

Guidance Notes Communities Fund

February 2017

Background

In February 2017 the council agreed £250k one-off funding initially for a pilot Communities Fund for communities to bid for matched funding schemes or projects to supplement services following changes/reductions.

Further details about the council's decision are available at:

<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=4818&Ver=4>

This approach supports the council's commitment to a new way of delivering localism in communities across Oxfordshire.

Our Approach

The purpose of this £250k communities fund is to provide grants for sustainable community solutions for communities to bid for matched funding schemes or projects to supplement services following changes/reductions.

In awarding the grants, our approach will be flexible, recognising the different needs across the county. You should discuss your proposal at an early stage with your County Councillor and seek their support for your proposal.

You can use the postcode search on www.writetothem.com to find your local councillor. Further information about contacting your local councillor is available on the Council's [website](#).

If your project impacts a wider area, you can put through a joint bid supported by multiple councillors.

Any proposals for funding will need to demonstrate sustainability and the ability to self-fund in the long term if it is an ongoing project. This will be a key criterion for assessing all applications. In addition match funding is strongly encouraged, and we will be asking all applicants to demonstrate match funding.

Applicants can apply at any point during the financial year 2017/18 and applications will be assessed at one of the quarterly locality meetings.

What do we fund? (eligibility criteria)

Funding is available for sustainable community solutions to supplement services following changes/service reductions. As the county council is moving towards a more locally sustainable delivery model we will be looking for projects that benefit the whole community, such as community transport schemes.

To make sure you have covered all the relevant areas in your application form, we have put together a suggested checklist:

- Description of the project/ activity
- Needs analysis
- Desired outcomes & beneficiaries
- Costs
- Sources of funding & long-term sustainability
- Performance Measures (how results will be monitored)
- Governance

Grant criteria

- Ability to self-fund in the long-term, as outlined in the application
- Clearly defined costs and timescales for implementation
- Evidence of the need for the project including community buy in
- Demonstrating the impact of service changes/reductions
- Engagement, partnership working and collaboration
- Projects must benefit Oxfordshire communities, be inclusive and provide good value for money.
- To what extent we can have confidence that the project will have a lasting impact, beyond the funding period.

We want to see projects which are rooted in their communities and which have grown out of a specific local need. All applicants must work closely with their local community to ensure their project is properly connected locally, responds to recognised need and does not duplicate other provision. We would also ask to see evidence of a strong buy-in from the local community, and any successful initiative would need to be accessible, inclusive and open to all.

Funding will only be awarded on a one-off basis and must be spent within the financial year it is awarded (end of March 2018).

Who can apply:

In order to be deemed eligible for funding, applying organisations must have a committee and/or a constitution or appropriate rules setting out aims and objectives and how the group will operate, and a bank account¹.

- Not-for-profit community groups
- Town and parish councils
- Schools (in the case of fee paying schools, only those that have charitable status)
- Social enterprises
- Charity organisations
- Community associations
- Community Interest Companies
- Companies limited by guarantee (which have exclusively non-profit making, community benefit objects)
- Parent teacher associations
- Cooperatives
- Friendly societies
- Youth Clubs

What don't we fund?

Organisations:

- Individuals or sole traders
- Profit-making organisations
- Organisations not established in the UK
- Organisations that give funds to other charities, individuals or other organisations

Projects:

- Projects that duplicate an already existing service
- Activities which a statutory body is responsible for
- Activities with a religious or political purpose
- Activities that contradict or act against any of the Council's agreed policies such as [Equalities](#) and [Safer Recruitment](#), or fail to comply with all the other relevant statutory requirements, such as health and safety legislation

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and if you are not sure whether you are eligible for funding you should get in touch with us at: localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

¹ Please note we will not make any payments into individuals' bank accounts, so it is very important that your group has a bank account.

How to apply

Application process:

- 1) Discuss your proposal with your local county councillor
- 2) Submit your application to localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- 3) Applications will be considered at the next available locality meeting
- 4) Decision
- 5) Notification to bidders

We encourage applicants to contact us early with their expressions of interest or any questions they might have, to avoid any delays in the council assessing the bids and making a decision.

The Communities Fund application form can be downloaded from our website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/communitybudgets.

Please ensure you complete all the fields of the application form. You may also attach additional documents in support of your project.

The application form must be physically signed by the applicant. We cannot accept typed signatures.

Deadline for Submission

The deadline for submission of applications is 31 December 2017 to allow for consideration at the final locality meeting of the financial year which will take place in January. Funding is awarded on a rolling basis so early applications are strongly encouraged to submit their application early.

How will applications be assessed?

We will assess your application against the key criteria set out above and we may also seek feedback from community stakeholders.

The county councillors at the locality meeting will review all applications and then make their decisions. If they feel there is insufficient evidence they may defer the decision to the next meeting pending further work.

Decisions can be called-in by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, which can decide to approve the decision, ask the Locality Meeting to reconsider, refer it to full council for further debate, or require further information of further work to be done.

Awarding the grant

Applicants, along with their local county councillor, will be notified by email of the Locality Meeting decision within 14 working days of the decision being made.

Successful applicants will be asked to sign a legal agreement with the council (for any grants over £5,000). Once the legal agreement is signed, we will then transfer the funding into the organisation's bank account.

For larger grants/ where appropriate, funding might be phased depending on the outcomes achieved following the first stage of delivery.

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback on their proposal and, where possible, we will work with organisations to help them identify alternative funding opportunities.

Monitoring

Successful applicants are expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the Council and must agree to this when signing the funding request form.

All successful applicants need to be prepared for a review of their project.

This may include:

- Receipts recording how the money was spent
- Reports on the activity funded
- Feedback from individuals impacted
- Any other record of the activity funded (e.g. promotional flyers and posters)

Successful applicants will be strongly encouraged to keep us informed about the progress of their projects. Any setbacks to the implementation of the projects should be reported to the Policy Team. Delivery of the projects will be monitored as per milestones identified in the business case/ project proposal.

Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the county council.

Contact us

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