

TASK GROUP REPORT

REPORT TO:	Councillor Community Grants and Budget Setting Task Group		
DATE:	16 October 2026		
TITLE:	Councillor Community Grant Bids October 2026		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Scrutiny		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Cllr Chris Morley – Finance Portfolio Holder		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Carl Holland - Assistant Director - Finance (Deputy S151)		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
To provide details of Council Community Project Fund bids received and scoring against evaluation criteria for consideration by the Councillor Community Grants and Budget Setting Task Group.
KEY ISSUES:
Following a bid submission window that ran from 31 July 2026 to 2 October 2026, officers have evaluated the bids received. This report provides a summary of the bids received and details of the scoring against the criteria set out for the scheme. The Task Group is asked to consider and support that the bids received are allocated up to the value of the funds available, based on evaluation score awarded.
BACKGROUND:
The Officer Evaluation Task Group has scored and then subsequently ranked the projects on score achieved. This is shown in appendices A to D. Appendix E provides an individual summary of each application received, drawing together the key information submitted by applicants to support consideration by the Task Group. The value of bids received exceeds the £500,000 funds made available by Full Council at its meeting on 26 February 2026 by £151,833 above the funds available. Appendix A details those bids with a score of 50 or higher and they return a funding cost of £398,879 for projects delivering value of £1,098,918. Appendix B – details applications with a score of 50 or higher, but officers have recommended rejection of the bid as noted in officer comments. Appendix C details those bids scoring 49 or below. Appendix D details those bids scoring 49 or below and officers recommend rejection.

The Task Group may, following discussion and consideration of the individual applications, recommend changes to the officer-assessed prioritisation, including recommending applications from Appendices B, C or D for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Task Group is asked to:

1. Consider the officer evaluation and ranking of the applications set out in Appendices A and B
2. Agree which applications should be recommended to Cabinet for approval, ensuring that the total recommended funding does not exceed the available budget of £500,000.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To enable the Task Group to make a recommendation to Cabinet of the bids it considers should be approved under the 2026/2027 Councillor Community Grants scheme.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

1.1. The Community Project Fund is designed to support councillors in delivering community-led projects that improve local facilities, enhance wellbeing and strengthen community resilience across the Borough. Projects should demonstrate a clear and measurable community benefit.

1.2. The Task Group Terms of Reference provide that the Group will:

- Receive applications from Borough Councillors on behalf of eligible applicants.
- Assess the applications against the agreed criteria.
- Make recommendations to Cabinet in relation to the awarding of grants from the Community Project Fund.

1.3. Officers received and evaluated 48 submissions to a value of £651,833, for projects with a value of £1,862,983. The task group is advisory with no delegated decision-making powers and are asked to consider and agree its recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet meets on 17 November 2026, where the decisions in relation to the fund will be made.

2. Background Information

2.1. The published guidance for the Community Project Fund set out the eligibility requirements and parameters for the scheme. The key requirements are summarised below:

- The fund will support projects that can demonstrate a clear public benefit and address an identifiable community need.
- Projects must be completed by 31 March 2028.
- Examples of projects that may be supported include, but are not limited to:
 - improvements to community buildings, play areas or sports facilities;
 - projects enhancing local green spaces or environmental sustainability;
 - activities promoting health, wellbeing or social inclusion;
 - community safety initiatives; and
 - digital or infrastructure improvements where there is a direct community benefit.

2.2. A key feature of the scheme is providing councillors with the opportunity to support projects within their wards. All applications require councillor endorsement. Applications may seek:

- Revenue funding of up to £5,000
- Capital funding of up to £25,000.

2.3. A summary of the evaluation criteria used is shown in the following table.

Criterion	Points	What good looks like
Community Need & Evidence	15	Clear local need supported by evidence, consultation, demand data or community support.
Community Benefit & Impact	15	Meaningful, measurable benefits for local people, with good reach and impact.
Value for Money	15	Strong outcomes for the funding requested, including matched funding or in-kind support where available.
Deliverability & Readiness	15	Realistic plan, clear timetable, manageable risks and capacity to deliver by 31 March 2028.
Rural Balance & Fair Distribution	10	Fair geographic distribution, particularly supporting rural or underserved communities.
Eligibility & Financial Position	10	Meets fund rules and demonstrates an appropriate financial position and genuine need for grant support.
Sustainability & Longer-Term Benefit	20	Lasting outcomes, a strong legacy or self-sustaining community benefit beyond the funding period.

3. Issues for the Task Group to Consider

3.1 The Task Group is asked to consider the officer evaluation of the applications, together with the individual application summaries and the scoring and ranking set out in appendices to this report.

3.2 Applications have been assessed against the published evaluation criteria and ranked according to the score achieved. For the purposes of presenting the evaluation results, applications scoring 50 or above have been identified as the initial priority for consideration for funding, with applications scoring 49 or below presented separately.

3.3 The scoring provides a consistent and evidence-based framework to assist the Task Group but does not, in itself, determine whether an application should or should not be recommended for funding. The Task Group retains discretion to consider the merits of all applications received, including those scoring below 50, having regard to the evaluation criteria, the information provided within the application and any further clarification or assurance provided.

3.4 Where the Task Group considers that an application scoring below 50 should nevertheless be recommended for funding, it should identify the reasons for doing so. This may include consideration of the particular community need or benefit,

geographic distribution, the overall balance of awards or other relevant matters arising from its consideration of the application.

3.5 Similarly, an application scoring 50 or above does not create an automatic entitlement to funding. Recommendations remain subject to the availability of funding and, where applicable, satisfactory resolution of any outstanding clarification, evidence or assurance requirements identified through the evaluation process.

3.6 The Task Group is invited to seek assurance from officers on individual applications, evaluation scores or the assessment process and may propose amendments to the applications recommended for funding following its consideration.

3.7 The total value of applications recommended for funding must remain within the approved Community Project Fund budget of £500,000.

3.8 Following its consideration, the Task Group will agree the applications it wishes to recommend to Cabinet. The Task Group is advisory and has no delegated authority to approve grant awards, with final decisions on the allocation of funding being made by Cabinet.

4. Corporate Priorities

4.1 The Community Projects Fund supports the Council's Corporate Priorities by investing in projects that strengthen communities, improve local facilities, enhance health and wellbeing, promote community resilience, support rural areas and deliver long-term social value. The fund enables local organisations to address identified community needs while ensuring the effective and sustainable use of public resources.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Full Council, at its meeting on 26 February 2026, approved the establishment of a Councillor Community Projects Fund of £500,000 within the 2026/27 budget.

5.2 A total of 48 applications has been received, requesting grant funding of £651,833 towards projects with a stated total value of £1,862,983. The value of funding requested therefore exceeds the available budget by £151,833.

5.3 Applications achieving an evaluation score of 50 or above request total funding of £480,914 towards projects with a stated total value of £1,595,841. If all these applications were recommended and subsequently approved by Cabinet at the amounts requested, £19,086 of the approved fund would remain unallocated.

5.4 The final financial position will depend upon the recommendations made by the Task Group and the decisions subsequently taken by Cabinet. The total value of awards must not exceed the available budget of £500,000.

5.5 Any awards requiring further clarification or assurance should be made conditional upon the relevant matters being resolved to the satisfaction of the appropriate officer before payment is released. Grant offer letters will set out the

approved purpose, payment arrangements, monitoring requirements and the Council's rights in relation to unspent or ineligible expenditure.

5.6 Expenditure will be monitored against the approved fund, with any unallocated balance or funding subsequently recovered dealt with in accordance with the Council's agreed financial arrangements.

6. Any other Implications/Risks

6.1 Applications have been evaluated by officers against the published eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria. The principal risks associated with the scheme are that a project is not delivered as proposed, costs increase, match funding is not secured, required permissions or legal interests are not in place, expenditure is not eligible, or the intended community benefits are not achieved.

6.2 Where an application is recommended subject to further clarification or assurance, this will be identified as a condition of the award. No payment will be made until the relevant requirements have been satisfied to the Council's satisfaction.

6.3 Each successful applicant will be required to enter into a grant agreement or accept a formal grant offer setting out the approved purpose, the amount awarded, the period for delivery, monitoring and evidence requirements, and the circumstances in which funding may be withheld or recovered. This will include provisions relating to unspent grant, expenditure outside the approved purpose, failure to complete the project and failure to comply with the terms of the award.

6.4 Applicants will remain responsible for securing all necessary permissions, consents, licences, funding and legal agreements required to deliver their projects. Approval of grant funding by the Council will not constitute approval under any separate regulatory or statutory process.

6.5 Appropriate due diligence and proportionate monitoring will be undertaken, having regard to the value, nature and risk of each award.

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

7.1 The fund is intended to support projects that deliver benefits for local communities, including projects promoting health, wellbeing, accessibility and social inclusion. Individual applications have been considered against the published criteria, including the nature and reach of the proposed community benefit.

7.2 Applicants are responsible for ensuring that funded activities and facilities comply with relevant equality and accessibility requirements. Where appropriate, specific equality or accessibility matters may be addressed through conditions attached to an award.

7.3 Information about the scheme was published on the Council's website and promoted through Borough Councillors within their wards. Support was available where assistance was required with the administration of an application.

8. Environmental Considerations

8.1 The fund itself does not give rise to a single direct environmental impact. Environmental effects will depend upon the nature of the individual projects supported. Some applications may deliver positive environmental outcomes, including improvements to green spaces, energy efficiency or local sustainability.

8.2 Applicants will remain responsible for securing all necessary planning permissions, environmental consents, licences and other regulatory approvals. Where relevant, environmental risks and benefits will be considered as part of the assessment and conditions of award.

9. Consultation

9.1 The establishment of the fund was approved as part of the Council's consideration of its 2026/27 budget. The scheme was subsequently promoted through Borough Councillors and published information.

9.2 Evidence of local engagement, consultation, demand or community support has been considered within the Community Need and Evidence criterion. The nature and extent of that evidence varies between applications and is reflected in the individual evaluation scores and application summaries.

10. Conclusion

10.1 The fund has attracted significant interest, with 48 applications seeking £651,833 against an available budget of £500,000. The applications have been evaluated against the published criteria to support a consistent and evidence-based prioritisation process.

10.2 The Task Group is invited to consider the evaluation results, seek any further assurance it requires and agree the applications it wishes to recommend to Cabinet. In doing so, the Task Group should have regard to the evaluation scores, eligibility and deliverability of individual projects, any outstanding conditions or assurance requirements, the overall distribution and balance of the proposed awards, and the requirement to remain within the available budget.

11. Background Papers

The Budget, Financial Strategy and Council Tax Resolution – Council 26 February 2026