

West Suffolk Councillor Locality Budget Scheme 25/26

1. Scheme purpose – the why

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council has a strong belief that families and communities are the bedrock of West Suffolk. Where they are thriving, we see successful places that are economically buoyant, healthy and cohesive. But where they are struggling, we see a range of issues and challenges emerging that prevent people from achieving their goals, this is particularly pertinent in the light of the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- 1.2 The Thriving Communities Funding has been designed to provide a more coherent package of funding toward initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of residents across West Suffolk. The Thriving Communities Funding offers a package of support of £645,953. The fund is made up of (1) £179,200 for Locality Budgets; (2) £266,733, that goes to the Thriving [Community grants](#)– a grant process that opens annually for applicants to apply for grants of either £2,000-£8,000 or £8,001 to £20,000; and (3) a three-year grant of £200,000 to Citizen's Advice West Suffolk..
- 1.3 The objective of the Locality budget scheme is to ensure funding is used in developing and building, capacity and resilience in local communities, helping residents to take ownership of and make a difference to the issues they care most about locally. Supported by the ward councillor, with their links and connections and understanding, not only of the local area, but also wider council priorities.
- 1.4 It is the councillor's responsibility to engage with the local group applying for funding to complete the application form with them. Councillors are encouraged to create positive relationships with local groups to be able to suggest changes to a project or activity that does not meet the criteria in its current format. They are encouraged to align projects with the [Thriving Communities strategic priority](#) and that projects follow principles of the [Families and Communities Approach](#). If councillors wish to make appropriate and achievable conditions to the Locality Budget, they can make suggestions to the community group and place conditions on the funding to ensure that the funding is within the scheme. The Families and Communities Officers can support the Councillor with setting the conditions.

What funding do I have?

- 1.5 The Locality Budget spend for 2025-2026 is £2,800 (plus any carry forward of up to £600 when a clear project has been earmarked for the carry forward). Projects will need to be committed by the 14 January. With the application form

completed, or an email detailing committed spends, detailing the recipients, to the Families and Communities Officer by the 14 January.

Who can I work with?

- 1.6 Locality Budget can be used for new or existing community-based projects or activities carried out by community groups working in the councillor's own ward. This centres on encouraging residents to explore their strengths and assets, an approach which is underpinned by the [Families and Communities Approach - building Thriving Communities](#) examples of which are in these [case studies](#).
- 1.7 Any continued funding should be for a new element of the project or an annual event that shows the community benefit. For example, Proposals to upgrade a community building can be funded over consecutive applications if the requests are to fund different parts of the project and each application can identify clear benefit to the community.
- 1.8 If a project has benefit to residents in more than one ward then members of those wards can collaborate in order to fund this, in any proportions, from their own locality budgets. Families and Communities officers will assist in these collaborations. Councillors can also work together with a county councillor, or town or parish, using funding from other funds. However, projects covering the whole district are not considered suitable for this funding. Large area/ whole district applications may be more suitable for the Thriving Communities fund. Ward members should make sure that residents in their locality are made aware of the purpose and funding windows for Thriving Communities Fund. [Community grants](#)

What can I fund?

- 1.9 Councillors should satisfy themselves that the project or activity being funded would improve the community or environment and enhance the quality of life for local residents. The project or activity should also have wider community support which should be evidenced within the application form.
- 1.10 The funding must be used by community groups, charities, social enterprises and community interest companies. Community groups are groups which are not public or local authorities (such as county, district, town, and parish councils) or businesses operated solely for profit. The activities of the community group will be primarily for the benefit of the community. The way in which groups demonstrate community benefit will vary depending on their legal form. Please note applications from faith groups must be inclusive and benefiting the wider community not just those who come to the space for the practice of their faith. An example might be a faith organisation acting as treasurer for a play group that uses their venue. In this case they may receive funding to buy them equipment, providing that those using the facility are not required to share the faith or will be directly canvassed to join the faith.

- 1.11 Sometimes, small groups may not hold a bank account or constitution, funds can instead be paid to the holding account of a public sector partner or community organisation. Where this is the cases, the group should contact a public sector partner (i.e. parish council) or community organisation (i.e. church) to act as their treasurers. This governance procedure is called 'holding the monies in trust'. Funds will be paid on the strict understanding that funds can only be used for the stated purpose.
- 1.12 As community activity in many rural areas is often led or supported by the parish council, funding may in exceptional circumstance be granted to support activities which are for the benefit of the community, (Town councils, in exceptional cases), but which are directly delivered by the rural parish councils. Funding must not be used to supplement services or functions provided by the parish council which are or could normally be provided through its own resources. Legal costs or administrative costs cannot be funded. If there is any doubt, please discuss with your Families and Communities Officer.
- 1.13 Funding events – these should clearly demonstrate the residual benefit to the community after the event is completed (developing and building capacity and resilience).
- 1.14 Locality budgets may not normally be used to subsidise events that generate their own revenues – for example, through ticket sales, admission fees, sales of goods or services within the event. However, they can support events which generate revenues for the benefit of the community. In other words, residual community benefit, not commercial benefit, must be the central feature of the event or project. They cannot be used for individuals – regardless of the benefit and national charities requesting donations.

2. Essential criteria

- 2.1 The scheme is governed by criteria to ensure that the funding has the greatest impact on the quality of life for residents in the district and ensures probity, value for money and accountability.
- 2.2 Councillors are responsible for satisfying themselves that the following essential criteria has been met.
- 2.3 The funding must go to a community group, non-public bodies, non-profit-making organisations, or national charities (with the exception of rural parish councils as set out in 1.8 above).
- 2.4 The granting of the funding is a one-off and does not imply an ongoing commitment by the council or have a revenue implication for the council.
- 2.5 The project or activity promotes communities working together and results in greater community involvement in a project and/or connecting people and organisations in new or stronger ways.

- 2.6 The project or activity does not unfairly discriminate against people from different backgrounds as described in the [West Suffolk Equality Scheme](#).
- 2.7 Councillors should ensure that funding is used by the community group during the 12 months following receipt or should be paid back in full. Evidence is required if payment exceeds 12 months. Should a change in the use of the funding be required then this should be in writing to the councillor and F&C team and agreement sought first. For example, 1. A community building asked for funding to pay for the kitchen, but other repairs are required instead. 2) If a School PTA applies for a grant to plan a summer fete and the full funds are not spent, they can request for remaining funds to go towards play equipment. 3) If a resident association apply for funding to hire a venue for regular meetings and a social event, but the event is postponed. A fundamental change doesn't necessarily mean the council will want the money back, but agreement must be sought if the terms of the funding changing.
- 2.8 As far as the councillor is aware, making the payment to the community group would not result in fraudulent or illegal activity or any practices which would bring the council into disrepute.
- 2.9 Councillors should satisfy themselves that the organisation does not have existing funds or significant unallocated or uncommitted reserves that could fund the project or activity.
- 2.10 Where a councillor believes they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in the community group, this is declared and the approval of the Council Leader or Deputy Leader must also be obtained, by sending them the application form to sign off.

3. How the scheme works

- 3.1 Councillors publicise the Locality Budget Scheme in their wards to a wide variety of community groups.
- 3.2 Generate conversations with local networks. The Families and Communities Officer can support the Councillor to enhance their knowledge of and how best to engage with the groups in their wards if needed.
- 3.3 Community groups make their funding needs known to councillors.
- 3.4 Councillors request supporting information from the community groups about projects which may be eligible for Locality Budget support.
- 3.5 Councillors consider community groups' funding needs against the purpose of the scheme and essential criteria.
- 3.6 Where projects meet the scheme's purpose and essential criteria, councillors complete the online application form, recommending the funding of a project or activity and providing the necessary supporting information. Councillors may propose changes to a project to meet the scheme's criteria and are encouraged to discuss this possibility with the Families and Communities Officer.

- 3.7 The Families and Communities team cannot fill in the forms, but are available for advice, to check the funding, and suggest connections. The form should be completed by the member together with the group, and/or in collaboration with an/other councillor/s. Once all are agreed with the content, please send this to the Families and Communities Officer.
- 3.8 Where a councillor believes they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in the community group, they should consult the Council Leader or Deputy Leader and agreement must also be obtained, by sending them the application form to sign off.
- 3.9 The Families and Communities Officer considers the information provided on the form and checks to sufficient funds are available and the eligibility criteria is met.
- 3.10 If everything is in order, the Families and Communities Officer authorises the payment and informs the ward councillor, inviting them to let the community group know that the funding has been approved. (Of note – Due to fraud, audit and transparency purposes new suppliers will need to complete an additional form and will not be paid for 10 days of completion of this paperwork. Organisations should expect a due diligence phone call from an officer to confirm bank details
- 3.11 The Families and Communities Officer writes to the community group, asking for confirmation that the funding will be spent on the intended purpose, their payment information (BACS transfer) and agreement regarding publicity.
- 3.12 The community group returns its confirmation, and the Finance Team arranges for payment to be made.
- 3.13 Once the project has been completed, the community group contacts the elected member, confirming that the money has been spent and providing evidence of expenditure.
- 3.14 Councillors liaise with the community group and the Families and Communities Officer to publicise the award and outcome of the funding.

4. Further details

- 4.1 The Families and Communities Officers will ensure that the criteria and purpose of the scheme are met and provide advice to ward councillors should this not be the case.
- 4.2 If Families and Communities Officers are unsure whether the application meets the scheme's purpose and/or criteria, or the councillor who originated the application is unhappy with the decision of the Families and Communities Officer, the Families and Communities Portfolio Holder will decide.
- 4.3 In the event that the councillor who originated the application is still unhappy with this decision, or the Portfolio Holder is unable to decide, then a decision

will be made by the Leader of the Council in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.

- 4.4 Councillors may check the funds available in their Locality Budget at any time by contacting their Families and Communities Officer.
- 4.5 The Locality Budget spend needs to be paid or committed by the 14 January. With the application form, or email with the detail of the committed spend with the Families and Communities Officer by the 14 January. At the end of a calendar year, all unallocated fund, will be moved into the in Thriving Community Funding small grant pot.
- 4.6 Details of Locality Budget spending are published regularly on the [West Suffolk – Community grants](#) page.

