



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission 31 August 2023

Wards affected: All wards

Parish and Community Initiative Fund – proposed changes

Report of Director Corporate and Street Scene Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To propose the introduction of new Community Equipment Grants offering fixed grants for smaller projects.
- 1.2 To propose an amendment to the Parish and Community Initiative Fund (PCIF) and Hinckley Community Fund (HCF) which gives greater priority to climate change initiatives.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Scrutiny Commission endorses the introduction of a new Community Equipment Grant scheme set out in 3.5 – 3.10.
- 2.2 Scrutiny Commission endorses the changes to the PCIF and HCF to reflect the Council's climate change priorities.
- 2.3 Scrutiny Commission endorses the change in budgets identified in section 5 namely: -
£3,028 per year budget for admin support (commencing 1 September 2023).
£25,000 new Community Equipment Grants.
£134,000 PCIF / HCF fund (reduction of £28,000 to fund new Community grant fund).

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 Since 2005, the PCIF and HCF has awarded £1,847,000 to 461 community projects within the parishes of Hinckley and Bosworth. An annual capital

budget of £162,000 is set aside for these funds (£150,000 for the PCIF and £12,000 for the HCF).

3.2 PCIF and HCF grants are for capital projects only and will cover 50% of the total project cost up to a maximum of £12,000. There is also a threshold of £12,000 allocated per parish.

3.3 Since the last review of both funds in 2020 there have been an increase in applications for smaller scale schemes which whilst still having community value are failing to meet the scoring threshold of 50 points to qualify for a grant. Whilst applications are starting to be received for small scale climate change projects there is still little significant applications for larger scale climate change projects which would meet the Council's climate change strategy ambition of a net zero borough by 2050.

3.4 The following changes are therefore proposed: -

NEW Community Equipment Grants - £25,000 per year – Start 1 April 2024

3.5 This would be funded from the current PCIF capital budget (thus amending the PCIF) and will still only fund capital items. Applications would be mainly online, require a lower level of information from the applicant making it easier to apply and administer, and offer fixed grants for specific items based on 50% of officers' estimates of current costs.

3.6 Applications will be assessed against set criteria to ensure transparency and consistency and grants would be approved at the lead officer's discretion (with second agreement from Green Space Manager / Head of Service and without referral to Councillors or SLT) and paid once works are completed / receipt or invoice provided. Grants would be awarded on a first come first served basis starting 1 April each year, with a maximum payment per parish of £3,000 per year. Grants will be paid by bank transfer only.

3.7 The Senior Green Space Officer will lead officer and be supported by the Green Space Manager. To support the lead officer an additional 4 hours of administrative officer time will be provided at a cost of £3,028 per year. To enable this new fund to be established this additional support is required from September 2023.

3.8 Previous grant recipients will be asked to advise which types of equipment they would like to see funded (capital only) before the items funded are finalised but from previous applications the following is proposed per item:-

Defibrillator - £1250

Bench / seat - £500 (max 2)

Shelter (bus, cemetery, park) - £1300 (max 1)

Village sign / notice board - £300 (max 1)

Interpretation panel - £500

Smaller signs / plaques - £50 (maximum 10)

Tree planting schemes (small scale) standards - £100 each (max 5)

Tree planting – whips £1 each (max 500)
 Recycling bins - £200 (max 2)
 *Small Machinery and equipment (e.g., for in bloom groups) - £100
 *Medium machinery and equipment - £250
 *Large machinery and equipment - £500
 Electrical appliances (kitchen based – oven, fridge etc minimum value) – £75
 (gas appliances not funded)
 Furniture - chair £30 per chair
 Furniture – table £35 per table
 *Miscellaneous items – small £100
 *Miscellaneous items – medium £250
 *Miscellaneous items – large – £500
 * size of grant would be determined by cost of item following principle that max 50% will be funded. Miscellaneous category added to allow flexibility for a wider range of items to potentially be funded. In future years this could be removed as clarity emerges on what groups want funding.

3.9 Unless otherwise specified the maximum number of items funded is set by the maximum grant of £3,000 per parish.

3.10 Transparency – It is proposed that all grants are published on the council’s webpage, and twice-yearly update on grants awarded is sent to all Councillors by email. An annual review of the previous years grants will be reported to Scrutiny at the same time as the PCIF / HCIF report is reviewed.

PCIF and HCF Changes to reflect climate change priority.

3.11 The PCIF / HCF fund will be amended to £134,000 total to fund the new Community Equipment Grants (pro rata PCIF will be £124,000 and HCF will be £10,000).

3.12 To focus this fund to larger schemes a minimum project size of £5,000 will be introduced, meaning minimum grants will be £2,500.

3.13 To reflect the Council’s climate emergency and climate change strategy projects which reduce carbon emissions will be given priority over all other applications when allocating funding. Items and projects which would now be funded by the Community Equipment Grants will also be removed as priorities. Gas and oil boilers and appliances will no longer be funded. As such the priorities for the scheme will now be judged in the following order:-
 Priority 1: climate change / carbon reduction / biodiversity projects
 Priority 2: play area improvements and community building projects.
 Priority 3: sports and fitness projects, footpaths, trails and historic features
 Priority 4: landscaping projects and improvements to places of worship

For priority 1 projects, examples of climate change / carbon reduction biodiversity types of projects would be:-

Reducing – electric vehicle car clubs and charge points, building insulation, air and ground source heat pumps and solar (PV) panels

- Offsetting – tree planting (including land purchase for woodland creation), generating renewable energy.
- Mitigating – shading, flood water management / permeable hard landscaping, grey water harvesting, green roofs, biodiversity improvements such as new wildflower meadows / ponds which help nature adapt to climate impacts.

- 3.14 To reflect the scale and cost of some climate change projects the maximum grant award will be increased to £20,000 / 50% of project costs. For example, a village hall green retrofit could potentially include internal and external insulation including new windows and doors, air source heat pumps, PV panels and battery storage and therefore cost significantly more than £25,000. This increased grant size would overrule the £12,000 per parish limit and would only be applied for significant carbon reduction projects.
- 3.15 For climate change / carbon reduction schemes feasibility studies will also be included retrospectively for funding. For example, where a green heating scheme has been designed for retrofit into a community building, if the scheme then applies for funding to the PCIF the value of the feasibility study can be included as a cost and therefore 50% of costs can be funded. This only applies where schemes are implemented, and only applies for climate change projects.
- 3.16 To reflect this new focus for the PCIF and HCF the assessors need to reflect this new area of work and it is therefore proposed that the assessors are now expanded and applications are assessed by those with the right skill for the project application. Suggested to include:-
- 3 green space officers
 - 1 rural / community officer
 - 1 asset management or housing officer with net zero experience
 - 1 climate change officer
 - 1 sports development officer
 - 1 heritage planning officer
 - Chair of assessment panel – Head of Street Scene services
- 3.17 All applicants need to be constituted groups with a bank account. For applicants ease and to reduce assessment time it is proposed that this is set up as standalone assessment which is then shared across all HBBC funding schemes and remains valid for 3 years. For example, a sports club would need to complete the constituted group assessment once and would then be able to apply for PCIF, community equipment and sports grants with HBBC without need to provide this information again for 3 years.
- 3.18 For the Borough as a whole to achieve its net zero ambitions Parish Councils and community groups need to be ambitious with the schemes that address climate change.
- 3.19 To aid transparency the assessment criteria for the PCIF / HCF will be published on the council website.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

4.1 This report can be taken in open session.

5. Financial implications [AA]

5.1 To reflect the change in focus to Community Equipment Grants it is requested that the PCIF fund is amended from £150,000 to £124,000 , the HCF fund amended from £12,000 to £10,000, and a new Community Equipment Grant budget is created for £25,000.

5.2 The virement of £25,000 will require approval by the Head of Finance and Chief Executive.

5.3 The £3,000 for administration support, if approved will require a revenue supplementary budget.

6. Legal implications [MR]

6.1 None

7. Corporate Plan implications

7.1 These funds support many of the Councils Corporate Plan Place and Prosperity aims including supporting rural communities, delivering our climate change strategy, and improving our parks and open spaces.

8. Consultation

8.1 This report will be reviewed by Scrutiny Commission, and Scrutiny will continue to review all grant allocations made under the PCIF and HCF funds prior to awards on an annual basis.

8.2 The list of items funded through the Community Equipment Grants will be circulated to previous grant recipients and applicants for comment before finalising by Officers.

8.3 Ward Councillors will continue to be asked at the time of application if they support PCIF and HCF projects. It is not intended to consult ward Councillors for the Community Equipment Grants.

9. Risk implications

9.1 It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with

this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

- 9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decision were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Failure to use IT to minimise administrative burden of new community equipment grants	Commence work with IT well in advance . Ensure non-IT based system available for those who cannot access IT	Paul Scragg
Projects are too small for funding (less than £5,000)	Ensure these groups are advised of other funding sources and utilise the equipment grant scheme.	Paul Scragg
Failure to secure admin support resulting in increased work for green spaces	Ensure admin support funded and in place	Paul Scragg
Lack of suitable skills to assess applications	Widen assessment team to include those with climate change / carbon reduction in buildings skills. Update assessment processes to minimise input needed by new assessors	Caroline Roffey Paul Scragg
Failure to increase climate change projects / deliver climate strategy	Ensure external funding information for climate change projects available on website and updated regularly. Engagement at rural conference and parish forums on climate change funding and projects e.g., how to reduce energy, switch to heat pumps, PVs, EV charge points etc	Danielle Leggett / Rose Leach Danielle Leggett / Rose Leach

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 All these funding schemes support voluntary sector community projects and Parish Council projects across the Borough. The funding cap of £12,000 per parish ensures that funds are spread across a wider number of projects, and

the £20,000 cap for climate change projects reflects the large costs of these projects.

- 10.2 Within the assessment process for the PCIF and HCF consideration is given to accessibility by the community, DDA compliance etc.
- 10.3 The new Community Equipment Grants will be an easier funding route for smaller scale projects and are intended to increase support for the voluntary / community sector on smaller projects.

11. Climate implications

- 11.1 The changes to the PCIF and HCF prioritise funding to climate change projects and will target funding to support delivery of the climate change strategy.
- 11.2 Together with the other support for the parishes such as information on funding and further engagement on green building projects through the rural conference and parish forum this will enable an increase in climate change projects across the Borough and through the voluntary sector.
- 11.3 The inclusion of climate projects which reduce, off set and mitigate climate change allows for a greater scope of climate related projects to be funded as a priority.

12. Corporate implications

- 12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
 - Community safety implications
 - Environmental implications
 - ICT implications
 - Asset management implications
 - Procurement implications
 - Human resources implications
 - Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector

Background papers: None

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