

REPORT 20.091

LAVERSTOCK & FORD PARISH COUNCIL

Subject: Grant Funding to River Bourne Community Farm.
Date: 21st September 2020.
Author: Andrew Prince, Clerk.

1. Report Summary.

- 1.1 This Report provides background and recommendations for paying a grant of £5000 to the River Bourne Community Farm CIC.

2. Background.

- 2.1 The River Bourne Community Farm CIC (Community Interest Company) provides important recreation and education benefits to all of the communities of the Laverstock and Ford and to the wider communities of Salisbury and Southern Wiltshire. All profits of the CIC are retained and used to support its operations.
- 2.2 The Parish Council has supported the Community Farm since 2009 with Grants provided in accordance with Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, and with other funds provided by developers from S106 Agreements. The total funding provided is nearly £56,000.
- 2.3 A large part of the land and buildings occupied by the Community Farm are owned by the Council and leased to them under a 25-year term with a peppercorn rent.
- 2.3 In 2019 it was suggested that the Council should investigate a method of Section 137 Grant Funding that would give the Community Farm more certainty for future planning, and give the Council reassurances about the future direction and management of the Farm.
- 2.4 A draft Agreement was agreed by the Council in January 2020 and is currently with solicitors for the preparation of a formal Memorandum of Understanding and a revised Lease. The Covid lockdown has prevented conclusion of these documents.

3. Agreement.

- 3.1 The Agreement proposes to provide up to £10,000 per year for Farm projects, to be approved by the Council with an application for each project. The funding is guaranteed for 2 years from April 2020, and will be reviewed annually to cover the subsequent 2-year period.

4. Effect of Coronavirus.

- 4.1 In March 2020 the Community Farm closed because of the coronavirus lockdown and all sources of funding from education and commercial activity, such as the café and shop, ceased.
- 4.2 In April 2020 the Council granted £5,000 to the Community Farm to support its operations and to assist in developing a new facility for adults with mental health issues.
- 4.3 In August 2020 the Chairman of the Community Farm requested that a further £5,000 be granted to the Farm without identifying a project. All funds are currently going to meet operating costs and ensure the survival of the Farm.

5. Cllr Hayes Recommendation to Council.

- 5.1 Cllr Hayes, who leads the Community Farm Subgroup, recommended that the Council grant the sum of £5,000 without the usual conditions, provided that the Farm reported on how the first £5,000 was spent.
- 5.2 The Chairman of the Community Farm gave a written explanation of how the funds had been spent and gave a tour of the new facility to the Council Subgroup.

6. Recommendation.

- 6.1 That the Council exceptionally grant £5,000 to the River Bourne Community Farm CIC in accordance with Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and without meeting the conditions of the draft Agreement.