

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY

May 2016

CABINET (14.6.16)

General Principles

North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to providing support to help community groups and organisations working in the district to deliver services, build capacity and sustainability, and contribute positively to the achievement of the Council's priorities for the district.

This document therefore sets out the terms and conditions under which applications to the Council should be made, the criteria for award, the context in which it will be considered, and monitoring thereafter.

The Council, its partners, and local voluntary/community groups need to maintain a good balance between looking at those things that can be planned, budgeted for and delivered in the short to medium term and at the same time considering how we address, and respond to, longer term needs. Whilst much of the activity the Council enables through grant funding deliver benefits in the shorter term, we increasingly need to reflect our continuing aspiration to improve the district for, and importantly with, the communities who live here.

Any grant application will therefore be considered in the light of the Council's agreed grants policy document.

Eligibility and funding criteria

North Hertfordshire District Council is keen to provide financial support to groups who can deliver a wide range of projects in its local communities, and the criteria which will apply to those applications, and how they are dealt with is explained in detail within this policy document

1. Examples of organisations who may apply

The following are examples of not-for-profit*, community based organisations that operate wholly within the North Hertfordshire District who are able to apply for funding, provided they meet the relevant criteria:

- Registered Charities – with charity number
- Community Interest Company
- Social Enterprise
- Sports Clubs (provided the event(s) proposed encourage public participation)
- Youth/young peoples' Groups
- Children's Groups, eg: playgroups
- Elderly Person's Organisations
- Residents Associations
- Neighbourhood plan groups
- Tenants Associations
- Faith-based organisations

**The use of the term 'not for profit' relates to an organisation with charitable status where it can be evidenced that profits gained are re-invested into the delivery of its original mission and charitable objectives.*

Organisations already in receipt of other funding from or any contractual arrangement with North Herts District Council, or from the Council working in partnership (i.e. North Herts Community Safety Partnership) will need to clearly identify the additional

benefit any stand alone 'ad hoc' project application for a community grant may bring; failure to do so will render any application invalid..

2. Examples of organisations who may not apply

The Council will **not fund** the following types of groups/organisations through community grants:

- Private clubs or organisations - where there is restricted membership, and facilities are not generally available freely to the public
- Business Improvement District companies – on the principle that NHDC are already a contributor to Business Improvement Districts by payment of levy and support of BID renewal/ballots
- Private individuals
- Business Groups/Organisations, including Town Centre Partnerships
- Groups who operate at or for a profit
- Groups who cannot demonstrate they are registered as a charity or are formally constituted etc to the satisfaction of NHDC
- Groups who have previously failed to meet the conditions placed on them by the award of a grant from NHDC
- Organisations whose intention is to use NHDC funding to make smaller awards to individuals, other local community/voluntary groups
- Any organisation which has debts and cannot demonstrate the ability to repay such commitments within an acceptable or agreed timescale.
- Any organisation which has failed to make required financial returns to the Charity Commission or other funding bodies in the previous financial year
- Contractors to the authority

The Council accepts that for some organisations a modest membership or subscription charge may be necessary, but will require evidence the level of charges levied at the time of application in order to inform any award being made

3. Areas North Hertfordshire District Council will not fund

There are also some areas which North Herts District Council will **not** fund, which include;

- Services for which the Council retains a *regulatory* function, including but not exclusive to;
 - Planning applications
 - Licensing applications
 - Alcohol licences
 - Land licences
 - Traffic regulations
 - Events permissions/ licences
 - Noise nuisance
 - Appeal against any regulatory decision

This would also apply to Herts County Council in regard to statutory functions relating to regulatory services such as highways, Traffic Regulation Orders and similar.

- Grants towards general running costs i.e. salaries, utilities, rents, etc
- Any request which exceeds 70% cost of project

- Applications from groups who have not yet spent money previously awarded by NHDC
- Applications from precepting authorities (town, parish and community councils) the only exceptions being where a specific fund ie capital funding is established by NHDC and identified specifically as being eligible for such application
- Any scheme which is designed to only benefit an individual or individuals, such as personal awards or 'scholarships' since the principle should be that funding be awarded to community schemes
- Grants for maintenance, extension, refurbishment etc where it is already a condition of lease, licence or other formal arrangement with NHDC that such costs remain the responsibility of the lessee/tenant/transferree
- Private sports clubs where a membership fee is charged unless sufficient evidence can be provided of adequate public access or a development programme available to the general public
- Grants which are contrary to the adopted Council policy for NHDC, including through any of the Council's strategic and budgetary plans (i.e. Green Space Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Corporate Business Planning, etc)
- Grants towards running and general maintenance costs of assets wholly transferred from the ownership of NHDC to a community organisation; any financial or other professional support to be awarded or not will be explicit in the lease/transfer documentation agreed at the time of transfer and in accord with the Council's Asset Transfer Policy.
- Grants which seek to enhance services already provided by NHDC to an agreed cycle/frequency/service level, i.e. cleaning of streets, or painting and replacement of street furniture
- Grants which if awarded have additional (adverse) revenue implications for the authority i.e. additional bin or dog bin provision
- Grants to commercial/profit making organisations – applicants should be an incorporated or unincorporated charity or voluntary/community/not for profit group, Social Enterprise or Community Interest Company and able to evidence such on submission of any application. Failure to do so will render any application invalid.
- Any group which fails to prove that it is solvent, i.e. does not have creditors or debts, at the time of both application and, if later, grant award.
- Town Centre Partnerships or Business Improvement Districts; NHDC's policy (2010/11 corporate budget setting) was to cease funding to Town Centre Partnerships, recognising that as an owner of town centre assets it is already a contributor to BIDs, and provides officer and other resource to the BID ballots, re-ballots, levy collection etc
- Organisations holding reserves exceeding six month's basic operating costs
- Applications where NHDC consider that the planned activity remains or was formerly, the responsibility of another statutory body or agency
- National charities, unless the charity can evidence at time of application that North Herts residents are the sole beneficiaries of the activity proposed
- Applications from political groups
- Applications from single faith groups
- Applications from contractors to the authority
- Applications from or for the sole benefit of an individual
- Applications from any group or organisation which has received support from the Council within the same financial year, or has received funding in each of the two previous consecutive financial years. The intention is to support and increase capacity, not to provide continual funding, once groups are established
- Applications for awards which may constitute State Aid.

4. What we will expect of organisations making applications

Applicants must at the time of application;

- Ensure any application meets the Council's grants policy as advertised at www.north-herts.gov.uk/communitygrants/policy
- Ensure any application can demonstrate a clear link to one of the Council's high level objectives, and
 - contributes toward a priority identified in an adopted strategic plan for the district (either NHDC or NHDC working in partnership) or
 - towards an area of need identified through dataset such as Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Hertfordshire or similar
- Ensure any application meets any published deadline
- Ensure any application is made in full, with necessary supporting paperwork – any which are incomplete will be returned to the applicant
- Ensure any scheme for which funding is sought has not yet commenced
- Provide evidence of a bank account held in their organisation's name
- Be an incorporated or unincorporated charity or voluntary/community/not for profit group and able to evidence such at time of application
- Provide charity or similar registration number as appropriate
- Provide a full schedule of costs for the proposed scheme, including details of other funding already applied for, funding secured and from whom
- Demonstrate commitment to equal opportunities and not discriminate against any user – however, organisations may target some or all of its activities toward specific groups where the intention is to address a specific gap in provision, e.g.. older peoples' social opportunities or lunch clubs
- Confirm whether they are already in receipt of a grant for the same scheme from NHDC, or any partnership awarding grants of which NHDC is a member i.e. NH Community Safety Partnership, Health and Well Being Partnership, Public Health Board, etc
- Were the applicant to have applied for and been rejected for a grant for the same scheme from NHDC, or any partnership awarding grants of which NHDC is a member, i.e. NH Community Safety Partnership, then the reason for rejection must be provided
- If applicable, have a fee schedule or entry fee set at such a level as to be affordable to the majority of the general community – applicants must include details of fee tariff and any concessions/eligibility for concessions at time of application. For events, any charges for tickets and/or concessions will be required.
- Be able to demonstrate that the beneficiaries of the grant are (either wholly or in excess of 80%) residents of North Hertfordshire

5. General requirements

- 5.1 Any organisation awarded financial support will be required to provide appropriate monitoring information on its membership/users. This should be proportionate to the grant requested, but as a minimum evidence that services and opportunities provided are accessible to all sections of the local community and what actions, if any, they will take to address any gaps identified will be required.
- 5.2 Any organisation receiving grant funding must ensure that throughout their operation, from the employment of staff, securing volunteers to delivery of the

service itself, they can demonstrate compliance with applicable legislation, including but not solely confined to;

- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Equalities Act
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults
- Charities Act and financial reporting requirements
- Money laundering regulations

- 5.3 Any organisation undertaking activity which is a regulated activity under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which may involve for example working with children, young people under 18 years or being responsible for a service provided to vulnerable adults must ensure that all staff and volunteers working with them have current, and at a level appropriate to their role, DBS (criminal record) checks in place and a suitable system for regular review. Such compliance must also take account of the need for such staff and volunteers to undertake training (and subsequent refresher training) relevant to their role and responsibilities.
- 5.4 Organisations in receipt of any grant must ensure they have appropriate, and sufficient insurance in place for facilities, events and services provided, including where appropriate, for Public Liability.(£10m cover required).
- 5.5 The organisation should be sustainable and able to provide suitable evidence of sound financial management;
- for organisations less than one year old, this can be by provision of current bank statements, being able to demonstrate sound management of the account and having two authorised signatories in place.
 - for organisations which have been in existence for more than one financial year, then provision of recent audited or, as appropriate, independently examined and signed accounts, with projected income/expenditure figures will be required
- 5.6 A detailed breakdown of costs for the project will be required, and as the Council will not 100% fund any individual project, applicants are expected to demonstrate their own ability to contribute, with details of other fund raising included alongside the anticipated costs. If the organisation is seeking other/external funding, then a grant payment may be made by NHDC subject to securing other external funding; it will only be paid at such time evidence of other funding is received.
- 5.7 Failure to meet the Council's agreed terms in regard to financial reporting, use of funding etc will render the application invalid and require funding to be repaid in full to NHDC.

6 Application process for grants (minimum £250)

- 6.1 Any application for funding **must be made on the Council's grant application form**; requests made by letter, email or by telephone will not be considered. The application form and information regarding application deadlines, assistance with completing forms etc is available on the Council's website, www.north-herts.gov.uk/community

- 6.2 The application form should contain all information requested and be submitted to NHDC with any supporting evidence required by the appropriate deadline; applications which fail to meet a given deadline will not be put forward for consideration to the relevant Area Committee at its next meeting.

7 Financial arrangements

- 7.1 Grants from NHDC will not be paid until the entire cost of a project has been secured. In cases where a group intends to secure match funding, then the authority may decide to make a 'conditional offer' or offer in principle with conditions attached, to enable such funding to be secured; written evidence of having secured other/match funding must be provided prior to payment being made. Failure to do so will render any grant invalid.
- 7.2 Grants can only be spent on the project for which the funding was secured; the Council must be made aware if plans or timescales for spending have changed, and authorise any amendment of the original scheme.
- 7.3 Evidence of how the money has been spent will be required. This can be evidenced by use of photographs, report back on the success of an event in report to the next committee, income generated (if appropriate) as well as a schedule of accounts, submission of receipts, feedback and publicity, depending on the size of award made, but the Authority retains the right either to visit the organisation/event and/or request representatives make a presentation to the relevant decision making body.
- 7.4 If a project fails either to commence or complete, any remaining grant must be returned to the Council. Similarly if an organisation should cease to exist, then the authority should be informed as quickly as possible and any unspent funds returned.
- 7.5 The conditions under which the original grant was requested must be met – failure to meet with such conditions will render an organisation ineligible to apply for any further funding from NHDC.

8 Data use and Management

- 8.1 All organisations making an application to the Council for funding are required to sign their acceptance that the general information included in any application, and any supporting evidence such as schedule of accounts or information on other grant applications, may be referred to or published, either in part or in whole in a report which is available to the public; applications considered by elected members which contain such information will also be subject to discussion in a meeting open to the public.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of any applicant to make NHDC officers aware at the time of application whether any information, for instance confirmation of funding from another source which must remain confidential under an embargo, should be included in any report which is to be published to the public prior to the expiry of such condition.
- 8.2 Sensitive information such as individual bank account numbers, sort codes etc will therefore be captured and retained separately and only retained for the purpose of making payment of any award granted.

- 8.3 All information received by the Council in regard to grant applications is captured, stored, used, retained and destroyed in accordance with relevant Data Protection legislation, the Council's data sharing protocol and relevant corporate document retention schedules in effect at that time.

9 Data 'Transparency'

- 9.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published its *"Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency"* in December 2013.
- 9.2 Elements of the Code have now become mandatory, which includes the publication of grants to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The requirement is that NHDC publish details of each individual item of expenditure that exceeds £500, including
- grant payments to third party providers;
 - grant in aid;
 - the date on which expenditure was incurred;
 - the beneficiary;
 - summary of purpose, amount and category against which it was spent (software, highways works, etc) .

These requirements will be subject to further review following the outcome of the Government's review of transparency in 2016, which propose a number of other/new areas which local authorities will be expected to publish.

- 9.3 Applicants to, and successful recipients of the Council's grants scheme should therefore be aware that any grant award fulfilling this 'transparency criteria' will need to appear on a schedule published to the Council's website at www.north-herts.gov.uk/opendata . That schedule will be updated and published following agreement of grant awards and their payment having been made.

10 Public relations and promotion

- 10.1 Awarding financial support to local groups and organisations is an excellent opportunity for the Council to demonstrate its support for local community activities and its promotion of general well-being. Publicity surrounding any event or project can also help to promote the work of local organisations and increase opportunities for future financial sustainability for the grant recipients too.
- 10.2 All applicant organisations are expected to acknowledge any financial assistance received from the Council in any relevant media coverage, and the financial support recognised in publicity materials provided to participants; NHDC will provide both an electronic logo and guidance on its use for these purposes (please contact the authority's Communications Team for more details).
- 10.3 The Authority retains the right to use examples of projects completed, including relevant images, in communications it may produce for its residents, in order to demonstrate the investments made. Such images will of course be subject to legislative restrictions regarding the use of images, especially where they may feature minors, where parental/guardian's written permission is required.

- 10.4 For capital projects to improve buildings or assets, it is a requirement that a plaque acknowledging the Council's contribution should be installed at their completion. Information on the format, style and information required should be obtained from the Communities Team.

11 Grants policy review

- 11.1 The award of grants by the authority must be subject to relevant and up to date financial management and sound governance, with the grants policy and processes which deliver it considered and applied in accord with the Council's governance framework, which include the authority's Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders, Procurement Strategy, and Constitution as apply at the time of grant payment; expenditure is also subject to periodic review by the Council's internal auditors to ensure compliance with these regulations.
- 11.2 For this reason the grants policy will be subject to annual review alongside these documents to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects any necessary legislative changes and improvements proposed. It will also continue to ensure that the grants paid by the authority reflect and contribute best to priorities identified, and remain responsive to change.