**Community Investment Fund Policy**

1. **The Fund**

1.1 A Community Investment Fund was approved initially as part of the Council’s Revenue Budget 2023/2024 at the February 2023 Council meeting. The fund will be directed towards supporting the local community to capacity build in order to enable wider and long-term community benefits. The Council will potentially look at other external funding sources for subsequent years to continue providing this benefit, if possible.

1.2 The Fund supports the [Council’s Priorities](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/Council%20Plan%202022-2027.pdf): All allocations of the Fund should pertain to at least one of these priorities.

**People First** – Putting people at the heart of what we do.

**Sustainability** – Delivering sustainable services (financial sustainability; environmental sustainability).

**A Brighter Future Together** – Planning for the long-term to ensure the best outcomes for North Hertfordshire and its communities.

1. **Grants**

2.1 The funding allocations from the Community Investment Fund are defined as ‘grants’, in that payment is not being made in return for goods or services to the Council, but rather to enable the beneficiary to invest in themselves with the aim of enabling wider community benefits.

2.2 Grant values will range from a minimum of £5000 to a maximum of £20,000.

2.3 In order to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, those seeking grants must confirm on their application form that their organisation will not receive grant funding of more than £315k over a three year period from any Public authority (such as Central or Local Government sources).

1. **Criteria**

3.1 The Fund is designed to result in a benefit or value for the community/communities of North Hertfordshire. This benefit or ‘community value’ should be achieved through capacity building.

3.2 Capacity Building

3.2.1 Capacity building is about organisations and communities developing and/or strengthening their skills, knowledge, abilities, processes, or resources. Doing so allows organisations and communities to do new activities or improve the things they already do.

3.2.2 Capacity building can help community groups get into a better position to apply for future grants and funding opportunities.

3.2.3 Capacity building should enable the organisation or community group to operate on a long-term basis. It will often help groups to increase their resilience and adapt to changes they are experiencing. Applicants must therefore explain how capacity building will enable them to sustain their projects and services.

3.2.4 Capacity building activities could include:

* Training or mentoring for staff, volunteers, and trustees to fill skills gaps.
* Creating or improving a ‘business plan’.
* Doing more work in the community or engaging with a wider audience.
* Purchase of equipment or other resources (e.g a database, new IT systems)
* Activities to improve staff/volunteer retention or to attract more volunteers.
* Building a network of contacts who you could work with, engage in peer support with, or receive funding from.
* Developing your financial resources – exploring new ways of fundraising (e.g asset transfer, selling your skills, finding new grant opportunities).
* Improving your standards on safeguarding or equalities.

3.3 Community Value

3.3.1 Community Value is when the community benefits from positive value. This value could relate to economic support and opportunities, social opportunities, wellbeing, or environmental protection and improvement.

3.3.2 Projects which deliver community value could include:

* Helping people access employment.
* Educational or training activities.
* Activities which encourage civic engagement or community cohesion.
* Activities which alleviate poverty.
* Support for mental or physical health.
* Measures to address climate changes and impacts, reduce impact on the environment, or restore/improve natural environments.

3.3.3 Ultimately, community value is about improving the lives of those within the community and finding solutions to local challenges. All applications to the Fund should have the ultimate aim of delivering community value.

3.4 Proposed projects should pertain to at least one of the Council’s three Priorities: *People First;* *Sustainability;* *A Brighter Future Together*.

3.5 The award of the grant must provide additionality. You are providing additionality if your capacity building activities would not have been able to occur without award of the grant.

3.6 Inclusions: The Fund is open to volunteer-led groups or those who operate on a not-for-profit basis. Please see our [Community Grants Policy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-grants) for examples of what this includes.

3.7 Exclusions: The Fund is only available to not-for-profit organisations. It is not available to any organisation who has received more than £10,000 from other North Herts Council grants over the last 12 months. The Fund is also not to be used for

duplicating existing funding for services. For a full list of ineligible activities, please see section 3.1 of the [Community Grants Policy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-grants).

3.8 To comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, organisations must confirm on the application form that they will not receive grant funding of more than £315k over a three-year period from any Government/Local Government source.

3.9 The Fund will be assessed according to the Assessment Criteria at Section 5 of the Council’s Community Grants Policy. The Terms of the Award at Section 6 will also apply.

1. **Applications**

4.1 The Fund will be open to applications which should be made using the Community Investment Fund application form.

4.2 As part of the application form, applicants are asked to define the intended outcomes of the activities for which they are applying for funding, and to outline how they will measure these outcomes. Applicants are also asked to indicate a timeframe for completion of their activities. This will enable the Council to review the success of the funded activities and will help us shape future Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding opportunities.

4.3 All applications will be robustly reviewed to ensure there is evidence that grants will result in a benefit to the community and that projects will be sustainable long-term. As such, applicants should explain how their capacity building activity will enable them to sustain their projects or services, and the community value this will produce.

4.4 Organisations who have not received money previously under the Area Forums (or previous Area Committee) process will be considered favourably. Partnership working will also be considered favourably.

4.5 *Note that Community grants can still be applied for and considered in the normal manner [*[*https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/grants/community-grants*](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/grants/community-grants)*], and the fund will not impact on the overall budget of Area Forums. Area Forum grants will be considered and approved by the Area Forum or the Executive Member for Community & Partnerships and Service Director Legal and Community in the normal way.*

4.6 Applications will be considered by the District wide community facilities capital & revenue grants panel, with decision made by the relevant Executive Member in consultation with the Service Director following the Panel’s recommendation.