

**PROVISION OF LAPTOPS TO AID 'HOME SCHOOLING' OF CALNE WITHOUT PARISH PUPILS  
ATTENDING LOCAL SCHOOLS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That Calne Without Parish Council agree, in response to the current pandemic and extended lockdown, to grant funding of up to £10000 for distribution to Derry Hill School, Kingsbury Green Academy and Cherhill Primary School for the provision of laptops to support learning from home for pupils residing in the Parish who do not have adequate access to such technology; and to note:**

**that such grants can be made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and that adequate provision exists within the potential grants provision for 2020/21 (£21,607.04) and that funding can be met from underspends in current running cost budgets for 2020/21.**

**BACKGROUND**

1. This proposal seeks to provide funding to local schools to procure laptops for Parish pupils with no or limited access to the technology to undertake distance learning during the pandemic.
2. The Council will be aware of the difficulties for many families as a result of the extended lockdown because of the current pandemic and the closure of schools, except for children of key workers, and the need for distance learning. Much of the distance learning is undertaken 'on-line' requiring suitable devices. A number of media campaigns, including one by BBC Wiltshire Radio, has highlighted a disparity where some children are unable to access the necessary technology to work 'on-line' with the potential impact on their education and development.
3. Pupils from the Parish attend a number of local schools, either located within the Parish or adjacent to the Parish specifically Derry Hill School, Cherhill Primary School, Heddington and Kingsbury Green Academy.
4. Contact has been made with each school to establish if a requirement exists for laptops for pupils from our Parish who might be assisted. Derry Hill has indicated a requirement for 10 devices and Kingsbury Green 5 and Cherhill 11. Heddington acknowledged the generous offer but has no requirement.

**COSTS**

5. Each school has a slightly different requirement for capability and set up. The Derry Hill and Cherhill requirement is £350 per machine plus a set up cost of £60 for each machine giving a total of £410 per machine. There is an additional fee of £200 for services provided by Oakwood for Derry Hill; this may be reduced if we are able to secure a discount through services already provided to the Parish. The current Derry Hill total is £4100.00 and the Cherhill total £3410.00
6. The Kingsbury requirement is more straightforward at £450 per laptop and no set up fee. A total of £2250.00.
7. Overall cost of providing this important support to our community is £9760.00 plus a possible £200.00 to Oakford. Therefore, the total requested for approval is £9160.00.
8. In order to be of benefit as quickly as possible the Council if approving the grant is asked to approve immediate payment to the schools.

#### FUNDING

9. Advice has been sought from the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) about the expenditure and the governing principles. The council can consider the request under the Local Government Act 1972, section 137 which permits the council to spend up to a certain limit on anything which in the opinion of the council is in the interests of the parish, or any part of it, or is in the interest of all or some of its inhabitants.
10. This amount is limited to a figure per head of the electorate on the electoral role on 1st January before the commencement of the financial year. This money forms part of the Precept request which the parish council makes on Wiltshire Council. The cost of any grants or donations is therefore reflected in residents' council tax bills. The spending limit for 2020/21 is £21607.04; to date £350 has been spent. The Parish council has no obligation to spend all or any of the money available under S.137. The amount being spent is high if taken as benefiting only 16 residents however the schools will retain the laptops to use for the benefit of residents of Calne Without for as many years as the laptops remain functional.
11. The council has already identified £1000 to support Covid recovery and made budget provision for this, the balance £8760 can be met from unspent precept funded running cost budget headings (e.g., Election provision £2278, Restoration of reserves £1500, Aesthetics £2000, project running costs £1291, IT development £1500, Public participation £500). The current underspend is some £10,000.