

# FOOD & WARMTH GRANT SCHEME

## October 2023

### INTRODUCTION

The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) was launched in December 2020 to fund the implementation of local authority public health measures which aimed to support the proactive containment and intervention to reduce COVID-19 outbreak and spread of infection.

Legal restrictions around COVID in the UK ended in 2022 and consequently in December 2022, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) issued clarification on how COMF could be spent to both continue to prevent and help deal with the public health consequences of COVID such as:

- Public health action on addressing the impact of COVID-19 on health outcomes and health inequalities,
- Public health projects aimed at directly addressing health inequalities arising from the pandemic
- Public health prevention projects intend to prevent or mitigate health inequalities or unequal impact on populations in future outbreaks

Oxfordshire County Council was allocated COMF funding. The Oxfordshire councils agreed to administer an element of the funding allocation received before 31 March 2021, through the City and District Councils. This enabled funding to be prioritised at both a county and more localised level towards initiatives that directly link to the parameters set out in The Guidance and subsequent clarification letter of December 2022.

South Oxfordshire District Council continues to fund a variety of initiatives in support of the aims detailed in this guidance.

### Objectives and principles of the scheme

This policy outlines the framework for the allocation of a portion of COMF through a grant scheme for voluntary and community groups such as food banks, food larders and community fridges, warm/cold spaces, community hubs, community action groups, and youth groups.

The voluntary food network faces increased demand from residents. As fuel costs escalate and food prices, particularly for staple foods continue to increase, low-income households are increasingly turning to food banks for essentials. Yet at the same time, the food network of food banks and larders are seeing a decrease in supply. This is due to a drop in donations from individuals and companies and supply disruption. Many food banks are having to buy essential supplies which are no longer coming through the surplus food companies and of course are faced with the same rising fuel and food costs as the residents they seek to help.

Lack of access to healthy affordable food is an increasing public health crisis. Residents are struggling to afford essential items and are having to choose cheaper, processed food which is lower in nutritional value. The impact of a poor diet can be seen in rising rates of obesity, tooth decay and premature mortality caused by diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The impact of fuel poverty in our district is also a public health crisis. Since the pandemic more people cannot afford to heat their homes to a reasonable temperature and evidence strongly suggests that growing up and living in cold homes has a direct and detrimental effect on health. The risk of strokes and heart attacks is increased in older people, and respiratory diseases (including flu), falls, injuries, and hypothermia are more common. Children growing up in cold, damp, and mouldy homes with inadequate ventilation have higher rates of respiratory infections and asthma, chronic ill health, and disability, and they are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and slower physical growth and cognitive development. Community spaces and warm spaces are facing an increase in demand from residents and are struggling with high energy costs. We would like to offer grant funding for existing services and extension of existing services so that people can stay somewhere warm for longer.

This grant scheme is designed to provide financial support to assist the voluntary and community groups who play a vital role supporting residents, many of whom were already disproportionately impacted by the pandemic financially and in terms of their health. This will play an important role in building resilience and funding projects for these groups this winter. It has been estimated that from April 2023, Oxfordshire households need an extra £200 per month to cover increased bills. Our district's network of grassroots charities is doing essential work to help people stay afloat until the picture is more hopeful.

Provision of support for the VCS organisations meets the objectives of COMF post pandemic as it helps to mitigate health inequalities or unequal impact on populations by supporting access to these organisations that help residents with cost of living.

Organisations can apply for grants of £2,000 to £5,000 with grants of up to £10,000 for collaborative projects between two or more groups.

The grant budget funded by COMF will be £80,000.

Any funds not used will be returned to the COMF budget for re-allocation.

## Community groups

### How much is available per application?

- £2,000 to £5,000 to individual groups/organisations or up to £10,000 for groups/organisations working collaboratively on a project to work with residents to mitigate against the public health impact of a lack of access to warm homes and food.

### Who is eligible?

Constituted not for profit community and voluntary organisations, community interest companies or non-profit organisations who are based in the district and assist residents with food or energy support or benefit our residents by providing initiatives/projects to help with cost-of-living hence promoting resilience in our communities.

- Local 'not for profit' organisations e.g., VCS organisations. This can include a company limited by guarantee which does not distribute any surplus it makes to its members, whose primary purpose is to benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire.
- Not for profit preschools and PTAs for local authority run schools or Academies, can apply for items that meet the criteria of this scheme and are not considered business as usual (non-statutory elements of the education programme).
- Town and Parish Councils
- Food banks
- Community fridges
- Food larders
- Food organisations who redistribute surplus food across South Oxfordshire.

### Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies (for example Oxfordshire County Council, NHS trusts and schools)
- Individuals
- Profit-based businesses (private businesses)
- Political parties and lobbying groups
- Religious bodies where the monies will be used for religious purposes or religious buildings.
- Community groups not formally constituted.
- Groups who do not support residents in South Oxfordshire.

- Nationwide organisations (except where they have a local constitution and/or local bank account. We may also make exceptions if a project clearly relates to a local hub/branch of the organisation)

These lists are not exhaustive, and the council's decision is final.

### **What can we fund?**

- Purchase of food supplies and essential supplies such as household cleaning products, toiletries, consumables either for distribution to residents or for use by the organisation to ensure the safe provision of goods to residents.
- Purchase of additional equipment to store and supply food.
- Purchase of equipment to keep residents warm e.g. hot water bottles and blankets, and cooking equipment to distribute to residents e.g. saucepans and slow cookers.
- Purchase of general equipment for specific food and/or warmth projects e.g., gardening/cooking equipment
- Future energy bills at the premises of VCS organisation or food larder/bank.
- Future fuel costs for distributing food supplies.
- Future travel costs relating to a specific food and/or warmth project.
- Future additional staffing costs such as short-term hiring of additional staff, freelance project workers or a short-term increase in hours for a specific food and/or warmth project (not core salary costs).
- Future marketing/advertising/printing costs for food and/or warmth projects.
- Future room hire/short-term rent costs.
- Projects that might include cooking clubs/gardening clubs and educational activities that promote healthy food choices, saving energy and keeping warm, budgeting etc. The list is not exhaustive.

### **What will we not fund?**

- Statutory activities/requirements that either the council or another public-sector organisation is responsible for delivering.
- Lost income
- Projects that specifically benefit private businesses
- Political activities, lobbying or campaigning.
- Loan payments
- Revenue costs such as lease of property, core salary costs, and travel and subsistence costs for staff/volunteers.

- Insurance, vehicle or building repairs and maintenance.

## Application process

1. The Grant scheme will open week commencing **23 October 2023** and close at midday **27 November 2023**.
2. Organisations apply using the council's online grants management system ('the system'), accessible from our website [www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants). This MUST include the following information:
  - The name of the group/organisation
  - A formal constitution or similar governing document
  - A copy of the most recent audited accounts
  - The geographical area they are representing.
  - The latest bank statement in the organisations name who is applying – no more than 2 months old
  - A description of the support or activity the group/organisation will provide with the funding
  - Details of how that spend will be monitored and due diligence carried out
  - Confirmation that if awarded the funds will be spent by 31 March 2024
3. The council will aim to reach a decision within four weeks of the grant scheme closing.
4. Council officers will check the eligibility of the application (including the additional checks if required) and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility.
5. If eligible, officers will prepare a short summary of the applications for determination by the Head of Policy and Programmes.
6. If an application is not eligible the community hub team will discuss the issues with the applicant and return the application to them for resubmission once the issues are resolved. If the issues cannot be overcome, they will reject the application on eligibility grounds and notify the applicants accordingly.

## Award Process

1. The community hub team will record the outcome of all applications on the grants system and either;

- a. send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions and a grant acceptance form they must complete and return.
  - b. inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful.
2. The applicant must sign and return the acceptance form, confirming they will meet all our conditions and give the bank details for their organisation.
3. On receipt of the acceptance form the grant payment will be made in line with the offer letter. **All payments must be made by BACs to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.**

## Monitoring and Reporting

- The district council will request an end of project monitoring form from funded groups to ensure compliance to the grant.
- Ensure timely return of any request for information to the district council.
- Failure to provide these details by the deadlines requested may result in funding being clawed back.

## Standard conditions

- Organisations/groups must only use the funding for initiatives, work or items covered by this grant policy.
- to submit a monitoring form on our grants system when the project is finished to update us on the project.
- to mention the council in any publicity of the project. Please contact us at [communications@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communications@southandvale.gov.uk) for quotes, logos, press release feedback
- Monies must be spent by the end of the grant scheme (31 March 2024)
- The grant recipient shall keep a financial record of the spending of the grant and retain a copy of any appropriate invoices and receipts and submit these to the district council if requested.
- Organisations/groups are responsible for considering where their initiatives need to take account of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, and subsequently complying with the relevant legislation.

- Organisations/groups acknowledge that the council accepts no responsibility or liability for the services/activities the groups deliver with the funding, now or in the future.
- Organisations must confirm if they have received any Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) in this financial year and/or the previous two financial years, in excess of £315,000. This may also have been called De Minimus State aid if you received it prior to 1 January 2021.
- We will only pay the grant upon receipt of a completed/signed acceptance form.

### **Opening and Closing Dates**

The grant scheme will open week commencing **23 October 2023** and close at midday **27 November 2023**.

The funding must be spent by **31 March 2024**.