



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Name and date of Committee	<b>EXECUTIVE – 11 JUNE 2025</b>
Subject	<b>COMMUNITY ACTIVITY GRANTS – REVISED CRITERIA</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Rachel Crouch - Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: <a href="mailto:rachel.crouch@westoxon.gov.uk">rachel.crouch@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Phil Martin - Director of Place Email: <a href="mailto:phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk">phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager Email: <a href="mailto:heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk">heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	The purpose of the report is to consider the criteria for the latest round of the Community Activity Grant scheme which will be launched in the summer. The grant scheme will run alongside Westhive providing an opportunity for local groups to access Council funding for small scale activities which have an impact in communities.
Annexes	Annex A – Proposed criteria
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Approve the proposed criteria;</li><li>2. Instruct officers to launch the Community Activities grant scheme;</li><li>3. Agree that the grant award decisions are delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities.</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li><li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li><li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Following a review of Westhive it was determined that there would be value in launching a light touch community grant scheme accessible to small community groups looking for low levels of funding.

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** Following the review of Westhive carried out in March 2025 it was determined that the Community Activity grant scheme (CAG) be redesigned and relaunched to provide a vehicle for distributing very small grants to local groups. The CAG scheme sets out to complement Westhive but operate separately and be managed internally.
- 1.2** This report sets out the vision for the CAG scheme with a set of criteria.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The CAG scheme was outside of the scope of the Grants Review undertaken in 2023. It has operated for a number of years – with its most recent revision taking place in 2019. The annual budget for the scheme is £11,000. Traditionally funding has been allocated to small scale community-based activities and events. In 2024/25 the Council did not operate the CAG scheme. For 2025/26 it was agreed that the budget for 24/25 be carried forward and added to the existing budget, taking the total available in 2025/26 to £22,000.

## **3. MAIN POINTS**

### **3.1 Proposed theme**

- 3.1.1** The proposed theme for the CAG scheme in 2025/26 is Community Action.
- 3.1.2** It was felt appropriate to select a broad overarching theme which could attract the widest variety of proposals covering the areas of community wellbeing, nature and the environment. Our vision for the scheme is that it encourages collaboration and grassroots action to build a strong sense of community.
- 3.1.3** During Covid we saw residents demonstrate that they not only knew best what their community needed but also that they had the imagination and drive to create solutions. By helping residents to remove barriers that get in the way, provide encouragement and some resources, there is scope to make a lasting impact. Projects which bring residents together to deliver lasting change in their community are encouraged through this scheme.
- 3.1.4** The data backs up the need to create opportunities to create connections between people. The Loneliness Indicator recently developed by OCC identifies levels of loneliness based on a number of factors and has identified Witney central and Chipping Norton in the top 10 MSOA areas in Oxfordshire. We have an ageing population - estimated 22% of the population of West Oxfordshire is aged over 65 and this cohort is likely to experience loneliness. Young people reported in our Youth Needs Assessment in 2022 that they faced barriers to accessing activity close to home and cost was very often a barrier. Transport is challenging for residents living rurally both in terms of cost and availability and residents continue to face financial challenges as reported by Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire.
- 3.1.5** It is proposed that applications supported through the scheme will contribute to the following outcomes:
  - Give local people the resources to take action to benefit their local community or neighbourhood.
  - Help residents to feel less isolated by supporting activities which bring people together.

- Make it easier for residents to engage in a vibrant range of cultural and recreational activities focussed on creating a sense of pride of place.
- Create inclusive communities and neighbourhoods, where people facing the biggest barriers to participation are able to access opportunities.
- Improve access to opportunities and services to help people affected by the cost of living crisis.

## **3.2 Draft criteria**

**3.2.1** The proposed vision and priorities are set out in Annex A. The key elements of the approach are:

- Grants awarded will be a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £1,000
- Funding would be distributed to activities and events which most strongly demonstrate they can contribute to any or all of the outcomes above.
- Partnership funding will be encouraged - with no minimum level – as will ‘in-kind’ support.
- There will be restrictions on who can apply so as to ensure a focus on very local activities delivered by smaller groups and so as not to draw project creators away from Westhive.
- Applications will be assessed in 1 Round. In the event that funding remains a second round will be considered.
- Projects must deliver on at least one of the Council’s priorities.
- Priority will be given to projects which are led by residents, for residents and those who face the greatest barriers to participation eg young people and older residents
- Only one application per organisation in a single calendar year.
- General and unspecified fundraising will not be eligible.
- Applicants will not be able to utilise CAG funding towards a project which has previously received Council funding or for activity which is simultaneously fundraising on the Westhive platform.

**3.2.2** It is proposed that the following groups will be able to apply:

- Voluntary sector groups including community action groups.
- Constituted groups – including Sports clubs
- Charities
- Non-constituted informal groups – partnering with a constituted group or charity

**3.2.3** It is proposed that the following groups will not be able to apply:

- Parish and Town Councils
- Schools and Colleges
- Groups based outside of West Oxfordshire.

**3.2.4** Faith groups where any element of the activity delivered has a religious component or element of worship, or where access to the activity is limited or denied on the basis of a difference in religious belief, will be ineligible.

**3.2.5** If a group is not constituted, they will be able to apply if they partner with another group which is constituted. They will be encouraged and supported to become constituted where possible by the Community Funding Officer.

### **3.3 Decision-making**

**3.3.1** It is proposed that the decision-making is delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities.

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**4.1** The Executive could decide not to relaunch the CAG scheme with a focus on supporting local, small-scale activity. If this option is selected, the result would be that this type of activity would find it more difficult to access funding from the Council.

**4.2** The Executive could decide that the proposed criteria and principles of the scheme require further modification which would delay the start of the scheme. In the event of this being required and to minimise the impact of the delay, officers could be requested to redraft the criteria and principles in consultation with the Executive Member of Stronger Healthy Communities and provide a fresh approach to a future Executive meeting.

**4.3** The Executive could decide not to award a maximum grant award of £1,000. A change to the maximum level would not delay the implementation of the scheme.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The budget for the CAG scheme is in the base budget. The budget available in 2025/26 is £22,000. It is proposed that the maximum grant awarded would be £1,000. Grants provided will be one-off in nature with the Council making no commitment to continue to support the activity after the initial funding window comes to an end.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**7.1** Relaunching the CAG scheme provides a positive opportunity for residents to secure the financial support of the Council. The ambition is to get an appropriate balance between making the scheme accessible to local groups whilst achieving due diligence in the distribution of public money. Advice will be sought from the Fraud team in this regard and appropriate checks will be made. By supporting only constituted or charitable organisations the Council is mitigating its risk of inappropriate use of funds. Applications will be assessed by officers before being considered by the Executive or Executive Member for Strong Healthy Communities, whichever approach is preferred.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**8.1** It is considered that the introduction of the CAG scheme will not result in inequality on the basis of:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief

**8.2** The CAG scheme will be promoted widely and priority given to projects which most strongly deliver on the outcomes set out above including the degree to which projects provide opportunities for those facing the greatest barriers to participation.

## **9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1** We do not envisage any climate or ecological implications resulting from the relaunch of the CAG scheme. It is the intention of the scheme to support local groups to operate close to communities – thus reducing the need for residents to travel.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**10.1** None  
(END)