

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 4 March 2024

Title: Community Grants Scheme – Round 2

Report of: Corporate Policy and Projects Manager

Cabinet Member: Councillor Killeen

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To present and recommend approval of Community Grants applications for Round 2, 2023/24

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;
- 2) all Members be requested to promote the various Community Grants schemes and the Rother Community Lottery within their wards.

Reasons for

Recommendations: To approve the Community Grants applications for Round 2, 2023/24 to enable the projects to proceed.

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. Two applications have been awarded Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle grants in Round 2. They were The Studio Rye for £453 and Community Compost Solutions for £256.
3. Round 2 of the Rother CGS for 2023/24 closed on 30 November 2023. Eleven applications were received requesting £114,595 in total, exceeding the available remaining budget for 2023/24.

4. By working with RDC Officers and applicants, three applications are eligible to be funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Rural England Community Infrastructure Grants Scheme.
5. The Panel met on 25 January 2024 and have recommended awards for six applications. Two applications were declined due to ineligibility.
6. 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. Little Gate Farm	£30,000	£30,000
2. Bexhill Family Collective	£4,948	£4,948
3. Bexhill Heritage	£2,657	£2,657
4. Crowhurst Parish Council	£19,250	£19,250
5. Icklesham Parish Council	£3,000	£3,000
6. Three Oaks Village Hall	£6,550	£6,550
Total:	£66,405	£66,405

Rother Community Grants 2024/25

7. Members are reminded of the following grants schemes available in 2024/25.
 - a. Small Community grant – up to £1,000 per application with a ringfenced total of £5,000 per annum. Open all year until the fund is allocated.
 - b. Rother Reduce Reuse Recycle grant – up to £1,000 per application with ringfenced total of £5,000 per annum. Open all year until the fund is allocated.
 - c. Medium and Large Community grants: £1,000 - £30,000. £120,000 available. Round 1 opens 1 April 2024, closing 6 July 2024.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Conditions are applied when awarding 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.
11. Further information on all grants schemes are 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

12. The Rother Community Lottery has 83 causes signed up. Since the first draw in April 2022, £42,000 has been facilitated going direct to the various good causes.
13. £12,350 has been won in cash prizes, including one lucky winner with £2,000 and 22 winning £250. £1,300 of cash prizes by 34 winners has been donated back to the organisation supported.
14. Approximately £15,000 of income generated is forecast to support the Rother Community Grants scheme in 2023/24.

Conclusion

15. Members are requested to consider the applications attached at Appendix A and recognise 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.
16. Members be requested to promote the various Community Grants schemes and Rother Community Lottery within their wards.

Financial Implications

17. 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

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

Risk Implications

19. 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 2 2023-24 Summary
Relevant Previous Minutes:	CB08/115
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Document:	None.

Grant Applications – Round 2

1. 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 Ganly, Biggs and Bayliss, 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.

Support staff and drivers raised concerns that the range of electric buses was not high. This is in addition to the concern that the district does not have the infrastructure in place to charge an electric bus and if the bus needed to be charged at the Farm the added distance of driving from the Farm to pickups would further reduce the range. Buses do multiple pickups around Hastings and Bexhill and then drive out to Beckley. The Farm is in a rural location down country lanes.

Update January 2024

Since the grants panel in July 2023, the applicant has reviewed their minibus strategy which included exploration of an electric/hybrid option that determined that there are no self-charging mini-buses available in the UK.

Further, in January 2024, the pathway for zero emission vehicle transition by 2035 became law, following a decision taken by the Prime Minister to delay the ban on new diesel and petrol cars from 2030, putting the UK in line with other major global economies. This should increase the options available to Little Gate Farm at their next review point of transportation options.

Panel Recommendation:

Grant £30,000 subject to standard terms and conditions.

2. Bexhill Family Collective

Total cost of project: £10,860.50

Funding secured: £5,661.72

Funding shortfall: £5,198.78

Amount requested: £4,948.78

Percentage of total project costs requested: 45%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: £250

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Bexhill Family Collective Community Interest Company (CIC) work towards reducing the barriers to work, education and leisure for people in Bexhill and surrounding areas.

The grant will be used for the associated costs with setting up their community garden in Sidley. This includes erecting sheds, setting up rainwater collection systems and purchasing tools and equipment.

Benefits

This project intends to bring members of the Sidley community together. The aim of the project is to help fight food poverty, by giving people the opportunity to grow their own food and exchange gifts and knowledge. They also aim for the 'Collective Garden' to be a place that supports social cohesion by joining different generations together, and in turn decrease the amount of loneliness many people face in all phases of their lives.

The project will have a range of different planters on site to enable people of all ages to join in planting activities, for example building waist high planters with steps up the side so that the elderly and young children can work together on a shared project. They are making sure that the pathways around the site are wide enough for wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Bexhill Family Collective are working with other community organisations, such as the Pelham, to ensure that the site runs a breadth of useful workshops and learning experiences. They will provide bushcraft and forest school workshops to help people not only grow their own fruit and vegetables, but also foraging skills.

Another part of the wider project is to help get people back onto the employment ladder. With regular involvement at the community garden, they will offer the opportunity for some people to undertake forest school training and Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) horticultural qualifications. Within the first year, they aim to train one person in Forest school leader training, which would provide them with the skills to hold forest school sessions with adults and children; and three people to undertake RHS horticultural training which can be provided by Ingram allotments community organisation.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillor Coleman, The Pelham, and the wider community. The funds of £5,661.72 were raised through a community crowdfunding campaign. As a result of the consultation held at Sidley Family Hub in October 2023, large amounts of positive feedback have been received and 17 people have volunteered for the project.

Project Sustainability

The estimated annual running costs are around £5,000. The applicant has advised us

that these costs can be met by profits raised in their community nursery school and fundraising activities.

They have employed a volunteer coordinator whose role will include ensuring they have an adequate number of volunteers to grow fruit and vegetables at the garden and help deliver the ambitious programme of workshops and learning opportunities.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost up to £10,860.50. The applicant has committed £5,661.72, leaving a shortfall of £4,948.78 (£250 if full grant awarded).

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged on social media, and a plaque will be put up at the community garden. A formal launch will be held, with invitations to Councillors and local newspapers.

N.B. Bexhill Family Collective have approached Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council for funding and await the outcome of their decision due in February 2024.

Environmental Considerations

Bexhill Family Collective are working with The Pelham's Building Enterprise Scheme to use timber for structures and bases that have been reclaimed. They aim to plant hedgerows to increase the biodiversity of the site. Rainwater will be collected wherever possible to water plants etc. The rainwater collection units will be recycled from local vineyards. It is planned to hold a 'tool amnesty' so that garden tools and equipment can be donated for the community garden volunteers to use. A community composting scheme will be set up in the future.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £4,948.78 subject to standard terms and conditions.

3. Bexhill Heritage

Total cost of project: £5,313.50

Funding secured: £2,656.75

Funding shortfall: £2,656.75

Amount requested: £2,656.75

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Bexhill Heritage are a volunteer-led group whose aim is to conserve, protect and improve the Bexhill-on-Sea built environment.

Their project will see Bexhill Heritage restore the old red K6 telephone box on Normans Bay Road and convert into a community book exchange. An interpretation board detailing the history of the telephone box will also be installed.

Benefits

The book exchange will be a useful facility for all age groups and act as an informal meeting place within the neighbourhood, contributing to a sense of community cohesion.

The new book exchange will include books for all, including children's books. A non-slip floor will be added to cater for the needs of people with mobility problems. An area of hardstanding will be added immediately outside to cater for the temporary parking of mobility scooters, wheelchairs, and push chairs.

The associated interpretation board will further promote respect for the area's heritage by celebrating the life of architect, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, designer of the K6 telephone kiosk who spent his formative years in Bexhill. The restoration will promote an interest in those local sites that inspired him.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillors Stanger and Winter, Bexhill Town Council, Normans Bay Residents Association (NBRA), and the wider community. NBRA were consulted on the appropriate use of the restored box and the book exchange was agreed.

Project Sustainability

Bexhill Heritage own the telephone box. NBRA will carry out ongoing day-to-day maintenance of the kiosk such as cleaning. Bexhill Heritage will inspect the kiosk at least annually to carry out minor repairs. In an exposed marine environment, there is an expectation that external redecoration will be required every third year. Bexhill Heritage officers would carry out or commission this work through funds raised.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost up to £5,313.50. The applicant has committed £2,656.75 to the project. This leaves a shortfall of £2,656.75 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged prominently on the interpretation board.

Environmental Considerations

Bexhill Heritage will seek to minimise impact on the immediate environment by ensuring that dust from sandblasting is contained by using protective sheeting. Attention will be paid to the level of Volatile Organic Compounds in paints and solvents. All waste material will be reused or recycled if possible. Hazardous waste will be disposed of safely.

The restoration will be thorough. The application of a maintenance schedule will contribute to the longevity of the painted surfaces.

Books will be donated to the project, therefore being re-used and recycled.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £2,656.75 subject to standard terms and conditions.

4. Crowhurst Parish Council

Total cost of project: £38,500

Funding secured: £14,000

Funding shortfall: £24,500

Amount requested: £19,250

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

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Funding shortfall if full grant approved: £5,250

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Crowhurst Parish Council (CPC) support the wellbeing of residents and conserve and protect the environment and heritage of the Crowhurst parish.

The grant will be used to fund the associated costs with converting the tennis court at Crowhurst Recreation Ground into a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

Benefits

Crowhurst Tennis Court has been in situ for over 40 years and has had temporary renovation measures over its life. However, it is now unusable and unsafe as a community facility. Crowhurst has limited community facilities, and they wish to ensure that this all-weather outdoor facility is not lost.

CPC's aim for this project is to retain and increase access to physical activity within Crowhurst Village, for those who have little access to physical resources. This project would provide an all-weather facility for groups of all ages. Activities such as football, netball, basketball, yoga, and Tai Chi can be carried out in addition to the existing provision of tennis.

Active adults, children and young people will benefit from the extended range of activities. Children including those from the Youth Club adjacent to the Recreation Ground and court will be able to extend their activities to include physical sports and games. The pre-school children located at the Youth Club Hut will benefit from the all-weather play area. Families of all ages will benefit from the extended facilities. Older people will be able to access gentler outdoor exercise opportunities e.g. yoga or fitness groups.

Crowhurst Tennis Club has been established for over 40 years; improved facilities will enable the club to focus on increasing its membership within the community and providing longevity to the club.

It is acknowledged that there is not a footpath from the carpark to the proposed MUGA location, two residents in the consultation also observed and requested that accessibility is improved. CPC have advised that they will consider options and explore feasibility.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received by Councillor Pearce, Crowhurst Tennis Club, Active Rothers Sports Development Officer, and the community via a questionnaire designed to gather opinions on options for the facility.

Project Sustainability

CPC will be responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the MUGA and will include within their budgets going forward.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost up to £38,500. The applicant has committed £14,000 of their own funds to the project. They have outstanding grant applications with Cash for Clubs (£2,000) and Sussex Community Foundation (£3,000) as well as completing further fundraising themselves. This leaves a shortfall of £250 if all grants are awarded.

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged in the Crowhurst news magazine, CPC reports and a grand opening which will be widely promoted.

Environmental Considerations

The base of the tennis court is stable and will be repurposed. The tarmac used will be semi-permeable in line with the aims and aspirations of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Development Plan (2019) and CPC Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution (2019). The work will be carried out by local tradespeople.

An additional benefit is that the new facility will provide a local resource, so that people in Crowhurst do not have to travel further afield.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £19,250 subject to standard terms and conditions and the following:

- a. Funding from other sources is confirmed.
- b. Confirmation that improved accessibility is explored for a future project.

5. Icklesham Parish Council

Total cost of project: £26,668

Funding secured: £23,000

Funding shortfall: £3,000

Amount requested: £3,000

Percentage of total project costs requested: 11%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: Nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Icklesham Parish Council (IPC) wish to use a Rother Community Grant to purchase a new bus shelter and towards installation costs on Sea Road, Winchelsea Beach within a wider scheme to widen a footway and improve accessibility to those who travel by bus.

Benefits

It is proposed to install a bus shelter in the busiest part of the village, close to the Co-Op, Pub 31, Winchelsea Sands Holiday Park, and the Community Hall.

IPC have received many complaints from residents over the years regarding the lack of a bus shelter at this location. In consultation with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and residents it is proposed to widen a footway and increase accessibility/ease for those who travel by bus and install a bus shelter.

It is observed that children in Winchelsea Beach who travel by bus to school can end up soaked whilst waiting for the bus in this exposed area. Widening the footway will also increase the safety for children waiting for the bus, ensuring they are standing further away from the road.

Many elderly residents rely on the bus service to access services in local towns such as Hastings and Rye and it is vital that these services are as accessible as possible. The proposed shelter will have a bench with back support. The bus shelter will also benefit tourists and holidaymakers, who visit in their thousands every year.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillor Osborne, ESCC and residents.

Project Sustainability

There will be very little running costs for the bus shelter. IPC add the bus shelter to its maintenance schedule. The costs are met via budgeting annually.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost up to £26,668 to complete. The applicant has committed £12,268 of their own funds to the project, and ESCC have pledged £11,400 of community matched funding. This leaves a shortfall of £3,000 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged via a press release stating that the project was made possible via grant funding received from Rother District Council. IPC will also look at installing a plaque acknowledging Rother District Council's contribution.

Environmental Considerations

It is hoped that by installing the bus shelter and the wider scheme of kerb and footway widening would encourage more residents to use public transport, resulting in fewer cars travelling in the village. Currently, many parents drive their children to school when it is raining as they do not want their children to get wet whilst they are waiting for the bus.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £3,000 subject to standard terms and conditions.

6. Three Oaks Village Hall

Total cost of project: £13,100

Funding secured: £6,550

Funding shortfall: £6,550

Amount requested: £6,550

Percentage of total project costs requested: 50%

Funding shortfall if full grant approved: nil

Applicant and Grant Request Details

Three Oaks Village Hall Committee are a charity responsible for the maintenance and operation of the village hall for the benefits of the residents of Three Oaks and its vicinity.

The grant is proposed to be used to refurbish the village hall toilets which have not been modernised or updated since the hall was built in 1981/1982.

Benefits

The current toilet provision is outdated and not accessible to all. The project will provide modern facilities to include one of the two cubicles fitted out for accessible use, baby change facilities and widening of the corridor for accessibility.

The hall is regularly used by many local groups; a bi-weekly coffee mornings, whose activity programme includes a regular hearing aid clinic, and talks on topics such as fire prevention from East Sussex Fire & Rescue, crime prevention from Police Community Support Officer and stroke response from a nurse. There is a village art club, gardening club, exercise classes. The Three Oaks Village Hall also facilitates

larger village events such as a Summer BBQ, craft and Christmas fayre, charity fundraising evenings, birthday parties, dog training classes and as a rehearsal room by local bands. All users of the hall will benefit from the new facilities.

Support for the Project

Support for the project has been received from Councillor Coupar, Guestling Parish Council, and several of the groups who use the hall. A large amount of time to complete the project has been donated by local tradespeople (quoted at circa £6,500 in labour).

Project Sustainability

No additional running costs will arise from this project. The cost of maintaining the toilets is part of the general overheads of running the hall. This includes a cleaner who cleans the facilities once a week.

Funding Details

The project is expected to cost up to £13,100. The applicant has committed £5,050 of their own funds. Guestling Parish Council have donated £750, Hastings Rotary £100, Hastings Lions £150, and the Sussex Police Property Act Fund £500. This leaves a shortfall of £6,550 (nil if full grant awarded).

If successful, RDC's contribution would be acknowledged on social media, in the Parish newsletter, on the Parish website and they will explore the idea of a plaque in the hall.

Environmental Considerations

The walls, ceiling, and floors will be fully insulated, and a modern efficient heater will be installed, reducing carbon emissions. Local tradespeople are to be used.

Panel recommendation:

Grant £6,550 as per standard terms and conditions.

End of report