

# Capital Grant Policy

## Draft policy changes summary

Please find below a summary of proposed changes to the Capital Grants policy and the rationale for these.

Officers also reviewed the feedback from the Community Grants Panel (CGP) following the Capital grant awards meeting and from officers in the Climate Team, these changes have been incorporated where possible.

The CGP requested the following improvements to the grant scheme to be examined:

- If it was appropriate for specific groups (such as sports clubs) to be given low scores in community benefit even though they do benefit those in the community who use the facility?
- If each scoring category should be given equal weight to the overall project score?
- If new organisations without a history to base climate scores on, should be given low scores despite the organisation itself being established to take action on the climate emergency?

Other process improvements not specifically related to policy changes can be seen in appendix 1.

Section	Change	Rationale (where needed)
<b>What type of project will the scheme fund?</b>	Clarified we will only accept one application for one project per organisation. The current policy is silent on this.	This process is already in place as the scheme is usually heavily oversubscribed, however, it was silent in the policy. This will potentially allow us to reach more beneficiaries across the district.
	We will allow funds received from other council grant schemes to contribute towards the project cost, but the combined grant awards from the council will not exceed the total project cost. The current policy is silent on this.	It provides clarity to applicants that they can apply to apply to different grant schemes for the same project. We have had several enquiries from applicants asking if they can apply to the Rural England Prosperity Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy Grant Fund schemes as well as this scheme.
	Organisations can apply for projects we have awarded grants to before if it is for a different phase. The current policy states organisations cannot apply to the scheme for projects we	Large scale projects are often expensive, and it can take a long time for organisations to raise the funds to be able to deliver the project. Allowing applications for different phases of the project will mean projects can get off the

	have awarded grants to before.	ground quickly and provide ongoing benefits to the community. e.g., a large recreation ground is being refurbished and they want to refurbish the playground, install a 3G pitch and create a wildflower area. The need for the playground refurbishment may be higher due to safety requirements, so the project is broken into phases.
<b>What are the minimum and maximum amounts for the scheme?</b>	Increase minimum grant request from £1,000 to £5,000	To encourage slightly larger projects.  The councillor grant scheme allows for small capital projects up to the value of £15,000 and if it is for one ward the maximum they can apply for is £5,000. The application process for that scheme is a lot easier than the Capital Grant Scheme and therefore more suitable to smaller projects.  This proposal means the minimum project cost would need to be £10,000 to apply to the scheme, as we only pay up to 50 per cent of project costs. Since 2019 we have awarded approximately £1,224,000 and of this four per cent were awards of under £5,000.
<b>Opening and closing dates</b>	The scheme will be open for a minimum of eight weeks as opposed to six weeks.	The current process is to open for a minimum of eight weeks, so the policy has been updated to reflect this. It is a large application form with key documents required, which can take time for applicants to provide. The risk of keeping it open for a shorter period is that information is missing from application forms therefore increasing officer time in requesting this. Which could impact the delivery timescales of the scheme.
	Update the number of weeks that decisions will be made from 12-14 weeks to 14-16 weeks.	This timeframe is more accurate. It takes into consideration things that might be outside of our control e.g., Christmas closure.
<b>Scheme eligibility criteria</b>	A copy of the latest bank statement and confirmation of the amount of money held by the organisation will be requested as opposed to statements for all bank/building society accounts.	We already request the organisation to provide us with their total bank balance of all accounts, therefore it seems unnecessary to ask for copies of all the statements. We use the bank balance as part of scoring their financial sustainability, to understand if they can contribute more towards the cost of the project. This change will reduce the administrative burden on applicants and officers.

	Clarified a project cannot complete until an offer letter has been issued. It currently states until a decision is made.	This makes it clearer that projects cannot complete before an offer letter is issued, as we can't pay retrospective costs. Previously applicants have made assumptions that they can start their project once the CGP has been held, which can leave them with unexpected costs that will not be reimbursed.
	Added we will not fund council legal and property fees. Currently we only refer to not funding planning and building control fees	Otherwise, the council is paying itself.
	Updated the confirmation required for Minimal Financial Assistance, so it no longer refer to De Minimis State Aid and provides clarity on the timeframe and what we mean by 'financial year'	To update in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and make it clear for applicants. Due to the timeframes that organisations need to report any grant received as a subsidy, reference to De Minimis State Aid is no longer relevant.
	When mandatory information to pass eligibility is requested and not provided by a specified deadline, the application is at risk of being rejected. This is not included in the current policy.	Approximately 75 per cent of applications are missing information that is required for them to pass the eligibility criteria. If we do not stipulate a deadline, we cannot start scoring the applications and will be unable to keep to the delivery timescales. This could impact the project start dates for other applicants.
<b>Community Grants Panel (known as the CGP)</b>	Provide clarity there will only be one round. The policy states in each round, implying there is more than one.	We have not opened for more than one round for approximately five or six years, due to a reduction in budget and the number of grant schemes the team administer increasing.
<b>Standard conditions for all grant awards</b>	Extra conditions of a 'charge or restriction' will be determined using a risk matrix in consultation with our legal team as opposed to in consultation with the Cabinet member.	We currently consult the legal team and not the cabinet member, as the legal team are able to provide specialist advice to reduce any risks to the council when extra conditions are required.
<b>Payment of grants</b>	We will pay 75 per cent of the grant upfront and the remaining balance is paid when the project completes, upon receipt of evidence of expenditure. We currently pay 50 per cent upfront.	This is to help get larger projects get off the ground, minimise the risk of projects being put on hold and reduce cash flow issues for the organisation. We have had requests from organisations to advance payments due to these issues. Allowing a larger upfront payment will help mitigate these risks and reduce the governance required to complete a delegated

		authority form for each request to advance payments.
	We will make full upfront payments for grants up to £10,000.	This is to help get smaller projects get off the ground, where small organisations may struggle to raise the remaining funds prior to being able to claim the funds from the council.
<b>Scoring and award matrix (Community need, inclusion, and consultation)</b>	The scoring guidance has been revised to remove a reference to the pandemic and replaced with sustaining community facilities.	This was updated as a result of feedback from the CGP. It makes it clearer that organisations can apply for funds to maintain what that group offers to the community now.
<b>Scoring and award matrix (Action on Climate Emergency)</b>	The scoring criteria has been revised, so the climate credentials of the project are scored, as opposed to scoring the organisation's commitment to action on the climate emergency.	This scoring area has caused confusion as applicants often believe this scoring criteria is based on the project and not the organisation's commitment to action on the climate emergency. This change allows for the project to be scored and encourages applicants to consider the climate credentials of their project.
<b>Scoring and award matrix (Financial Sustainability)</b>	A revised finance matrix has been added to replace the existing one.	The current finance matrix does not cover all scenarios for funding plans, so the revised matrix enables us to score the applications in line with the policy.
<b>Scoring and award matrix (Theme)</b>	Up to two additional points can be added to the score if the project can demonstrate it meets more than one corporate plan priority. This means they can score up to 8 points in this section. They are currently scored under one Corporate Plan priority with no additional points available and can score up to 6 points.	The scheme is for projects that meet the council's Corporate Plan priorities, therefore if a project meets more than one priority, the benefits should be recognised. The application form will be updated to include a question for this. This helps to address the feedback from the CGP, to consider if each scoring category should be given equal weight to the overall project score.
<b>Scoring and award matrix (suggested scores and priority levels)</b>	The suggested scoring and priority levels have been updated. High priority is 22-32 points instead of 21-30. Medium priority is 16-21 points instead of 15-20. Low priority is 0 – 15 instead of 0-14.	The theme score can be increased by 2 points based on the suggested changes; therefore, the highest score will be 32 and not 30. The change in priority levels are based on the fact that we expect applications to meet more than one corporate priority.

## Appendix 1 - Other process changes not referenced in the policy

The following sets out the other process changes we intend to implement.

- Grant applications will only be scored once and not twice, and the application form and comms will clearly reflect this. This is in line with other grant funders.
- A statement will be added to the application form advising we will not accept any changes to the application post submission, with the exception of changes relating to the organisations financial position.
- The Community Grants Panel will still have the opportunity to increase/decrease scores at the panel meeting, following representation from the applicants, where they are satisfied there is enough evidence to justify this.