

Rother District Council

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	4 September 2023
Title:	Community Grants Scheme – Round 1
Report of:	Lorna Ford, Chief Executive
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Prochak
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To present and recommend approval of Community Grants applications for Round 1, 2022/23
Decision Type:	Non-Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) the community grants detailed within Appendix A as recommended by the Grants Panel be approved, subject to specific conditions relating to each application; and
- 2) all Members be requested to promote the various Community Grants schemes and the Rother Community Lottery within their Wards.

Introduction

1. The Council's Community Grants Scheme (CGS) makes provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that meet the grants criteria of Rother District Council's (RDC) CGS.

Community Grants

2. The Community Grants Panel has delegated authority to award grants up to £1,000. One application was awarded in Round 1 from the small grants scheme to Family Support Work for £312. Two applications have been awarded from the Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle scheme to The Hunter Gatherers for £1,000 and Bexhill Environmental Group for £364.
3. Round 1 of the Rother CGS for 2023/24 closed on 6 July 2023. Six applications were received requesting £57,340 in total. The Panel met on 27 July 2023 and have recommended awards for four applications.
4. Cabinet is asked to consider the following applications for funding from the Council's CGS as set out in Table 1 (each application is summarised in Appendix A):

Applicant	Amount requested	Amount recommended
1. Battle Pre-School	£3,600	£3,400
2. Community Supporters	£10,000	£10,000
3. Fairlight Parish Council	£7,338	Defer
4. Little Gate Farm	£30,000	Defer
5. Right Path Hiking and Camping Skills	£2,600	£2,384
6. Winchelsea Village Hall	£3,802	£3,802
Total:	£57,340	£19,586

Table 1: Grants Panel recommendations

5. Should Cabinet agree with the Panel's recommendation to award the applications as set out above, this will result in a maximum of £19,586 being awarded in Round 1. This leaves £90,144 for grants for the Round 2, 2023/24 opening on 1 October 2023 and closing 30 November 2023 (£5,000 is ring-fenced each year for the small community grants scheme, and £15,000 for the Rother Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Grant for 2023/24).
6. Members are reminded that conditions are applied when awarding the grants which include that full funding is obtained in advance of any Rother payments being made and that RDC is acknowledged in any publicity and promotional material associated with these projects. Other specific conditions will also be applied to grants as appropriate.

Small Grants and Rother Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Grants Scheme

7. Members are reminded that small grant and Rother Reduce, Reuse Recycle (RRRR) applications are accepted all year round. Applicants are encouraged to make applications through the online application process. Support and advice can be accessed through Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) and it is recommended applicants contact RVA before the submission of an application. A balance of £4,687.50 remains for small grants, and £13,636 for RRRR grants applications for 2023/24.
8. It should be noted that all applications are to be driven by community support, and need to have an element of match funding, whether their own contributions or at least funding applications submitted to the total value of the project. This is to demonstrate it is fully costed, funded and ready to go. Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek funding from Parish and Town Councils.
9. Further information is available via the CGS section of the Council's website: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-funding/community-grants-scheme/>

Rother Community Lottery

10. We now have 81 causes signed up and over 620 players for the current draw. £7,825 has been won in prizes, with ten lucky people winning £250. There has also been 1,388 prizes of 3 extra tickets that have been won.
11. Since the first draw, approximately £47,000 has been facilitated by the Rother Community Lottery, with £28,500 of this amount directly to the various good

causes. Prize money of £800 has been donated by winners back to the cause they support.

Conclusion

- Members are requested to consider the applications attached at Appendix A and be mindful of the clear benefits these offer to their communities. The CGS offers a robust assessment process that benefits communities applying for grants and secures considerable additional value for money benefits for the Council.

Financial Implications

- The assessment and monitoring system for Community Grants will mitigate the financial and reputation risks associated with handing over grant finance. The Council attaches specific conditions to grant applications to mitigate risk.

Environmental Implications

- All community grants applications request for environmental considerations to be noted.

Risk Implications

- We are often at the hands of voluntary groups to the amount of time, effort and other financial support they can commit to their projects. This is mitigated by the good working relationships that exist across the district, and the support provided by RVA.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	Appendix A - Community Grants Round 1 2023-24 Summary
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Document:	None.

Rother Community Grants Summary of Applications – Round 1, 2023/24

1. Battle Pre-School

Total cost of project: £7,207

Funding secured: £2,307

Funding shortfall: £4,900

Amount requested: £3,600 (note: grants applied total £1,500, leaving £3,400 shortfall)

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

The applicant is Battle Pre-School, a trustee run, charity registered not for profit pre-school providing pre-school education for children ages 2-4.

The grant will be used to purchase physical play equipment for use both inside (on wet days) and outside.

Benefits

The pre-school needs suitable climbing equipment and physical activity items for its children. This promotes muscle building, healthy exercise, and balance skills, plus risk learning and confidence building. The tool station then links in with how items are built and offers fine motor skills and turn taking lessons.

The pre-school is open to children who require pre-school care of education from the age of 2-4 years old.

The project will enable the nursery to build better foundations for children before progression to school. This will help Battle Pre-School to continue supporting the families by providing excellent care and having facilities for their children.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillor Burton, parents and children who attend the pre-school. A grant application has been submitted to Battle Town Council, to include support for the project.

Project Sustainability

Battle Pre-School regularly check and maintain the equipment. They have items from Community Playthings over 10 years old which are still in perfect working order. Minor repairs or maintenance come within their annual budget.

Funding details

The project is expected to cost £7,207. The applicant has committed £2,307 to the project. This has been raised by the pre-school fund raising team including events such as quiz nights and a Teddy Bears picnic.

They are awaiting confirmation of funding, having applied for £1,000 from British Gypsum and £500 from Battle Town Council. This leaves a shortfall of £3,400 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged in their parent newsletter, on their website and in news articles sent to the local newspaper.

Environmental Considerations

The equipment chosen is mostly wood based, avoiding the use of plastics. Several items are sourced from Community Playthings in Robertsbridge which are very well made and exceptionally long lasting.

Panel recommendation:

£3,400 subject to standard terms and conditions.

2. Community Supporters

Total cost of project: £26,600

Funding secured: £11,600

Funding shortfall: £15,000

Amount requested: £10,000

Percentage of total project costs requested: 44%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

The applicant is Community Supporters. The charity aims to advance the education of environmental protection and the natural environment, and to promote conservation protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment for public benefit.

The grant will go towards funding phase 1 of the 'Bexhill Beach Garden Project' to provide accessibility to the beach at West Parade to view the pebble mural created by residents and one 'Lily pad garden'.

Benefits

This is the first phase in a larger project with an ambition to create a community beach garden area on the shingle at West Parade, Bexhill that is accessible for all with educational and recreational uses.

This application is for the installation of a boardwalk to provide access to the mural 'Wave of Hope' created by Bexhill Creative with pebbles painted by the residents of Bexhill expressing their sentiments from the Covid pandemic. Gabion seating is to be installed, along with one lily pad style platform for people to sit and enjoy the garden. The lily pad will be anchored down protecting it from the natural elements.

The beach garden will be free, open access for any Bexhill resident or visitor. Specifically, disabled and mobility impaired people and those with young children in pushchairs will gain better access to the beach. It supports mental health, physical wellbeing, environmental education, and a place for people to gather for a while.

Future phases include the continuation of the boardwalk, construction, and installation of 3 additional lily pad decking areas and refurbishment of the disabled facilities and installation of educational information boards and panels along West Parade promenade.

The lily pad areas will be used for Community Supporters' Beach School classes to educate children and others in the community about the beach plant life growing in the garden. The boards proposed will contain information about the flora and fauna, climate change issues and underwater habitats, promoting greater awareness of environmental issues. These boards and topics will be designed and put together in conjunction with local schools and local community groups. The design of the garden is created so that multiple groups or families can use the space at once.

These future phases are not included within this application and funding opportunities are being explored by Community Supporters.

Community Supporters have obtained planning permission for the works to be carried out and will be built to building control accessibility standards.

Support for the Project

Support for this project has been received by Councillor Oliver, the Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex, Parkinson's UK, Homecall, Bexhill Caring Community, and the wider community through social media engagement and crowdfunding support.

Project Sustainability

A 'Friends of the Beach Garden' group has been agreed to set up with Bexhill Environmental Group to carry out any maintenance that would be needed in the future.

Funding details

Phase 1 of this project is expected to cost £26,600. Community Supporters have committed £4,100 raised through crowdfunding, a community pledge platform and received grants of £6,000 from Homecall and £1,500 from Bexhill Trust. A response is awaited from a £5,000 application to Screwfix. This leaves a shortfall of £10,000 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, the applicant will acknowledge RDC's contribution via social media promotion, a press release and a plaque will be placed in the garden.

Environmental Considerations

The contractor undertaking the work of building the boardwalk and lily pads is local to Bexhill and is using as much recycled timber as possible. Community Supporters are an environmental education charity, aiming to educate the public on environmental issues, which this project is based upon, as well as protecting beach wildlife.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £10,000, subject to standard grant conditions, and:

- a) Signage is to be erected regarding litter within their budgeted information boards, as agreed with RDC Neighbourhood Services.
- b) The boardwalk meets Building Regulations requirements for accessibility.
- c) An agreement is entered with RDC Estates relating to liability and maintenance matters of the land of the project location.
- d) An agreement is entered with Bexhill Environment Group regarding the maintenance of the beach garden.

3. Fairlight Parish Council

Total cost of project: £14,676.48

Funding secured: £7,338.48

Funding shortfall: £7,338

Amount requested: £7,338

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Fairlight Parish Council wish to replace the existing slide, toddler swing set and safety matting surrounding these items at Wood Field Playground, with like-for-like equipment.

Benefits

During the past year, both pieces of equipment have been closed due to essential repairs. As their condition declines and will result in them being closed for health and safety reasons. The latest annual safety inspection recommends a replacement for the toddler swings as they are beyond repair.

Parents/Grandparents/Carers will benefit as the equipment proposed will provide a safer environment for children to play on and in. Safety tile matting will be upgraded to meet current standards.

It has been observed that since the pandemic, the recreation ground and play area usage has increased as people want to spend more time outdoors.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillor Mier.

Fairlight Nursey support the grant application in part and have received many comments from parents that the existing slide is greatly loved and is a focal point of the playground and should not be replaced as it cannot be replaced like for like due to its height and style. The Parish Council observes that for safety and cost reasons the request for the slide to remain cannot be satisfied. It is proposed that the replacement slide is of similar height etc.

Project Sustainability

The current slide has been on the playground for over 40 years. Wicksteed (who also complete the annual inspections), are a renowned company for producing high quality and long-lasting outdoor play equipment. Future maintenance costs will be very low and funded through the Parish Council's revenue budget.

Funding details

The total cost of the purchase and installation of the slide and swings is £14,676.48. Fairlight Parish Council have committed £7,338.48, leaving a shortfall of £7,338 (nil if full grant awarded).

Environmental Considerations

All metal components of the equipment will be removed and scrapped in the appropriate manner for recycling upon replacement of the slide/swings. The existing rubber tiles can be removed and repurposed elsewhere. Any materials to be removed from the site such as soil etc. will be done by the contractor and be reused. The proposed new surface is made of 100% recycled materials.

Panel recommendation

Deferral subject to community engagement and exploring of alternative options and future plan for the playpark.

4. Little Gate Farm

Total cost of project: £60,000

Funding secured: £30,000

Funding shortfall: £30,000

Amount requested: £30,000

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Little Gate Farm's purpose is to place adults with learning disabilities and autism into sustainable paid employment within Rother and the surrounding areas. They are requesting a grant of £30,000 to acquire a new diesel minibus with an accessible wheelchair ramp.

Benefits

Little Gate Farm rely heavily on ageing buses that are in constant need of repairs and maintenance. They have become a financial burden and limit their ability to serve their beneficiaries effectively due to the frequent breakdowns.

The new minibus will offer a reliable and efficient mode of transportation, significantly reducing breakdowns, repair costs, emissions, and operational disruptions. This improved reliability will allow Little Gate to provide uninterrupted services, ensuring people can access essential programs and activities without interruptions.

With a wheelchair ramp, the new bus will enable them to accommodate individuals with disabilities who use wheelchairs or have mobility impairments. This inclusive transportation option will empower their beneficiaries to participate fully in community activities, educational outings, and social events, fostering their independence and overall well-being.

The presence of an accessible minibus will enable Little Gate to expand their outreach and engage with more individuals who require specialised transportation services. They can collaborate with local schools, healthcare facilities, and community organisations, forging partnerships to enhance the overall impact of their programmes and services.

Support for the Project

Support for this project has been received from Councillors Bayliss, Biggs and Ganly, as well as East Sussex County Councillor Redstone, the community, and users of Little Gate's services.

Project Sustainability

Little Gate will establish a regular maintenance schedule for the minibus to ensure its optimal performance and longevity. This plan will include routine inspections, servicing, and repairs conducted by certified mechanics. By following a proactive maintenance approach, they will prevent breakdowns and costly repairs in the long run.

A portion of their existing budget and any additional funds received are allocated towards the ongoing maintenance and running costs of the minibus. This will include expenses such as fuel, insurance, licensing fees, and regular maintenance services.

Funding Details

Little Gate Farm have allocated £2,353.75 of their own funds towards this project. They have received a grant of £7,646.25 from The Big Give and £20,000 from The Gosling Foundation. This leaves a shortfall of £30,000 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, the applicant would acknowledge RDC's contribution by putting the RDC logo on the minibus, as well as on social media and their website.

Environmental Considerations

Little Gate Farm are replacing a 17-year-old diesel minibus with a brand-new diesel minibus. Newer diesel engines are more fuel-efficient than their older counterparts, leading to better mileage and reduced fuel consumption. The increased efficiency translates into lower carbon emissions, contributing to a smaller carbon footprint.

Little Gate Farm extensively researched the market for a replacement minibus for several months and had many discussions with support staff, drivers, and mechanics about the best option for Little Gate and for their trainees. This careful consideration led to deciding that whilst an electric bus was the preferred option, a diesel bus is the best option both financially for the organisation and for stability for the trainees. An electric bus would add an additional £10,000 to the cost of purchase and the raising of funds would delay the purchase of this critical item.

Support staff and drivers raised concerns that the range of electric buses was not high. Bus breakdowns and poor reliability have been a huge source of anxiety for many of the trainees and breakdowns in the past have caused problems for some trainees. Buses do multiple pickups around Hastings and Bexhill and then drive out to Beckley. The farm is in a rural location down country lanes.

There was also concern that the district does not have the infrastructure in place to charge an electric bus and if the bus was able to be charged at the farm the added distance of driving from the farm to pickups would further reduce the range.

Panel Recommendation:

Defer, pending exploration of additional £10k of funding for electric / hybrid options to meet the Council's climate agenda.

5. Right Path Hiking and Camping Skills

Total cost of project: £5,278.93

Funding secured: £2,678.93

Funding shortfall: £2,600

Amount requested: £2,600

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Details

Right Path Hiking and Camping Skills are a new community group based in Bexhill, providing opportunities for people to learn how to hike, orienteer and camp in a safe and fun environment. Their aim is to help people make connections, friendships and support one another through recovery journeys.

The grant requested is towards the costs of training and equipment of their group members.

Benefits

Right Path's project is open to all, but targeted at those who struggle with addiction and mental health by providing a platform to empower and to build confidence. It is also an opportunity for like-minded people to get together and share knowledge of local support available and experiences had on their recovery journey.

Right Path Hiking and Camping Skills wish to support those members to get practical skills as well as obtain industry recognised qualifications that could lead to paid work and be a steppingstone to continuous personal development. Their members are in recovery from addiction and mental health problems.

Support for the Project

Support for this project has been received from Councillor Coleman, Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) and members of the group and community.

A trial hike was carried out to gauge demand and support. It proved a success, receiving positive feedback. Through the support of RVA and local community network meetings, word is getting around and membership is growing.

Project Sustainability

Ongoing running costs will be minimal as the group is 100% volunteer led. Right Path Hiking have linked with other charities who are willing to provide equipment free of charge. As the group expands, options will be explored to become a charitable incorporated organisation or community interest company which will open funding opportunities.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost £5,278.93. Right Path have successfully applied for a grant of £2,678.93 from Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA).

This leaves a shortfall of £2,600, however there are items in the budget which are not eligible under the Community Grants Scheme. These costs total £511. Therefore, the maximum grant that can be awarded is £2,384.

If successful, the applicant would acknowledge RDC's contribution via social media, their website and other marketing material.

Environmental Considerations

Right Path operates a 'leave no trace' policy. They make attendees aware of the countryside code and how to respect the natural environment. They also try to choose locations accessible via public transport.

Panel Recommendations

Grant £2,384, subject to standard grant conditions.

6. Winchelsea Village Hall

Total cost of project: £20,435

Funding secured: £8,500

Funding shortfall: £11,500

Amount requested: £3,802

Percentage of total project costs requested: 20%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: £8,133

Applicant and Grant Details

Winchelsea Village Hall wish to reconstruct the interior of the female toilets to provide new facilities, including thermal insulation and hygienic surfaces and to repair the sash windows so that they can open to provide ventilation and increase their thermal efficiency.

Benefits

The existing facilities are inhospitable to modern perception, are in much need of an overhaul, being semi-detached outhouses to the 1926 Hall with aging facilities. The interior has painted brick walls and the ceilings are a patchwork of surfaces. The walls and ceiling are uninsulated.

The strip out and reconstruction of the female facilities will provide a uniformed feel rather than the dated piecemeal that is there presently. The project supplements the recent addition of a new accessible toilet at the front of the Hall.

The work planned will provide more comfortable and warmer facilities in the winter for the many users of Winchelsea Village Hall.

Support for the Project

Support for this project has been received from Councillors Creaser and McGurk, Icklesham Parish Council, Community groups and users of the facility.

Winchelsea Village Hall facilitated a focus group in 2016 on the hall's interior in which the facilities were identified. The observations highlighted are being worked on as funding opportunities and resource capacity allows.

Project Sustainability

Winchelsea Village Hall have a budget for maintenance, the revenue covers day to day running and maintenance costs.

It is planned for the male facilities to be completed in the future.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost £20,435. The applicant has committed £8,500 to the project. Funding has been applied to Little Cheyne Court Windfarm (£5,000), the Rye Fund (£1,500) and the Sussex General Giving Fund (£1,633). This leaves a shortfall of £3,802 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, the applicant would acknowledge RDC's contribution via their website, public noticeboard, and a news column in the Parish news magazine.

Environmental Considerations

The existing facility has little retention of heat. Addressing the thermal insulation will cut down the wasted energy provided by the radiator. The improvements are designed to last the lifetime of the building so the material investment is worthwhile. Local craftsmen are being employed to carry out the project.

The hall is also participating in the RDC Village Halls Energy Project and will take recommendations from this project into consideration.

Panel Recommendations

Grant £3,802 subject to standard grant conditions.

End of report.