Community Project Fund - Criteria

1. Purpose of the Fund

The Community Project Fund is designed to support councillors in delivering community led projects that improve local facilities, enhance wellbeing and strengthen community resilience across the borough. Projects should demonstrate clear and measurable community benefit.

2. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by borough councillors on behalf of:

- Constituted community associations and voluntary organisations
- Parish and town councils (subject to restrictions below)
- Not for profit organisations or charities
- Social enterprises and community interest companies (community interest companies must have at least two unrelated directors who have been in office for at least one year)
- Applicants must be non commercial and operate within the borough.

3. Ineligible Applicants

Under normal circumstances, funding should not be awarded to:

- Other statutory organisations (eg. Schools)
- Parish or town councils with access to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds relevant to the proposed project
- Parish or town councils with large unrestricted reserves
- Private or profit-making organisations
- Organisations in receipt of a Service Level Agreement from the Borough Council even if your project is separate to your core business funded by the SLA
- Projects already fully funded from other sources.

However, discretion can be applied where there is a strong justification for the proposal.

4. Funding Available

The maximum award per project will be £25,000. However, Councillors are encouraged to sponsor multiple smaller applications rather than a small number of large awards, ensuring fair and balanced support across rural and urban areas, with particular attention to rural equity.

5. Revenue Grants

Revenue grants are available up to a maximum of £5,000. Revenue grants can cover running costs and activity/ operational costs.

- Revenue grants are for 1 year only

- Any one organisation applying for revenue funding will only receive funds for a maximum of 3 consecutive years for the same or similar activity
- Revenue grants will normally be paid upfront in one instalment
- Grants will not cover VAT costs where organisations are registered to claim this expenditure back
- The Borough Council will not be able to make payment to any supplier directly – this will be the responsibility of the applicant.

6. Capital Grants

- Capital grants can cover equipment, building, and refurbishment costs.
- All capital projects need to adhere to the relevant Building Regulations and Planning Requirements.
- Capital grants may be paid in instalments depending on the size of the grant
- Grants will not cover VAT costs where organisations are registered to claim this expenditure back
- The Borough Council will not be able to make payment to any supplier directly – this will be the responsibility of the applicant.

7. Eligible Projects

The fund can support projects such as:

- Improvements to community buildings, play areas, or sports facilities
- Projects enhancing local green spaces or environmental sustainability
- Activities promoting health, wellbeing, or social inclusion
- Community safety initiatives
- Digital or infrastructure improvements where there is a direct community benefit.

Projects should:

- Deliver demonstrable public benefit
- Be deliverable by 31 March 2028
- Include community engagement or evidence of local need.

8. Ineligible Projects

The fund will not normally support:

- Statutory services that are the responsibility of another authority
- Projects where the applicant has substantial unused reserves
- Retrospective funding for costs already incurred
- Maintenance that would normally be part of an organisation's core responsibilities.

However, discretion can be applied where there is a strong justification for the proposal.

9. Match Funding

Match funding is encouraged but not mandatory. Proposals that leverage additional community funding or volunteer input will be viewed positively.

10. Rural Balance & Distribution

To ensure fairness across the borough:

- Councillors should consider geographic balance when sponsoring applications
- Rural areas should receive equitable access to the fund relative to their needs, population, and lack of alternative funding streams.

11. Application Requirements

Applications must include:

- Project description and objectives
- Evidence of community need or consultation
- Budget breakdown, including any match funding
- Delivery plan and expected timeline
- Risk assessment and sustainability considerations.

12. Decision Making

Applications will be assessed against:

- Alignment with fund purpose
- Strength of community benefit
- Value for money
- Deliverability and sustainability
- Fair distribution across wards and rural/urban areas
- Compliance with CIL and reserves restrictions.

13. Monitoring & Evaluation

Successful applicants must provide:

- A short end of project report confirming delivery
- Evidence of expenditure (receipts/invoices)
- Community impact summary or photos where appropriate.

How the assessment and scoring of applications will be applied

Each application will be assessed against the following criteria. A total score of 100 points is available. Applications must meet a minimum acceptable standard (e.g., 60 points) to be considered for approval.

1. Community Need & Evidence (15 points)

Assesses the extent to which the project responds to a clear and demonstrated local need.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–3: Limited or no evidence; need not clearly demonstrated
- 4–7: Some evidence of need; limited consultation
- 8–11: Good evidence with engagement or data supporting the need
- 12–15: Strong, well-documented need backed by consultation, evidence or community support

2. Community Benefit & Impact (15 points)

Assesses how the project will improve outcomes for local people.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–3: Minimal or unclear community benefit
- 4–7: Moderate benefit but limited reach
- 8–11: Clear benefit with good reach or impact
- 12–15: Strong, measurable improvements for the community and wide reach

3. Value for Money (15 points)

Assesses whether the project delivers good outcomes for the level of funding requested.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–3: Poor value; high cost relative to benefit
- 4–7: Adequate value; costs somewhat proportionate
- 8–11: Good value; efficient use of funds; some matched support
- 12–15: Excellent value; strong impact per £1; leverages additional funding or in-kind support

4. Deliverability & Readiness (15 points)

Assesses whether the project is realistic, achievable, and deliverable by 31 March 2028.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–3: Unclear plan; significant risks or barriers
- 4–7: Some concerns with readiness or risk
- 8–11: Clear plan and timeline; manageable risks

- 12–15: Fully developed plan; ready to deliver; strong governance and risk management

5. Rural Balance & Fair Distribution (10 points)

Ensures funding supports the aim of equitable distribution, with attention to rural areas and councillor-sponsored balance.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–2: No consideration of geographic balance
- 3–5: Some contribution to balance but limited rural relevance
- 6–8: Supports good balance or rural equity
- 9–10: Strong contribution to rural equity or addressing an area with limited alternative funding

6. Eligibility & Financial Position (10 points)

Confirms that the applicant meets fund rules taking into account eligibility and reserves.
Scoring guidance:

- 0: Fails key eligibility criteria
- 1–4: Eligibility met but financial standing unclear or borderline
- 5–7: Eligibility clearly met; financial position appropriate
- 8–10: Strong financial justification; low reserves; clear need for funding

7. Sustainability & Longer-Term Benefit (20 points)

Assesses whether the project has lasting value beyond the funding period.
Scoring guidance:

- 0–5: Short-term or one-off impact with no legacy
- 6-10: Some ongoing benefit, but limited sustainability
- 11–15: Clear ongoing outcomes or community benefit
- 16–20: Strong, long-term legacy or self-sustaining community impact

Total Score: 100 points
Recommended Threshold for Approval: 50 points (or as the panel determines).