5,000 to be subject to a grant rate of 75% on the sum in excess of £5,000 (e.g. an application requesting £8,000 that meets the criteria would receive £7,250 - £5,000 plus 75% of £3,000).
 - iii) The maximum grant payable to be £10,000.
 - iv) The grants process be reviewed to expedite payments wherever possible and that options be explored for publicising the funding more widely.
 - v) The number of quotes/estimates to be provided with applications be reduced to two for grant applications under £5,000 and three for applications over £5,000.
 - vi) Grants should be restricted to community organisations and community based projects in the first instance and that this position is reviewed in 12 months.
 - vii) Grants cannot be applied for in consecutive years.
 - viii) The maximum time period in which a grant awarded can be claimed is 18 months.
- 5.4 The revised criteria have been in operation since 1st April 2018. Responsibility for administering the WCAF moved from Corporate Finance to the Corporate Policy Unit on 1st May 2018.
- 5.5 Additional publicity has been undertaken to raise awareness of the grant scheme, in particular the increased upper limit that is available to projects and that projects of up to £5,000 can now be grant funded in full. This has led to a significant increase in interest in the WCAF, and since 1st April 2018, 39 individual projects have been approved totalling £191,264.39, with a number of other projects still in the pipeline. As stated in 5.1, the budget available for 2018/19 is £324,839.89, including underspends carried forward. Therefore, the unallocated amount currently remaining is £133,575.50.

- 5.6 As the amount of funding available in the budget has reduced substantially during the course of the financial year, it is likely that the remaining budget will be fully allocated in the near future. In future financial years the annual budget allocation from Monmouthshire County Council is likely to be circa £62k, although this amount is dependent on the investments of the overall WCAF.
- 5.7 Therefore, it is suggested that now would be a suitable time to revisit the upper level of grant that can be offered, in order to maximise the number of grants that can be supported and the benefits to our local communities. It is proposed that the grant criteria are revised so that the maximum grant available under the WCAF is £5,000, at a grant rate of up to 100% as appropriate. Projects with a total cost of over £5,000 would still be eligible for a grant of up to £5,000, but would need to seek match funding from other sources or their own funds. It is proposed that this change in criteria be implemented from 1st April 2019.
- 5.8 A further issue that needs to be addressed is the criteria relating to the WCAF and how it is used to support the scheme operated by the authority. As stated previously, the Corporate Policy Unit took over responsibility for the WCAF on 1st May 2018. The grant scheme had previously been the responsibility of Corporate Finance, who had administered the grant scheme since the authority was established on 1st April 1996. During discussions between officers of the two teams during the handover process, it was established that the WCAF has previously only been used for capital type activity e.g. works to land or buildings, purchase of equipment etc. However, the general criteria that apply to the WCAF are much wider (see Appendix 1 for full list), and includes:
- i) The advancement of education
 - ii) Libraries, museums, art galleries etc.
 - iii) The relief of poverty
 - iv) The advancement of religion
 - v) Other purposes beneficial to the community
 - vi) Aesthetic, architectural, historical and scientific matters
 - vii) Medical and social research, treatment etc.
 - viii) Probation etc.
 - ix) People who are blind or visually impaired
 - x) Emergencies or disasters
 - xi) Other charitable organisations
- 5.9 Whilst the general criteria is wide ranging in nature, it does state that they are 'Charitable purposes for which the Fund may be applied', and therefore there is no requirement for the Council to offer grants under the WCAF for all of these categories. Historically, awards have been made in relation to categories (iv) The advancement of religion and (v) Other purposes beneficial to the community. In addition to this, at its meeting of 28th March 2018, Cabinet made a decision that 'grants should be restricted to community organisations and community based projects in the first instance and that this position should be reviewed in 12 months' time'.
- 5.10 Therefore, it would now appear timely to agree formal criteria under which the WCAF is operated by the Council, which can be shared with potential applicants prior to an application being made. In addition to this, a small number of applications have been received from individuals in relation to educational and other activities in the current financial year, which have not been approved, as to do this would contravene the decision made by Cabinet as referred to in 5.3. The majority of local authorities in Wales each have their own locally agreed criteria which describes how the WCAF is administered in that area, including what cannot be funded.
- 5.11 Appendix 2 provides the proposed formal criteria for the WCAF moving forward. This document reinforces that the fund is primarily aimed at supporting churches, chapels, places of public worship, community organisations and charities operating in Caerphilly county borough. In addition, it states that the fund will support these organisations in the form of capital grants for the repair or refurbishment of buildings and the purchase of equipment to support the aims of the organisation and meet the identified needs of the local community.

5.12 The proposed formal criteria states clearly that the following items cannot be funded:

- Usual running costs of any organisation e.g. rent, utilities, insurance etc.
- Any other revenue costs including the employment of staff, training etc.
- Items for a one off or annual use and/or seasonal items
- Retrospective costs for any project i.e. costs for work already undertaken or equipment and/or materials that have been purchased or ordered prior to a formal grant offer being made and the Terms & Conditions of the grant being signed and submitted. If using a tender process, tenders cannot be awarded prior to a grant approval being made
- This list is indicative only and is not exhaustive

5.13 It is proposed, in response to a number of enquiries during the financial year, that the criteria are widened to allow applications from individuals in relation to 'the advancement of education' as detailed above. It is proposed that limited support would be provided for 'exceptional individuals' as a one-off grant of up to £1,500. It would be for the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel to decide what is meant by 'exceptional', but applications could relate to sporting or academic pursuits, or other activities. All applications from individuals would be reported to the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel for consideration, and the Panel would make a recommendation on which applications should be supported and the amount of funding to be awarded. These recommendations would be considered and approved as appropriate by the Head of Corporate Finance under delegated powers.

5.14 It is worth iterating at this point that in the case of the authority, the amount of funding that has been available in the current financial year is a unique position due to underspends in previous years, and it is likely that these underspends will be allocated in full very soon. Moving forward, the budget available each financial year will then revert back to the allocation from Monmouthshire County Council of circa £62k.

5.15 Therefore, Officers recommend that Cabinet approves the proposed formal criteria for WCAF as detailed in Appendix 2.

5.16 **Conclusion**

The report summarises the key changes that are proposed to the current criteria for the WCAF, which will ensure that the grant scheme continues to operate efficiently and benefits the communities of Caerphilly county borough.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 The report makes the assumption that in future the authority will continue to receive an allocation from Monmouthshire County Council of circa £62k in order to continue the operation of the WCAF.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

7.1 Corporate Plan 2018-2023

7.1.1 The report supports Objective 5 of the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 – Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

7.1.2 Voluntary and community sector organisations make an important contribution public service provision across the county borough. Grants offered to these organisations via the Welsh Church Acts Fund will help to ensure that they are able to provide the services required by residents within our local communities. This will ensure that residents are able to look after their own health and well-being.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 Voluntary and community sector organisations make an important contribution to public service provision across the county borough and are key participants in the 'Caerphilly We Want' Well-being Plan published on 3rd May 2018 under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Well-being Plan has four priorities – Positive Change, Positive Start, Positive People and Positive Places.
- 8.2 This report links to the following Well-Being Goals within the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- A prosperous Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- 8.3 Grants awarded via the WCAF contribute to the following Well-Being Goals for Wales:-
- A prosperous Wales – grants offered to the voluntary and community sector will help these organisations and the buildings they own and manage to become more financially sustainable, and help them to provide much needed services to their local communities.
 - A healthier Wales – providing opportunities for residents to receive local services that are suited to their needs will help to improve their physical and mental well-being.
 - A more equal Wales – providing local services in community settings will help to ensure that residents are able to fulfil their own potential, regardless of their background or personal circumstances.
 - A Wales of cohesive communities – community buildings are often at the heart of the local community, which helps to ensure that our communities can thrive and there is a focal point where residents can come together.
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – the activities that are provided by the community and voluntary sector encourage residents to participate in the arts, sports and recreational activities.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report so no Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The recommendations outlined in the report will ensure that the budget available for the WCAF is spent in accordance with agreed criteria, and ensure that the Council does not exceed the amount of budget available via the annual allocation from Monmouthshire County Council.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no personnel implications.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 Comments from the consultees listed in this report have been incorporated within the report.

- 12.2 Officers consulted the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel on the content of the report at their meeting on 6th March 2019.
- 12.3 Panel members supported the reduction in the maximum grant available for community organisations and community based projects to £5,000 with effect from 1st April 2019. They also supported the introduction of criteria for how the WCAF is operated within Caerphilly County Borough Council, with effect from 1st April 2019.
- 12.4 In relation to providing limited grants for 'exceptional' individuals under the WCAF criteria of 'the advancement of education', Panel members were supportive of the proposal to offer grants of up to £1,500 to 'exceptional' individuals in principle. However, their view was that to provide this support as a one-off contribution was not sufficient, given that many courses are for a minimum of three years. Therefore, their recommendation to Cabinet is that 'exceptional' individuals could be offered up to £1,500 per year for a maximum of three years, subject to the individual making new applications every year to evidence their continued attendance on the course.
- 12.5 Panel members were also supportive of a recommendation that all applications for support from 'exceptional' individuals should be considered by the Panel, who would assess each application and make a recommendation on whether an application should be supported and how much grant should be awarded. These recommendations will be approved or otherwise under the delegated powers of the Head of Corporate Finance.

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Local Government Act 1972 and 2003 and the Council's Financial Regulations.

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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Welsh Church Act Fund – The charitable purposes for which the Fund may be applied
Appendix 2 Welsh Church Act Fund – Caerphilly County Borough Council Application Criteria

The Charitable purposes for which the Fund may be applied

The Advancement of Education

Educational

1. The provision of benefits which are not readily available from other sources for persons of any age in one or more of the following ways:
 - (i) The award of scholarships, bursaries, loans or maintenance allowances to enable or to assist study at any school, university or other place of learning, approved by the Council, which may if the Council think fit include allowances to dependents.
 - (ii) The provision of financial assistance, outfits, clothing, tools, instruments, other equipment, or books or loans to enable pupils or students on leaving school, university or any other educational establishment to prepare for, or to assist their entry into a profession, trade or calling.
 - (iii) The award of scholarships or maintenance allowances or loans to enable beneficiaries to travel abroad to pursue their education.
 - (iv) The provision, or assistance towards the provision of facilities of any kind not normally provided by a local education authority, or a grant maintained school, for recreation, social and physical training at a school, university or other educational establishment.
 - (v) The provision of financial assistance to enable beneficiaries to undertake apprenticeships.

Libraries, museums, art galleries etc.

2. The advancement of knowledge and appreciation of the arts and literature of Wales and, in particular, in furtherance of those purposes but without prejudice to the generality thereof:
 - (i) The establishment, maintenance, replenishment or aiding of charitable institutions, libraries, museums, art galleries; or art, scientific or industrial exhibitions (including exhibitions relating to industrial archaeology); whether national or local, for the principal use and benefit of the Welsh people.
 - (ii) The assistance of charitable societies for study and research in subjects connected with Welsh history, topography, literature and life.
 - (iii) The provision of lectures, exhibitions and equipment.
 - (iv) The acquisition, preservation and publication of records and documents.
 - (v) The provision of suitable premises (by erection, purchase, lease or hiring for occasional use) for any of the purposes authorised by this paragraph.

The Relief of Poverty

Relief in need

3. The relief either generally or individually of persons who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by the making of grants of money or the provision of, or payment for, items, services or facilities calculated to reduce the need, hardship or distress of such persons.

The Advancement of Religion

Places of worship and burial grounds

4. The contribution towards the restoration and maintenance of any place of public worship or any burial ground.

Other Purposes Beneficial to the Community

Relief in sickness

5. The relief in cases of need of persons who are sick, convalescent, disabled, handicapped or infirm by the provision of, or payment for, items, services or facilities which are calculated to alleviate the suffering or assist the recovery of such persons, but which are not readily available to them from other sources.

Elderly persons

6. The provision, or assisting in the provision of accommodation for elderly persons who by reason of the infirmities and disabilities of age have need of such reception, care and attention. The provision of funds to organisations promoting the welfare of elderly persons.

Social and recreational

7. (1) The provision of, or assisting in the provision of, facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation being facilities which are available to the members of the public at large and which are provided in the interests of social welfare with a view to improving the conditions of life of the persons for whom they are intended and, in particular, in furtherance of those purposes but without prejudice to the generality thereof, the provision of, or assisting in the provision of, playing fields, other sporting facilities, parks, open spaces and centres or halls for meetings, lectures or classes.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) is intended, in particular, to be concerned with the provision of, or assisting in the provision of, facilities etc. to persons in need by reason of their youth, old age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social and economic circumstances.

Aesthetic, architectural, historical and scientific matters

8. The advancement of the education and public benefit of the Welsh people by promoting their interest in aesthetic, architectural, historical or scientific matters relating to Wales and in particular in furtherance of those matters but without prejudice to the generality thereof:
 - (a) The acquisition and preservation of –
 - (i) Land of special interest in relation to science and natural history.
 - (ii) Land, buildings or objects of beauty or of historic or architectural interest.
 - (b) The acquisition, preservation and publication of records and documents of historic interest.

Medical and social research, treatment etc.

9. The preservation and protection of the physical and mental health of society and, in particular, in furtherance of those purposes but without prejudice to the generality thereof:
- (a) The advancement of education in the theory and practice of medicine.
 - (b) The promotion of medical and social research and schemes for the prevention and treatment of disease and publishing the results of such research.
 - (c) The provision of nursery and convalescent homes and hostels.

Probation etc.

10. Making grants in cases of need for the assistance of:
- (a) Persons placed on probation, or children and young persons from community homes or any other institution of a substantially similar nature established under statutory authority.
 - (b) The families of any such persons, children or young persons.
 - (c) Discharged prisoners.

People who are Blind or Visually Impaired

11. Provision for the welfare of persons who are blind or visually impaired, including the provision of charitable homes and holiday homes.

Emergencies or disasters

12. The contribution towards the alleviation of the effects of emergencies or disasters involving destruction of or danger to life, and property and directly assisting persons in need as a result of such emergencies and disasters.

Other charitable organisations

13. Contributions towards charitable organisations, the purposes of which are consistent with the provisions of this Scheme or the Welsh Church Acts 1914 to 1945.



Welsh Church Acts Fund - Application Criteria

Purpose of the Grant

The Welsh Church Acts Fund is available to churches, chapels, places of public worship, community organisations and charities operating in Caerphilly county borough. It provides support to these organisations in the form of capital grants for the repair or refurbishment of buildings and the purchase of equipment to support the aims of the organisation and meet the identified needs of the local community. It is intended that projects supported will have a lasting effect on the communities in which these organisations and buildings are located. In addition, limited support may be provided for 'exceptional' individuals in relation to the advancement of education.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS

Community projects must be managed by a non-profit organisation based within Caerphilly county borough, of one of the following types:

- (i) Churches and chapels or other places of public worship with an adopted constitution
- (ii) Unincorporated voluntary/community organisation or club with an adopted constitution or rules
- (iii) Charities or Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) registered with the Charities Commission
- (iv) Community organisations who are Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) with no share capital and are registered with Companies House
- (v) Community Interest Companies (CICs) which are not established or conducted for private gain: any surplus or assets are used exclusively for the benefit of the community

Please note: All organisations must have their own bank account in the name of the organisation.

The following types of organisations will not be funded:

- (i) Any commercial/trading or profit-making organisations where the profits are shared amongst the Directors or members
- (ii) This list is not exhaustive

What can be funded?

- (i) The restoration or maintenance of any place of public worship and community or village halls
- (ii) Organisations working to address disadvantage for people on low incomes or those who are sick or disabled
- (iii) The provision of services or facilities by organisations promoting the welfare of elderly persons

- (iv) The provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation which are available to members of the public at large, with a view to improving the lives of individuals. This can include the provision of playing fields, sporting facilities, parks, open spaces and centres/halls for meetings, lectures, classes or training
- (v) The advancement of the education and public benefit of residents by promoting their interest in aesthetic, architectural, historical or scientific matters relating to Wales

Applicants will be required to evidence the need for their project or activity and the lasting benefits it will provide for the local community.

What cannot be funded?

The following cannot be funded:

- (i) Usual running costs of any organisation e.g. rent, utilities, insurance etc.
- (ii) Any other revenue costs including the employment of staff, training etc.
- (iii) Items for a one off or annual use and/or seasonal items
- (iv) Retrospective costs for any project i.e. costs for work already undertaken or equipment and/or materials that have been purchased or ordered prior to a formal grant offer being made and the Terms & Conditions of the grant being signed and submitted. If using a tender process, tenders cannot be awarded prior to a grant approval being made
- (v) This list is indicative only and is not exhaustive

When can an application be submitted?

The grant scheme opens on 1st April each year and applications can be submitted at any time. Limited funding is available and there is no guarantee that any application submitted will be supported. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application approximately 4-6 weeks after submission.

Applicants cannot apply for further grants in successive years i.e. if a successful application is made in 2018, the applicant cannot make a further application until 2020 at the earliest.

How much can be applied for?

The maximum grant available to any organisation is £5,000. Approved projects where the total cost is less than £5,000 can be awarded a grant of up to 100% of the project costs. Larger projects (costing over £5,000) can receive a grant of up to the maximum amount.

Estimates/quotes

Applicants must submit comparable estimates/quotes to support their application. For projects where the total project cost is under £5,000 we require two written estimates/quotes. For projects where the total project cost is £5,000 or over we require three written quotes/estimates. Applicants must ensure that all costs are inclusive of VAT where appropriate.

Estimates/quotes must be itemised, detailed and comparable (in terms of measurements, rates, quantities, specification etc.). They must also detail VAT where applicable and include the VAT number for VAT registered organisations.

Any grant offered is made on the basis of the cheapest quote provided. Applicants can choose a more expensive supplier or contractor to complete the work or provide goods/services, but this will be at the applicants' cost.

Payments

For approved applications, payment is made on the submission of invoices and copies of bank statements showing the payment being made to the named supplier or contractor. All payments are made to the applicant and no payments can be made to third party organisations. All payments will be made via BACS transfer to the applicant organisation's bank account.

Staged payments can be made in exceptional circumstances where the organisation does not have the necessary funds to pay for the project in full. These payments will still require the submission of invoices and bank statements.

Project timescales

All approved projects must be completed within 18 months of the date of the formal offer letter. The funding for any projects not completed within this timescale will be automatically withdrawn.

APPLICATIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS

What can be funded?

Applications may be accepted from 'exceptional individuals' in relation to the advancement of education. Applicants will be required to provide evidence of what makes them 'exceptional' and what purpose any grant would be used towards. Applications can be made for a maximum of £1,500 as a one-off contribution *[or for up to three years]*.

When can an application be submitted?

The grant scheme opens on 1st April each year and applications can be submitted at any time. Limited funding is available and there is no guarantee that any application submitted will be supported. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in approximately four weeks after the relevant Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel meeting, which take place in March, July and November each year.

Applications from individuals are one-off in nature, and no subsequent applications will be accepted from the same individual. *[If Cabinet decides to support applications for up the three years this will be amended to be – Applications from individuals can be for up to three years. A new application form will need to be submitted each year.]*

How will applications be assessed?

The Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel will consider all applications from individuals and will make recommendations to the Head of Corporate Finance in relation to which applications should be supported and the level of grant to be awarded. The Panel will determine whether an applicant is 'exceptional' in nature.

Evidence of costs

Individuals will be required to provide documentary evidence of the costs for which they are applying in order to support their grant application.

Payments

Payment will be made via BACS transfer to the bank account details provided on the application form.

WHO TO CONTACT

For more information or if you have any queries, please contact Vicki Doyle, Corporate Policy Unit, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Penallta House, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7PG. Tel: 01443 866391 or e-mail doylevm@caerphilly.gov.uk