



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 20 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	WESTHIVE CRITERIA
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Janine Sparrowhawk - Community Funding Officer Email: janine.sparrowhawk@westoxon.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the strengthening and clarification of established criteria for Westhive civic crowdfunding platform
Annexes	Annex A: Westhive Crowdfund - Scheme outline and fund criteria.
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree the strengthened criteria and scheme outline for Westhive Crowdfund.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All• Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Learning from other councils on the Spacehive platform and the understanding gained from managing the Westhive scheme since the launch in October 2023.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Westhive is a 'movement' on Spacehive, set up to support community projects in West Oxfordshire. Westhive was launched in October 2023. The Civic Crowdfunding platform provides a new and accessible way that West Oxfordshire residents can be at the heart of civic change and provides a springboard for locally led ideas to attract funding more easily.
- 1.2 This report serves to confirm the established criteria and strengthen elements which have been noted as requiring clarification.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2023, the Council agreed to commission Spacehive Ltd to create a Westhive 'movement' on its civic crowdfunding platform. This movement enables local people to promote ideas for civic projects and to raise money from local supporters including the Council, businesses and residents.
- 2.2 Officers and the Westhive Members Panel review and determine the Council pledges in line with the Westhive criteria. Since the launch of Westhive in October 2023, three rounds of pledge review meetings have taken place – in January 2024, June 2024 and October 2024. The existing contract with Spacehive Ltd will enable a further 3 rounds to take place.
- 2.3 Three online creator workshops have been hosted by Spacehive in conjunction with officers for potential project creators. These workshops provide information on how the civic crowdfunding platform works and enables break out rooms for sharing project ideas and tips for launching a campaign with one to one advice. Online workshops will continue to be provided in Spring and Autumn for potential project creators.
- 2.4 Five projects have successfully reached their project targets. The organisations are from a variety of sectors and include:
 - Creative programme for young people.
 - Community cycling project.
 - Gardening skills project for adults with learning difficulties.
 - Community food distribution project.
 - Project supporting victims of domestic violence.
- 2.5 The Pledge Review Group meeting on 30 October 2024 will consider Council pledges to 9 projects that are currently live on the Westhive platform.
- 2.6 Officers have drawn together the criteria agreed in all relevant reports to the Executive and as set out in original project initiation documents. Consideration has been given to wording used in previous Council grant schemes. Officers have also considered the approach taken by Cotswold District Council in relation to Crowdfund Cotswold.
- 2.7 The Council Plan Priorities are the foundation for the Westhive criteria.

3. CRITERIA AND SCHEME OUTLINE

- 3.1 The criteria and scheme outline are attached as Annex A. The first 3 rounds of the Westhive have provided a thorough test of the established criteria and process. Based on this experience the priorities for focus have been to:
 - Strengthen the definition of the eligibility of applicants.

- Clearly define the outcomes to be delivered.
- Improve information relating to phased projects, annual events and repeat applications.
- Ensure that the assessment process is clearly defined.
- Ensure that the Council's decision process is clearly defined.
- Clarify the requirements on successful projects.
- Ensure clear and concise information on the Westhive criteria and scheme outline is available to all involved including officers and members.

3.2 The revised criteria and scheme outline will be used by Spacehive during their verification process and be accessible to potential project creators on the Westhive platform.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The report does not seek to make any changes to the previously agreed approach – merely to provide additional clarification to aid understanding. The Council could choose not to provide this additional clarification. This may result in a greater amount of support being required from officers and could lead to some inconsistencies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report. The agreed annual budget for the Westhive fund remains as £120,000.

5.2 Officers and the Westhive Members Panel review and determine the Council pledges in line with the Westhive criteria which ensures appropriate use of public money.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no additional legal implications arising from this report. All Westhive applications are verified by Spacehive, to ensure that they are proposed by suitable organisations and to ensure that the arrangements in place for the delivery of projects are appropriate. Officers provide additional support. Officers and the Westhive Members Panel review the projects and supporting material, and this is reflected in the recommendations for pledges.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 The clarification of the criteria included in this report provides greater reassurance of consistency in approach and assessment.

7.2 This verification process ensures that pitches will only be made by eligible applicants. While this process prevents pledges being given to support ineligible activities, it cannot mitigate wholly against dissatisfaction where projects are unsuccessful in reaching their targets.

7.3 While the Council's pledge fund is within the Council's control, projects will also need to attract sufficient funding to reach their campaign targets from other supporters by their campaign deadlines. While this is a feature of crowdfunding, it may impact on take-up in that projects the Council determines to support today may not meet their targets and thus will not draw down pledges.

7.4 Where pledges are drawn down, but change of circumstances prevent activity taking place, Spacehive have procedures in place to seek the return of pledges. The Council maintains its

discretion not to recover the grant where alternative or more limited activity could still take place.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** The scheme has been designed to be open to geographical communities and communities of interest. The range of projects that have come forward onto the Westhive platform is to a degree testament to this, as they cover a range of very different activities, from different communities of geography and interest across the district.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** All projects on the Westhive platform have been asked to consider climate change, and any activity they could undertake to help mitigate its impacts. Positive actions to address climate change will be encouraged. The Council's Westhive Pledge Review Group meeting will consider applying a premium up to a total of 50% of a projects total cost, to projects which are seeking to directly address climate change and the ecological emergency.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None.

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