

Community Project Fund

How to Submit a Strong Application – Councillor Guide

This guide is designed to help councillors prepare high-quality applications that clearly demonstrate the value, need, and impact of the proposed project. Strong applications are more likely to score well and secure funding.

1. Understand the Fund Purpose

The Community Project Fund exists to support community-led projects that improve local facilities, enhance wellbeing and strengthen community resilience across the borough. Projects should deliver clear and measurable community benefit and respond to an identified local need.

Projects may be ***capital or revenue in nature***:

- Capital projects may include equipment, building improvements, refurbishments, play areas, sports facilities or other community infrastructure.
- Revenue projects may include activities, programmes, events, running costs or operational initiatives that provide community benefit. Revenue grants are normally limited to £5,000.
- The maximum grant award for any project is £25,000.

Your application will be stronger if the project:

- Responds to a clear local need supported by evidence
- Demonstrates community engagement or consultation
- Benefits a broad section of the community
- Represents good value for money
- Is realistic and deliverable by 31 March 2028
- Supports areas with fewer funding opportunities, particularly rural communities
- Provides benefits that will continue beyond the initial funding period.

2. Check Eligibility Early

Before drafting the application, ensure both the applicant and project are eligible.

Eligible applicants include:

- Constituted community associations and voluntary organisations
- Parish and town councils (subject to fund restrictions)
- Charities
- Social enterprises
- Community interest companies – these must have at least two unrelated directors who have been in office for a minimum of one year
- Other not-for-profit organisations operating within the borough.

Applications will not normally be supported from:

- Commercial or profit-making organisations
- Other statutory organisations
- Organisations receiving a Service Level Agreement from the Borough Council
- Parish or town councils with access to relevant CIL funding for the proposed project
- Parish or town councils with substantial unrestricted reserves.

Eligible projects will:

- Deliver clear community benefit
- Be deliverable by 31 March 2028
- Demonstrate local need or community engagement
- Comply with any relevant planning or regulatory requirements
- Where a lease is in place for any asset (land, buildings etc), this must have a minimum remaining term of 10 years.

Projects will not normally be eligible if they:

- Are already fully funded elsewhere
- Seek retrospective funding for costs already incurred
- Relate to statutory services provided by another organisation
- Cover maintenance that would normally form part of an organisation's core responsibilities.

If you are unsure whether a proposal meets the criteria, seek advice before submitting the application.

3. Build a Clear Case for Community Need

Projects with strong evidence of community need score highest. To strengthen your application:

Gather supporting evidence:

- Feedback from residents or user groups
- Parish/town council consultation responses
- Surveys or petitions
- Local statistics demonstrating need
- Letters of support

Clearly explain:

- What problem the project addresses
- Who is affected and how
- Why the community cannot fund or deliver this without support

The panel is looking for clarity and evidence, not assumptions.

4. Demonstrate Community Benefit and Impact

Make it explicit how the project will make a difference.

Include:

- Who will benefit (e.g., older residents, families, young people, wider community)
- How many people are expected to benefit
- What measurable improvements the project will deliver
- How the project aligns with local priorities or community plans

High-impact, inclusive projects score best.

5. Provide a Clear Budget and Value-for-Money Case

Panels want to see that projects make effective use of public funds.

Strong applications should include:

- A clear and itemised budget
- Recent quotations or cost estimates where appropriate
- A clear explanation of why the proposal represents value for money
- Details of any match funding, volunteer contribution or in-kind support.

Whilst match funding is not mandatory, projects that attract funding from other sources or demonstrate significant community contribution often achieve stronger value-for-money scores because they maximise the impact of the fund.

Remember that councillors are encouraged to support a range of projects across their communities, and well-targeted smaller projects may represent particularly strong value for money.

6. Show Deliverability and Readiness

Applications should demonstrate that the project is realistic, achievable and capable of being delivered by **31 March 2028**.

Strengthen your application by including:

- A clear delivery plan with key milestones
- Confirmation of planning permission, building regulation approval or licences where required
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Identification of key risks and mitigating actions
- A realistic implementation timetable
- Evidence that the project is ready to proceed

Projects that are fully planned, costed and appropriately governed are likely to score more highly.

7. Address Rural Balance and Local Equity

The fund aims to ensure fair distribution across the borough.

Your application will be stronger if it:

- Supports a rural community with fewer funding options
- Addresses an area with historic under-investment
- Represents a fair distribution of your own councillor-sponsored bids

If the project supports rural parity or communities with limited resources, explain this clearly.

8. Demonstrate Financial Need (for Parish/Town Councils)

Where applicable, make sure the application clearly explains:

- Why parish or town council funds (including CIL) cannot be used
- Why reserves are not available or appropriate
- Why the parish precept cannot be increased to support the project
- What alternative sources were explored

Transparency here prevents delays and strengthens scoring.

9. Show Long-Term Sustainability

Sustainability and longer-term benefit represent the largest scoring element within the assessment framework, making this a particularly important part of the application.

While the fund may support one-off expenditure, applications that demonstrate an enduring legacy are likely to achieve higher scores.

Explain:

- How the project will be maintained following completion
- Who will take responsibility for the asset or activity
- What ongoing community benefits will be achieved
- How the proposal will remain viable beyond the initial funding period
- Whether the project will reduce future costs, risks or funding pressures

Projects with a clear and sustainable long-term impact are strongly encouraged.

10. How Applications Are Scored

Applications are assessed against a scoring framework totalling 100 points. The recommended approval threshold is 50 points, although the final decision rests with the assessment panel.

Assessment Area	Weighting
Community Need & Evidence	15
Community Benefit & Impact	15
Value for Money	15
Deliverability & Readiness	15
Rural Balance & Fair Distribution	10
Eligibility & Financial Position	10
Sustainability & Long-Term Benefit	20
TOTAL	100

Applications that are well evidenced, offer clear community benefit, represent good value for money and provide long-term impact are most likely to score highly.

11. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will be expected to demonstrate that funding has been used for its intended purpose.

This will normally include:

- A short project completion report
- Evidence of expenditure, such as invoices or receipts
- A summary of the community outcomes achieved
- Photographs or other supporting evidence where appropriate.

Applicants should therefore ensure that suitable monitoring arrangements are in place from the outset of the project.

Checklist Before Submitting

- All eligibility criteria met
- Project can be completed by 31 March 2028
- Strong evidence of need included
- Financial need clearly demonstrated (where relevant)
- Clear description of community benefit
- Long-term sustainability clearly explained
- Itemised budget with quotes
- Match funding or community contributions identified where available
- Delivery plan and timeline
- Explanation of rural impact or balance
- Sustainability plan

- Supporting evidence attached
- Monitoring and reporting requirements understood