



TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE

REPORT AUTHOR	Colin Hill – Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
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Date	2ND January 2020
SUBJECT	Incredible Farm Grant Application

PURPOSE:

1. To remind Members that at the Amenities Committee meeting held on the 27th November 2019, a grant application for £6,400 was submitted by Incredible Farm CBS Ltd, and a decision deferred pending the opportunity for Committee Members to visit the site- Appendix 1
2. To remind Members that the maximum grant they can agree to is £3,000 and that this must also be within the delegated budget set by Full Council.
3. To remind Members that the award of grants must satisfy a requirement that activity /spend must specifically benefit Todmorden Precept Payers.
4. To inform Members that historically we have received applications in February/March from other Todmorden based groups that we have in the past supported that bring direct benefit to the Town. When requested, these are likely to fully use the majority of any unspent budget currently allocated.
5. To advise Members that the current level of general reserves is forecast to be at the minimum recommended level at year end. Any additional call for increasing overall grant funds availability would not be supported by the RFO, but is ultimately a decision for Full Council to make.

BACKGROUND:

1. Incredible Farm CBS Ltd is a Community Benefit Society registered as a Charitable Organisation
2. Their grant application was to seek assistance with core funding to help support increased demand for volunteer placements
3. A site visit was undertaken on 6th January 2020 where Councillors D Skelton, P Taylor, J Williams and M Holmstedt, together with the Town Clerk were shown around the main greenhouse and advised about their core activities. Appendix 2 may be helpful for Members to understand what the site location consists of.
4. The site location is not entirely central to Todmorden and consequently its visitor use may likely be from the surrounding areas, including Hebden Bridge.
5. Through visits to the farm itself, where they can learn permaculture, agroforestry and regenerative agriculture, children are encouraged to “get their hands dirty” or to walk on hillsides to experience more outdoor life and activity.
6. Examples were given of a private school attending the site, whilst volunteers from overseas visiting the site undertake extended stays on the site, in order to improve their understanding of the land and how it is farmed with the help of a regenerating eco system.
7. Specific reference was made that they actively work with Ferney Lee Primary School on a weekly outreach basis to teach children to grow and love nature. Members recognised the benefits that this element of their operation brings to this Todmorden School. Whilst the intention is to widen this scheme to other Todmorden Schools, as yet, this has not been taken forward.
8. When asked about where visitors come from, or volunteers using the site all came from, there was no evidence to support that Todmorden residents form the majority of visitors to the Farm.
9. They mentioned that up to 20 per week volunteers are seen on site at peak times but there was no evidence to affirm that volunteers are from the local area - for us this does need to be specifically from Todmorden. They also work with volunteers who come to the farm under the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) scheme from across the world.
10. Whilst the informal nature of the operations is perhaps an important part to enabling breaking down barriers to encourage volunteer activity, especially those who may benefit from such activity from a mental health point of view, bearing in mind the nature and ruggedness of the site, some Members did

express some concern about the lack of formal registration, induction, and safety briefing when walking onto and around the site.

11. Whilst this is a matter for the organisation to address, part of their grant application for core funding was to address safety equipment, insurance, and staff training and volunteer management.
12. **Section 137** of the Local Government **Act** 1972 gives the Council the power to “incur expenditure which in their opinion is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to their area or any **part** of it or all or some of its inhabitants”.
13. It is further qualified by “but a local authority shall not, by virtue of this subsection, incur any expenditure - (b)unless the direct benefit accruing to their area or any part of it or to all or some of the inhabitants of their area will be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

14. Amenities Committee can only award up to £3000 subject to overall budget availability.
15. Given knowledge of an application for a substantial sum, that we have historically supported to deliver key activities of benefit to all Todmorden residents , the current availability of budget before year end is insufficient to finance a grant of this size to Incredible Farm and would therefore require Full Council approval should Amenities Committee decide to put his forward.

RECOMMENDATION:

16. That this application as submitted is refused on the grounds that:-
 - a. That the core funding purpose of supporting increased demand for volunteers cannot be identified as likely to directly benefit Todmorden residents, as there is no substantive proof to confirm that Todmorden Precept Payers specifically benefit from this, and that elements would be used to support overseas volunteers.
 - b. That there is no evidence, whether known or anecdotal, to indicate that the direct benefit accruing to Todmorden or any part of it or to all or some of the inhabitants of Todmorden will be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred
17. That given the good work being carried out by Incredible Farm CBS Ltd with Ferney Lee to introduce children to these concepts, Incredible Farm CBs Ltd could be encouraged to put together a formal programme of assistance to other Todmorden Schools (6), and for the Amenities Committee to give consideration to on application by each school, and subject to matched funding from each school , an award of up to £400 per school to enable schools to start such

initiatives and £400 to Ferney Lee School to further their excellent progress to date.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

18. To provide the background for refusing this application.
19. To recognise that other elements of their work may potentially be supported subject to Todmorden schools engaging in such schemes with provision of matched funding.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

20. This application does not meet the requirement of legislation in respect of grant

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION:

21. None

SUPPORTING PAPERS:

22. Appendix 1 – Application form pages 1-3
23. Appendix 2 – Farm Layout

FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: Colin Hill