
BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL
COUNCILLORS
COMMUNITY ACTION FUND-
2017-18 GUIDANCE NOTES

Date of Issue September 2017

Guidance Notes- Community Action Fund

1. Background

- a) The Community Action Fund is a specific fund to enable each Councillor, subject to compliance with the requirements of the scheme, to put forward proposals for expenditure in their electoral wards which benefit the local population, which is lawful and not contrary to council policy. Funding for the scheme is included in the 2017-18 budget. The fund is allocated to each electoral ward for the Councillor of the ward to manage.
- b) Councillors are best placed to know what is going on in their own ward, and to help with any issues and queries that a constituent may have. Councillors are community leaders and work in partnership with many local bodies and forums, for example health boards, police authorities and schools. In this way councillors develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of the organisations that serve their communities. The Community Action Fund gives flexibility to Councillors to support their local community.
- c) The budget in 2017-18 is £285,000 which includes an estimated £15,000 to cover the administration costs of managing the scheme.
- d) Each Councillor will receive an annual allowance of £5,000 for their ward to be spent within that financial year. Funding must be spent within a calendar year of the launch of the fund. Any funds remaining unspent within this budget after this time will be returned to Council's balances.
- e) Applications will be processed through Business Support Services who will also give advice on the operation of the fund and whether proposals meet the requirements of the scheme. A record of all expenditure under the scheme will also be maintained by Business Support Services within Operational and Partnership Support Directorate and will be published on the Council's website on the following link
<http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/ignl-level-2/councillors-democracy-and-elections.aspx>

2. The Scheme

- a) The fund is designed to allow Councillors, subject to approved guidelines, to have individual discretion over their own expenditure choices – this means that they will have the freedom to identify how the money can best be used according to local priorities.
- b) The scheme is set up to be as low cost on administration and as self-regulating as possible. Councillors' use of the fund will be reported to the audit committee every six months and published on the Council's website to promote public accountability. The report will be submitted by the Director of Operational and Partnership Services.
- c) Expenditure will be subject to internal audit review and any future continuation of the scheme will be subject to future budget decisions.
- d) It is a fundamental principle of the scheme that any expenditure incurred must be lawful, must not be contrary to council policy and must benefit the local population.

- e) For expenditure up to £1,000 it is necessary only to demonstrate that value for money is being achieved. For expenditure over £1,000 it will be necessary to obtain three quotes.
- f) Councillors will be required to declare:
 - a. any personal interests that they have in the payment
 - b. that they DO NOT have any prejudicial interest in the payment.
 - c. that compliance with the Model Code of Conduct has been maintained.
- g) Budgets can be spent on one item/one recipient or multiple, or can be pooled between Councillors to deliver something across several wards. Therefore, two or more Councillors may agree a joint proposal for the whole or part of their individual budgets provided the proposals meet the requirements of the scheme.
- h) Any awards made should be in excess of £500 in order to ensure that the administration costs are not excessive relative to the payment itself.

What's eligible?

Applications for expenditure should be forward looking and be for one off types of expenditure which deliver a clear and demonstrable benefit to the local community within the Councillor's electoral ward. Here are some examples:

- a) Undertake small improvements to community assets such as painting a community room, buying equipment for a village hall or purchasing planters to improve the street scene.
- b) Improvements to a community centre or village hall.
- c) Setting up and publishing a new community newsletter.
- d) Projects involving the well-being of older or younger people.
- e) Planning and publishing village walks.
- f) Purchase of play and exercise equipment for community use.
- g) Local training schemes.
- h) Projects that help tackle unemployment and its impacts.
- i) Tourist information leaflets.
- j) Public events, festivals and exhibitions.
- k) Setting up a new community activity such as a gardening club or residents group.

What's not eligible?

Funding is not available for:

- a) Recurring expenditure and particularly not for anything which could create an on-going financial commitment.
- b) Clothing/Uniform for the sole use of an individual.
- c) Political activities, lobbying or campaigning.
- d) Direct employment of staff, or for rent or general running costs of an organisation.
- e) General charitable donations where there are no specific and identifiable benefits to the particular ward.
- f) Gifts or hospitality (catering and refreshments).
- g) Funding cannot be given to any request which supports any matter which is contrary to Council Policy - additionally funding cannot be provided to oppose or support any proposal, including planning proposals, which the Council has a

legal obligation to determine. The final decision on whether to refuse any requests will be made by the Monitoring Officer.

- h) Retrospective funding i.e. funding of a past event.
- i) Funding for national or regional projects (except those delivering specific benefits within the councillor's electoral ward).
- j) Sole use facilities which are not open/accessible to the whole community.
- k) Profit-making organisations are not eligible for funding under the scheme.

3. Declarations of Interest

- a) The Council's Code of Conduct and usual rules on declarations of interest (Councillors' Code of Conduct) apply to the Community Action Fund. Councillors must not place themselves in a position where their honesty and integrity could be questioned and should exercise their responsibility for the stewardship of the Council's resources properly.
- b) A Councillor must have attended the Code of Conduct Training provided by the Authority.
- c) A Councillor cannot use the fund where they have a prejudicial interest - for example a relative/s would financially benefit from the payment, their employment, trade, profession, contracts, or any company with which they are associated. Wider financial interests for example trust funds, investments, and assets including land and property are also likely to be considered as prejudicial interests.
- d) If a Councillor has a personal interest in a proposal they must declare it on the application form.
- e) Councillors will be required to sign a declaration that compliance with the Code of Conduct has been maintained.

4. Councillor Responsibilities

Councillors will need to complete a '**Fund Payment Request**' form which is available on the Councillors Learning & Development zone on the intranet.

Councillors will need to have undertaken mandatory training, before they can submit a request for payment from the fund.

Process

- a) Requests for payment from the fund can be made at any time of the financial year. The final date for making payment will be one calendar year after the launch of the fund.
- b) In the request, provide a clear statement as to how the money will be spent and how it will promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Ward or the people within it.
- c) Consideration should be given to incidental costs and timescales involved when considering certain types of funding.
- d) Wherever possible, include the bank details of the recipient of the funds, as payments will be predominantly made by BACS transfer to keep administration costs

low. Payment by cheque will only be made as a last resort and only where there is a valid reason for payment by this method. Councillors are responsible for ensuring that the bank details provided are correct. Councillors are encouraged to request a copy of the payee's bank statement (preferably less than 3 month old) as best practice in ensuring the validity of the bank details provided to them.

- e) In addition Councillors should obtain copies of quotations/estimates for the work to be funded. This information should be forwarded along with the 'Community Action Fund Payment Request form' to Business Support Services. If the lowest quote has not been accepted, then evidence needs to be provided of the reason for accepting the chosen quote.
- f) To ensure the records maintained centrally are complete and transparent, you will also need to forward a copy of the completed Community Application Fund Form and supporting bank statement along with the Community Action Fund Payment Request Form.
- g) The email forwarding the Community Action Fund Payment Request must be sent from your official email address e.g. Cllr xxxx @Bridgend.gov.uk, as this will be treated as the official authorisation of the payment.
- h) Where a proposal is for a project that requires funding from more than one source, the grant will be not paid until all the funding is in place, but an indication of support can be given.
- i) The authorised form reflects a formal decision and will be held for public inspection (on request) to the County Borough Council for 6 years at the Civic Offices. A summary of funding provided will also be made available on the Authority's external webpage.
- j) Any public enquiries regarding funding will be directed to the Councillor/s who has approved the funding.
- k) For data protection purposes you should destroy any applications which have not been supported by you.

Viability

- l) It is for you to consider the financial viability of the potential recipients and the project being supported. If you need such assurances you must seek them and have an appropriate response prior to submitting the form. It is public money and should be allocated appropriately.
- m) Organisations that receive funding are expected to have appropriate systems in place for monitoring and evaluating their projects and activities. Councillors will need to ensure that where funding has been given for a project or activity these have actually happened e.g. by obtaining a copy of the organisation's minutes detailing how the funds have been spent or a copy of the signed delivery note in respect of goods which have been funded from the grant awarded.

Declarations of Interest

- m) Please refer to section 3 for details of Declarations of Interest.

Joint Bids

- n) Joint bids are welcomed from two or more Councillors. Remember, the underlying principle of promoting the wellbeing of your own ward or the people within it must still apply. It is possible for a joint bid to support a project in a particular location (within one ward) as the project may attract attendees from a wider geographical area. It is important that this is made clear in the rationale.
- o) One form can be submitted by a lead Councillor detailing the joint bid and confirmation will be required (either by email or countersignature) by the other Councillors that they agree to the submission, confirm their financial contribution and confirm the declaration.
- p) You are reminded to respond to any emails about joint bids as swiftly as possible, as payments for joint bids will only be processed when all Councillors have responded.

Submission of the Form

- q) Forms need to be submitted electronically to: **ladsbussupport@bridgend.gov.uk**
Hardcopies of the form will not be accepted. Your supporting email will be treated as the necessary authorisation required. All supporting information will need to be submitted with the form e.g. quotes.
- r) Please note that no form will be accepted directly from an organisation seeking financial support. Should any be received, they will be directed to the local Councillor(s).

Publicity

- s) Community Action Funding is intended to have a direct benefit for the community. It is important that this is transparent and that the contribution made by the Council is recognised appropriately.
- t) Any publicity arising from the Community Action Funding should not be party political and should reference the Council's contribution – it is for you to ensure that any publicity complies with this. Do not give the impression that the payment is from you personally – it is from the Community Action Fund.
- u) If you have any queries regarding publicity please liaise directly with the Communications Team.
- v) In some situations it may be possible to produce a Presentation cheque for Council publicity purposes (e.g. in respect of a large amount of funding or a specific purpose which the Council is keen to promote). In these circumstances you will need to liaise with the Communications Team regarding publicity and the Governance Team (Gareth John Email: Gareth.John@bridgend.gov.uk or telephone: 01656 643424) to arrange for a Presentation Cheque to be made available.
- w) Do not create Community Action Funding media publicity during a pre-election period election where you are a candidate.

Method of contacting you when payments are made

- x) You will be sent an email by Business Support Services once the payment has been authorised and released. This email will also let you know how much remains in your fund and if you have any payments pending.
- y) Any spend by organisations on an event or a project prior to authorisation is undertaken at their own risk. Councillors cannot give categorical assurances that the funding will be provided until the form has been properly authorised.
- z) It is for Councillors to ensure that the Community Action Funding grant has been spent for the intended purpose and seek a refund or alternative use if not e.g. through following up with the payee.
- aa) Where a Councillor recalls funding, they must notify Business Support Services so that the payment received can be correctly allocated and the Councillor's Community Action Fund budget credited with the refund.
- bb) If the purpose or value of funding changes following further discussions with the applicant please advise Business Support Services so that any amendments are reflected in monitoring the funding which has been utilised.

5. Role of Business Support Services

- a) To provide advice and guidance to Councillors in relation to the scheme. Any contact to the Business Support Team will be made via the following e-mail address: **ladsbussupport@bridgend.gov.uk**
- b) To ensure that the 'Community Action Fund Payment Request' form provides sufficient information in order to make the payment and an email has been received from the Councillor's official email address which will be considered as authorisation of the payment.
- c) To ensure that the Community Action Fund 'Record of the Payments' spreadsheet is updated and reconciled on a monthly basis to the budget in the financial information system and that any discrepancies are identified, investigated and corrected.
- d) To make the payment as requested by the Councillor on the 'Community Action Fund Payment Request' form.
- e) To ensure that all payments are coded to Community Action Fund cost centre using a relevant subjective. That VAT is only claimed where there has been a supply of good and services to the council e.g. if payment was to fund new play equipment in a public park. In the majority of cases the payment will be made as a grant and therefore will exclude VAT.
- f) To liaise with the Communications Team and Governance Team.
- g) To advise the Councillors that payment has been made and the balance available to them.
- h) To report to Audit Committee every six months.
- i) To publish annually on the Council's website details of the payments made under the scheme, thus promoting public accountability.

- j) To respond or co-ordinate a response in respect of any Freedom of Information requests in relation to the Community Action Fund.
- k) To maintain all documents in relation to the Community Action Fund including supporting information for the previous 6 financial years plus current year. This includes a copy of the Community Action Fund Application, Community Action Fund Payment Request, quotes if applicable, a record of any decisions taken in respect of a declared pecuniary interest and any other supporting documents received. Information will be retained in electronic format.
- l) To respond to internal or external audit queries in relation to the Community Action Fund.

6. VAT

- a) If a grant is being provided i.e. where the Council receives nothing in return, then the payment will be outside the scope of VAT as no supply is taking place. In this case, the recipient of the grant should not raise a taxable invoice to the authority as it is not making a taxable supply to the Council. If you think that the Council is receiving a supply in return for the funding, then it must have ordered, received and paid for the goods/services using its own funds, to be able to recover any VAT it has been charged.

In the majority of cases the payment will be made as a grant and therefore will exclude VAT.

- b) It is also possible that funding allocated may be used to pay for assets managed by the local authority e.g. new play equipment in a park.

The Council will be able to recover the VAT in the following circumstances only

- It places the order for the supplies
- It receives the order in its own name (and takes ownership of them)
- It receives an invoice in its own name
- It pays for the goods using its own funds

If the above rules cannot be met, the funds may still be used to purchase items, but any VAT will not be able to be recovered.

- c) Any funding that is allocated in the form of a contribution to the local authority to increase a service e.g. to increase the number of grass cuttings undertaken by the Council, then this will be seen as an internal budget transfer and outside the scope of VAT

7. Publicity

- a) Community Action Fund funding is intended to have a direct benefit for the community. It is important that this is transparent and that the contribution made by the Council is recognised appropriately.
- b) A list of awards made will be maintained on the Council's website.
- c) Reports on the use of the Community Action Fund will be brought 6 monthly to Audit Committee by Business Support Services.

- d) In addition to this, the organisations in receipt of the award will be expected to acknowledge the Council's funding. This may include a notice stating the project was funded via the Community Action Fund, or acknowledged in the organisations publications, annual reports or meeting minutes. Individual Councillors should not be named in any permanent notices or plaques. Advice on suitable publicity is available to Councillors from the Director of Operational and Partnership Services

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