

Policy for the Parish Benevolent Fund

Summary:

The PCC agreed at the PCC meeting on 9 January 2020 the following:

- (1) Resolve to distribute money from the Parish Benevolent Fund in accordance with the principles set out below; and
- (2) Delegate to the Vicar and Churchwardens (together) the authority to distribute money of up to £1,000 on any single occasion. Any disbursements of funds will be reported back to the PCC via the Finance Committee in accordance with our existing reporting procedures.

Background:

We currently have a Parish Benevolent Fund of approximately £128,000 (cash) and a further approximately £29,000 of investment (shares in a Central Board of Finance investment fund). The capital endowment (the £29,000) only generates a modest amount of income each year. The Parish Benevolent Fund is the result of the recent amalgamation of certain historic trust funds, together with the Austin legacy. The purpose is to benefit the needy in the parish.

After careful consideration, we now want to put in place an agreed set of guidelines on how this money will be used. We also want to put in place a mechanism which is administratively simple will enable the above objective to be met without resulting in too onerous a burden on our own administration systems.

We should aim to spend the existing balance of the cash held in the fund (the £128,000), rather than just the small amount of annual income on the £29,000 capital endowment. The main reason for this is that, with interest rates still at an historically low level, we would have next to nothing to give out to those in need if we only distributed the income.

These proposals also take into account some research into comparable benevolent funds and also the existence of other charitable funds or grant-making bodies (the most obvious being the Clingan Trust); this is because we want to avoid unnecessary duplication of work already being done by others.

Proposed Guidelines for payments from the Parish Benevolent Fund:

1. The money may only be distributed to people living within the ancient parish of Christchurch (NB this includes the existing parish of Mudford, which incorporates Somerford).
The reason for this is the restrictions in the terms of the historic trusts which are the origins of the Parish Benevolent Fund.
2. Applications for funding will be considered from the following referral agencies (although direct applications from potential beneficiaries will also be considered as and when received, these will not be solicited):
 - Local schools

- The Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Christchurch Foodbank +
- Christchurch Community Partnership
- others as they emerge
- Vicar and Churchwardens and representatives of the parish of Mudeford.

This list of referral agencies will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

3. Without intending to limit or prescribe the sort of payments that might be made, we envisage that payments would be used for such things as:

- Household funding, such as furniture or white goods, payment of utility bills or assistance with rent/rental deposit;
- Transport costs
- School-related costs, such as school trips, school uniform, or other activities from which children would otherwise be excluded because the family cannot meet the cost.

This list is indicative of the type of thing we envisage, but it is not intended to limit the discretion to fund other things. The underlying idea is that we would fund things that help the beneficiary to get out of a short term fix, rather than committing to longer term support or creating a situation of dependency.

Proposed Delegated Authority

In order to make this administratively practicable, I propose that the PCC formally delegates to the Vicar and Churchwardens (acting together) the authority to distribute money of up to £1,000 on any single occasion. The total amount of disbursements of funds will be reported back to the PCC via the Finance Committee in accordance with our existing reporting procedures.

Generally

An ongoing Parish Benevolent Fund could form an important and valuable part of our ministry in this town. A further possibility to be borne in mind is inviting further donations to be made to this fund, so that it can continue to operate and make payments for the benefit of local people. I suggest that we see how the fund operates in practice and then revisit this issue in the light of experience.

Version 1 agreed 9 January 2020.