



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 10 JUNE 2026
Subject	SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SERVICES – CROWDFUNDER UK APPROACH
Wards affected	All
Accountable member (Joint)	Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Sport Email: tim.sumner@westoxon.gov.uk Sandra Coleman, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: sandra.coleman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager Email: heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To review the proposed application and assessment processes, criteria and eligibility of the new grants scheme which is expected to be hosted by Crowdfunder UK; and to update on the progress of commissioning Crowdfunder UK as the new host of the scheme.
Annexes	Annex A – Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the proposed application and assessment processes, criteria, eligibility and monitoring of the new grants scheme as set out in the report, and;2. Delegate authority for award decisions to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive member for Stronger Healthier communities and the Executive member for Arts, Culture and Sport.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Good Quality of Life for All• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	None.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed application and assessment processes, criteria and eligibility of the new grants scheme which is expected to be hosted by the Crowdfunder UK platform. Furthermore, it provides an update on the progress of commissioning Crowdfunder UK as the new host of the scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council entered into a 3 year contract with Spacehive in 2023/24. This contract ends on 30th April 2026. The Council distributed funding from the main Westhive fund through this vehicle. The annual budget for the scheme was £120,000.
- 2.2 The Council previously operated 2 main grant schemes – the Community Facilities Grant (CFG) and the Community Revenue Grant (CRG). In the most recent grants review the CFG which was focussed on community infrastructure capital projects such as village halls and sports facilities, was found to be regularly remaining unspent. The CRG was a fully committed revenue stream. It was found to provide very limited access each year to new applicants.
- 2.3 On the 17th December 2025 Executive agreed not extend the contract with Spacehive. It was agreed to pursue entering into an agreement with Crowdfunder UK to host a funding platform for 3 years from 2026/27 onwards. Furthermore, it was agreed to make provision in budget setting for platform hosting fees.
- 2.4 The main advantages of Crowdfunder UK over Spacehive are as set out below:

Crowdfunder UK	Spacehive
0% platform fees for not-for-profit groups	7.5% platform fees for not-for-profit groups
£46,000 hosting charge to the Council over 3 years	£110,000 hosting charge to the Council over 3 years
Added exposure to other grants available on the platform	
Stripe account fees of 2.4% plus 20p per pledge	

- 2.5 Officers were asked to design the criteria and application process for the scheme and progress the procurement of Crowdfunder UK, reporting back to Executive.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1 We know that sustainable change starts in communities. When locally led, innovative solutions are backed with the resources they need, they have the best chance to make the greatest impact.
- 3.2 Officers are recommending that the Council moves away from using the Westhive name to emphasise a fresh start, updated criteria and a new approach.
- 3.3 The new fund, delivered through Crowdfunder UK, will provide grants for projects that support communities across West Oxfordshire. It will continue to help bring locally led

ideas to life by combining support from residents, organisations and the Council. The fund will focus on projects that improve wellbeing, actively improve and protect the local environment, and strengthen community resilience.

3.4 The priorities for the fund will continue to align with Council priorities:

- ✓ Community Wellbeing – reducing health inequalities and creating more connected communities to enable people to enjoy a better quality of life
- ✓ Climate Resilience – achieving a reduction in carbon emissions and creating sustainable communities that are resilient to climate impacts, primarily flooding, extreme heat, and drought.
- ✓ Nature Recovery – enhancing the natural environment to increase biodiversity, alongside providing wider opportunities for people to access it and understand its value.

3.5 A budget of £120,000 per year is available. Projects will be able to apply for a pledge of up to 50% of the total project cost, or maximum of £12,000, whichever is the lower amount.

3.6 The aim is to provide two application windows in 2026.

4. CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY

4.1 Organisations will be deemed eligible to apply on the following basis:

Eligible	Ineligible
Charities - registered and excepted Charitable Incorporated Organisations Community Interest Companies (CICs) Constituted Voluntary Groups Community Benefit Society *	Town and parish councils Exempt charities Social Enterprises Private companies Statutory service providers Groups proposing for-profit projects Groups proposing projects with a political affiliation Schools will generally not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed project will have a demonstrable benefit to the wider community. Faith-based organisations will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the activity will have no religious or missioning component and so long as the activity is inclusive.

4.2 Eligible organisations will be required to:

- Deliver work for the benefit of people who live in West Oxfordshire.
- Have a governing body (trustees or directors) of at least three unrelated individuals.
- Be inclusive and accessible in terms of recruitment, governance and delivery.
- Be able to provide the following documentation and evidence of their organisation’s eligibility:
 - Governing documents (such as constitution or Memorandum & Articles of association);

- Bank account in the name of the organisation, with two separate signatories
- Published accounts to demonstrate the organisation is over 12 months old; and
- Safeguarding and/or child protection policies where relevant.

4.3 Both Revenue and Capital costs will be eligible.

- Revenue costs: One-off costs associated with the direct delivery of a project. Staff costs where they are directly related to the project will be eligible. Feasibility studies will not be eligible.
- Capital costs: One-off costs associated with the refurbishment of a building or the purchase of equipment.

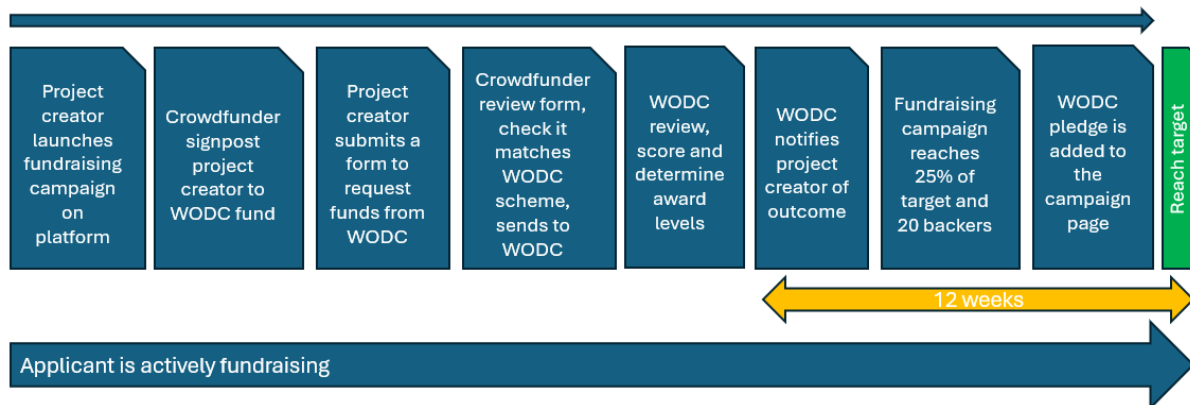
4.4 The following types of requests will not be eligible for support from the Council:

- Contributions to general appeals or circulars
- Activities where the primary benefit is the advancement of religion
- Activities where the primary benefit is to enable a public body to conduct its statutory obligations
- Activities where the primary benefit is the advancement of animal welfare
- Activities which have already taken place or costs that have already been incurred
- Grant-making or equivalent gifts in kind by other organisations (although we can fund provision of necessary goods for a service e.g. food parcels or activity packs)
- Changes to land/buildings that do not belong to the applicant
- Large-scale construction projects (including fixed structures e.g. playgrounds) with a total value over £100,000. This is due to the fact that these projects take a significant amount of time to reach their target and this can be difficult to manage in year.
- Feasibility studies
- Costs which can more appropriately be met through the precept.

4.5 All payments will be handled securely through Stripe. During project setup, each organisation connects its own Stripe account to manage transactions. Projects can run on an 'all or nothing' or 'keep what you raise' model, determining whether funds are released or refunded if targets are not met.

5. PROCESS FOR THE PROJECT CREATORS (APPLICANTS)

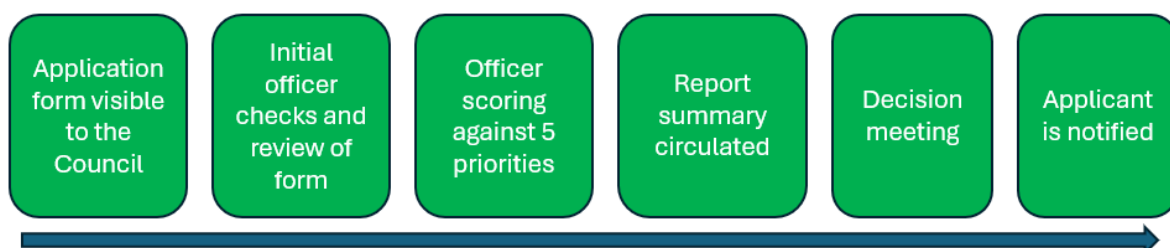
5.1 The process for project creators will be as follows:



- 5.2 Crowdfunder UK will pro-actively alert projects who are actively fundraising on the site. A very simple application form will be completed by the project creator and submitted to the Council via Crowdfunder UK who will review it against the Council criteria and eligibility.
- 5.3 Once approved the form will be visible to the Council via our Crowdfunder UK dashboard and officers will complete further checks before putting suitable bids forward for assessment and decision.
- 5.4 Once the outcome is known, project creators will be notified of the pledge. The pledge will be valid for 12 weeks after the date of the Award Agreement. If the project creator has not met the target within 12 weeks, the offer of the pledge may be withdrawn, however, project creators may request an extension to their campaign deadline. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis, recognising that there may be circumstances where a longer timeframe is needed to reach their target.
- 5.5 Project creators will need to reach 100% of their campaign fundraising target to receive the funds from the Council. At this point the pledge converts to an award.
- 5.6 If a project creator does not reach 100% of the campaign fundraising target the pledge will be cancelled.
- 5.7 Applicants should be actively crowdfunding to achieve the best results. The pledge from the council is designed to create energy in the campaign, to give the applicant a boost at a critical stage, encouraging supporters to back the project and reach the fundraising target.
- 5.8 There is no fee charged to project creators for using the platform. There are small costs associated on transactions which are levied by Stripe.

6. DETERMINING AN AWARD

6.1 Each application will be considered as follows:



6.2 If an application meets the criteria, it does not guarantee that an award will be granted. Officers will consider each application and score against a suite of 5 priorities. This will enable officers to prioritise funding to projects which align most strongly with the values of the funding scheme. The 5 priorities are as follows:

- Council priorities
- Local need
- Degree of community benefit
- Partnership arrangements
- Value for money

6.3 It is proposed that the decision making is delegated to the Director of Place in conjunction with the Executive member for Stronger, Healthier Communities. This is a change to the previous arrangement. Prior to this meeting a report will be shared with the Leader of the Council and Executive members for Finance, Environment and Climate to enable comments and representation to be made. The Decision will be made at the meeting itself where possible, unless further information is required.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

7.1 The Community Funding Officer will oversee the following process of evaluation and monitoring:

- A check in with the project creator 6 months after the campaign closes to review progress.
- An Impact report to be submitted by the project creator within 12 months of reaching the campaign target
- Produce an annual summary of projects supported and their impacts.

8. COMMISSIONING OF CROWDFUNDER UK

8.1 We are currently working through the process to procure Crowdfunder UK utilising the GCloud procurement framework. Procurement and Legal services teams are providing support.

8.2 We hope to commence the 3-year contract on 1st June 2026. Onboarding will be complete within 3 months of the contract start date.

8.3 The cost to the Council of Crowdfunder UK providing this service is £15,600 per annum for the duration of the contract. The costs are broken down as follows:

- Crowdfunder Connect Licence Fee (Hosted) for one fund £12,000
- Additional Fund distribution and enhanced verification service £3,600

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 The development of the eligibility and criteria has been informed by research into similar frameworks operated by other Councils and grant-giving bodies. Developing a loose framework could lead to uncertainty and inconsistency in decision-making.

- 9.2** The decision to move to Crowdfunder UK from the previous platform provider was approved by Executive following a previous report.
- 9.3** The open and transparent nature of a 'platform-based approach' to the distribution of funds is a distinct advantage.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The Council has agreed an annual budget for the scheme of £120,000. Funds will be allocated at two rounds each year. In the event of funds not being allocated in year, these will be carried forward.
- 10.2** The Council will make a maximum pledge of £12,000 or 50% of the campaign target, whichever is the lower amount.
- 10.3** It was agreed by Executive on 17th December 2026 to consider as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process making provision for platform hosting fees. Crowdfunder UK has confirmed that these will be £15,600 per annum - fixed for the lifetime of the contract.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** Crowdfunder UK will be contracted via the GCloud procurement framework, overseen by the Procurement team and Legal services team.
- 11.2** Applicants for grants through the Crowdfunder platform will not enter into a formal grant agreement directly with the Council. Instead as part of the application process they will agree to Crowdfunder's terms and conditions which will include obligations similar to those in a traditional grant agreement. These include discretion for Crowdfunder and the Council jointly to withdraw, reduce or require repayment of funding in certain circumstances.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1** Crowdfunder UK have experience of hosting local authority funds, and funds of national bodies such as Sport England and businesses such as Aviva and British Airways.
- 12.2** The framework for assessing applications to the Westhive fund is robust and provides suitable mitigation to reduce the risk of improper use of funds. Crowdfunder UK will undertake initial due diligence checks.
- 12.3** All organisations raising funds on the platform must comply with Crowdfunder UK terms and conditions and pass their due-diligence checks. These include:
- All project owners must provide a UK bank account as only UK accounts are accepted.
 - All project owners must provide proof of identity when required by Stripe, by uploading a copy of a UK Government issued ID such as a passport or driving licence.
 - All businesses, organisations and charities must provide registration details and a valid address.
- 12.4** Funding will only be distributed once the project has reached its fundraising target.
- 12.5** A regime for monitoring and evaluating the impact of funded projects will be in place.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

13.1 The award process will consider equality and inclusivity to ensure that the Council meets its duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex

14. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The Sustainability Impact Assessment is included in Annex A.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 None

(END)