

QUALIFYING CRITERIA AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS FOR THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES CAPITAL PROJECTS FUNDING SCHEME

1. Introduction

1. This document sets out the criteria for the awarding of grant funding from the Community Facilities Capital Projects Funding Scheme applicable from 1st April 2017, and how the scheme will be implemented.
2. The scheme will be administered by the Community Engagement Team Leader.

2. Qualifying Criteria

1. This funding scheme, which has a minimum capital project award of £10,000 and a maximum award of £50,000, has been established to help facilitate capital improvements to qualifying community halls and amenities in the Urban and Rural areas of North Hertfordshire. Qualifying facilities are as follows: -

- > Urban Community Centres
- > Rural Village Halls*

* Where applicable any application must be able to demonstrate the support of the relevant Parish/Town/Community Councils or Parish Meeting

Other community facilities may apply for a grant and will be considered on their merits on a case by case basis.

2. The facilities that are to be the subject of this funding scheme are those considered to be able to demonstrate significant operational improvements to be achieved by their proposed capital project, and also that the project is in accord with the aims and objectives in terms of community facility service delivery as identified in the Council's Community Halls Strategy.
3. Applications (form on NHDC website) will be invited from community halls and facilities within the district for funding towards an identified and quantifiable capital works project to their building that clearly sets out the benefits to the facility in terms of operational performance and improvements in its service delivery to the local and wider population.
4. No facility will be considered for funding that has already received, within the past ten years, a capital grant award from the Council under its former Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund (PACIF), or the Rural Community Halls Capital Funding Scheme which superseded it, both of which are now closed. No funding from other existing NHDC grant funding schemes (including from area committees) can be included in projects considered for funding from this scheme.
5. The scheme cannot be used for on-going staffing or facility operating costs, maintenance or repair costs, or any project associated fees and charges, including any such charges to the Council for Planning or Building Control or similar regulatory body.

6. Only one funding award can be made to a facility in the lifetime of this scheme. In assessing the possible award for funding, the Council will also take into account the financial position of the facility, the degree of reserves held in bank accounts of its managing organisation be that a Management Committee, Parish Council / Meeting or a Charitable Trust, and thus the extent to which it is able to contribute towards the cost of the works being proposed. Typically, the Council would only contribute to a maximum of 90% of the costs involved from this fund; however, this may be exceeded under certain circumstances at the Council's discretion. Any scheme proposed to alter the operational circumstances of the facility that will result in any increased revenue implications e.g. the building is made larger, or will be open for longer, must demonstrate how those increased obligations will be met, via a financial projection analysis.
7. Funding will be awarded only where the facility can demonstrate that it is well used and supported, and importantly, that the works will enable additional services to be offered; thus its operation is likely to be sustained for many years following the completion of works to be undertaken. Where a building is leased as part of its application, a facility must also be able to demonstrate that it has a lease agreement in place with an unexpired term of no less than ten years.
8. An analysis of the level of use (individual and group attendances) and range of activities that take place at the facility is to be provided by the facilities managing body; in principle the greater the use, the more likely that funding will be awarded. There may also be a requirement for a Business Plan to support the application, especially for requests for funding approaching or at the upper financial limit stated above.
9. Funding will only be awarded for projects that meet at least one of the Council's Priorities (Appendix A) and can be seen to provide additional social, economic or environmental benefit.
10. As part of the funding assessment process three fully costed estimates, from contractors independent from the facility, must be obtained by the facility for the proposed works, and provided to the Council with a project plan which must include clear delivery milestones and timescales for action. This information will be evaluated for reasonableness and likelihood of achievement by the authority's Property Services Department. A project cash flow forecast must be provided with the Project Plan to allow any awarded funds to be released appropriately. Any scheme which proposed an extension outside of the existing footprint of the facility will need to provide evidence that the land on which such an extension would take place is either within the ownership of the applying body, or if leasehold, then the ownership of the leaseholder, with all relevant permissions in place.
11. Grants awarded under the scheme will only be allocated when all funding for the project has been formally secured and works must be completed within twelve months from the date they were awarded. If not completed within this timescale the Council may recall the funding allocated.
12. Financial assistance will not be given retrospectively for works already started.
13. Financial assistance will not be released until receipt of all relevant documentation and approval has been given for works to start. (Facilities will be given further advice on what to submit).

- 14 Allowances should be clearly shown in costings for possible increases in overall project costs (contingency) and/or variations which may be caused by inflation due to

any lag between funding being approved and the start date of the project, when it would be expected that final pricing has been agreed with the contractor(s). In the event that on conclusion of the project and making due allowance for any uplifts to cover contingency and inflation factors, there is a funding surplus, i.e. funding awarded exceeds final project costs, an appropriate adjustment will be made to the extent of the contribution made by the Council.

- 15 If an application to another funding provider towards project costs still awaits a decision at the time of application, the expected date for that decision should be made known to the Council as part of the assessment and award process. If other funders have confirmed their contributions to the project, documentary evidence must be provided. Any approved funding will not be allocated by the Council until any additional project funding sought has been secured in writing by the facility concerned
- 16 Where a funding award is made, the scope or delivery of the project must not be changed without written permission from the Council. If there is a proposal to change any aspect of the project, at any time, the facility must advise the Council's lead officer for the scheme immediately. If changes are made without Council authorisation this may result in the Council's funding being withdrawn.
- 17 Written landlord's consent for the proposed modification(s) to the building concerned must be provided to the Council before any grant funding can be released.

3. Implementation Process

1. The scheme operates on a rolling basis and will be open to for applications whilst funding remains available. It should be noted however that the scheme will only be in operation for four years from the 1st April 2016. The Council retains the right to amend terms or to close the scheme prior to this date should circumstances demand.
2. Where from receipt of an application a project is considered as being suitable for funding support consistent with the aims and objectives of the Community Halls Strategy, organisations will be contacted by the Council to explore possibilities for funding being awarded. There may be a need for a condition assessment of the building in respect of the proposed works: this will form part of the assessment process.
3. The assessment will include a review of the facility's current financial situation from its published accounts to determine what if any contribution the facility can be expected to make towards the likely cost of works to be undertaken.
4. Each potential funding award will be considered on its merits against the criteria by a team of Council officers, who will make their recommendations to a panel of Councillors. The panel will, in turn, make comments on those recommendations for consideration by the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance (or deputy) in consultation with the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs. This process will be ongoing throughout the term of the scheme in order that approved funding can be allocated as appropriate on a rolling rather than an annual basis; it is anticipated that the overall application, assessment and decision process should be completed within 12 weeks, but officers will keep applicants informed of progress throughout the process.

5. Facilities where funding is being considered will be notified of the outcome of the process described above and then, if approved, asked to complete relevant contractual documentation to enable the funding to be made available.
6. On receipt of the signed contractual document, project activities can commence, as shown in the project plan, as soon as orders for the works are placed. Normally funding will be released at the rate of 50% at the start, and 50% on completion of the project following submission of all invoices. However, some projects may benefit from funding being released on a stage payment basis. If this is the case, payments can be made as appropriate by agreement against interim invoicing. If stage payments are applied, the final 10% of the funding awarded will be retained, in all cases, by the Council until the project has been completed.
7. Facilities granted funding will be expected to be in regular contact with the lead officer at the Council, to whom at least monthly progress reports must be made once the funding has been approved, through to conclusion of the agreed works. The frequency of reporting may be reduced or increased as appropriate for the project timescales involved, but such variation will be agreed with all parties involved.
8. On completion of the project a final report and financial statement will be required from the facility concerned within two months of the project's completion.
9. Each facility supported will be required to erect a plaque acknowledging the Council's financial assistance and there may be a requirement for a formal completion event (or similar) to publicise this support. The suggested design / wording of the plaque will be advised by the Council and the costs will be included in the funding award.

End

Appendix A NHDC Objectives

The Council has identified the following three objectives for 2020/21: -

Objective 1: Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council

Objective 2: Build thriving and resilient communities

Objective 3: Respond to challenges to the environment

Objective 4: Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy

Objective 5: Support the delivery of good quality and affordable housing