

APPENDIX ONE Capital Grant (CG) Policy

Introduction

To help achieve our corporate objective to support local communities we offer grants to voluntary and community organisations towards projects that will benefit our residents.

Applicants apply online through the council's website, where the full procedures are available.

What type of project will the scheme fund?

We're looking to fund projects that support community initiatives and facilities. They must take place in the district or within a three-mile radius if significant numbers of our residents will benefit.

We will only fund capital expenditure (excluding vehicles) from this scheme like buying, building, replacing or making improvements to long term assets (buildings, play areas and equipment). To us a long-term asset must have a life of more than 12 months and must remain the property of the organisation we are funding.

We will not give grants towards loans, mortgages and on-going revenue costs like maintenance, rent/rates, clothing or salaries etc. We may award grants for certain repairs but it depends on their scale and nature so applicants should contact the grants team before applying for a grant for any.

We usually only accept applications for projects that haven't already started, however in exceptional circumstances (like a major funder pulling out or unforeseen additional works) then the head of corporate strategy can make an exception.

Organisations cannot apply to this scheme for projects we've awarded grants to before.

Who can apply to the scheme?

Any community-based organisation with a signed constitution, including non-profit businesses, community interest companies and parish and town councils can apply.

We will not consider projects for private individuals, businesses, residential buildings or any that usually fall to other public sector/statutory bodies to provide or will primarily benefit organisations under their remit. For example, we won't fund projects to improve roads/footpaths, schools, academies, forest/free schools or health services.

We're committed to promoting equality and diversity, and welcome applications from organisations who represent minority or vulnerable groups.

How much can organisations request?

Organisations can request a minimum of £1,000 and up to 50 per cent of their total project cost. In exceptional cases, like a major funder pulling out of a project that offers significant benefit to our residents we will consider a request for more than 50 per cent.

To request an exceptional amount applicants must get approval from the head of corporate strategy (via the grants team) before submitting an application. The online application system won't allow requests for over 50 per cent without officer approval.

We will not award more than the amount requested by the applicant.

The maximum an organisation can request is the committee's budget for each round of applications, which we'll publish on the council's website before and after each round of awards.

We will only award one capital grant for each project so if an applicant applies to this scheme and the New Homes Bonus scheme and is successful in one, we will withdraw the application from the other.

Opening and closing dates

We'll usually open for applications twice each year (if there is sufficient budget available), except in a district council election year, when we may only open for one round.

We'll advertise the provisional opening and closing dates each November, and will confirm them after the annual budget-setting meeting.

We'll open each round of funding for a minimum of six weeks and will usually make decisions within 12 weeks of the closing date.

Where possible we will avoid opening over school holidays.

Scheme eligibility criteria

Applicants must provide:

- a copy of the latest statements for any bank/building society accounts in the name of the organisation
- two quotes for the project or a professional estimate for any building work
- a breakdown of the budget for the project including all the sources of funding

They must also confirm:

- they have a signed constitution and could provide it on request (except parish or town councils, churches or similar organisations that are governed by a central body and therefore don't have their own constitution)

- the project won't start before a decision has been made, which is usually 12 weeks from the closing date (unless otherwise agreed with the grants team before applying)
- they have all the necessary consents such as planning permission, listed building consent, Diocese faculty etc and could provide these on request
- they will provide additional information to help us evaluate their application on request

Applicants requesting more than £10,000 must provide:

- copies of any necessary planning, listed building, Diocese faculty and other relevant permissions
- their most recent financial accounts or their working budget and financial plan for the year if they're a new organisation
- a project plan including ongoing maintenance arrangements

Applicants requesting over £25,000 must also provide:

- evidence of ownership of the property or a lease with at least ten years remaining, including a copy of the Land Registry title documents.

The head of corporate strategy can decide if we'll accept any applications that don't meet all the above criteria. Applicants must give clear reasons why they can't for us to consider an exception.

Projects awarded up to £10,000 must complete within 12 months from our award date. Projects awarded over £10,000 must start work within 18 months of our award date, and must complete within 36 months.

If there's any unexpected delays to the project, applicants can request one extension of up to 12 months, giving the reasons for the delay. We must receive these requests at least one month before the end of the original grant term.

We'll send reminders for outstanding grants three months before they expire and will return any unclaimed awards to the council's general reserves after the expiry date.

Area committees

The leader of the council has split the district into three geographical area committees for determining community grants. Each committee is made up of the councillors elected in the wards they cover. A map of the area committee boundaries is attached in appendix one.

The council will appoint a chair for each area committee for the coming year in the annual budget-setting meeting. At the first committee meeting that follows, the committee will elect a vice-chairman.

Allocation of budgets to area committees

The council will decide if it wants to allocate any budget for capital grants at its annual budget-setting meeting.

We'll split any available budget between the area committees before each round of funding. We will use the following system to calculate their percentage of the budget:

	Total	Abingdon	Faringdon	Wantage
Parishes (exc towns)	65	13	32	20
Cllrs per town	16	10	2	4
Electors (as at August 2015)	97991	51093	19400	27498
0.60p per elector	£58,795	£30,656	£11,640	£16,499
£500 per parish/cllr	£40,500	£11,500	£17,000	£12,000
Total	£99,295	£42,156	£28,640	£28,499
Percentage	100.00%	42.46%	28.84%	28.70%

We will update the number of electors in this table each August, in preparation for the annual budget setting process, as the number of electors will determine the minimum budget required for the scheme each year.

The minimum budget each area committee must have to open for a round of funding is £5,000.

Allocation of unspent budgets

The cabinet member for grants can request that the section 151 officer agree to carry forward any unallocated CG budget to the next financial year. The cabinet member must give reasons why a carry forward is justified.

If the Section 151 officer agrees to carry forward any remaining budget, we'll add it to the total CG budget for the next year and divide it between the area committees using the system set out earlier in this policy.

We'll return any underspent or expired grants to the council's general reserves at the end of each financial year.

Decision-making

Grants team

The grants team will review the eligibility of every application before using the scoring matrix in appendix two to suggest scores and awards for the area committees to then review and amend as necessary. They will also flag any concerns with their scores.

Area committees

Each area committee will review the officer scores and comments for the applications in their area and will amend scores as necessary, giving clear reasons for any changes. The final score agreed by the committee will determine how much, (if any) funding the project gets as per the matrix in appendix two.

If an application covers more than one area committee, we will divide the request amount between the relevant committees based on the percentages used to allocate the annual budget.

The committee can recommend not funding an application that scores enough points if they:

- have serious concerns around the management of the project now and in the future.
- are satisfied the applicant has sufficient unrestricted reserves to fund the project themselves
- have serious concern as to the financial viability or appropriateness of the proposed project;
- are unsure if the project complies with the criteria or helps deliver the council's strategic objectives

The committee can recommend that the cabinet member for grants makes awards for more than a score allows. The cabinet member's decision is however final.

Once a committee has voted to agree a score and an award, it cannot then amend it.

Head of Corporate Strategy

The head of corporate strategy using delegated powers will decide:

- if we'll accept requests for over 50 per cent of the total project cost
- if we'll accept applications that don't meet all the eligibility criteria
- whether to give extensions to the term of any grant
- whether to amend award percentages or maximum values beyond what was originally agreed, as requested by applicants. Increases will stay within the maximum limits of the scheme.

Cabinet member for grants

The cabinet member for grants will decide:

- any awards to give more funding than a score dictates

- any amendments to the policy and scoring criteria, to make sure it continues to meet the needs of the community (via ICMD).

We'll publicise all the grants we award through our councillor newsletter, website and the media.

Procedure at area committee meetings

The area committees will conduct their meetings in accordance with the Rules of Procedure set out in Parts 4 and 5 of the council's Constitution.

Declaration of interests

Councillors and officers will declare any interests in accordance with the Rules of Procedure set out in Parts 4 and 5 of the council's Constitution.

Any officer of the council with a pecuniary interest in any application will take no part in the process and register their interest as required by the employee's code of conduct policy.

Standard conditions for all CG awards

We'll include the following standard conditions on all CG grants:

- Organisations must formally accept the grant offer and agree to meet any conditions by completing and returning a grant acceptance form
- Organisations must submit evidence that they've spent the grant on the project we awarded it for
- Projects awarded less than £10,000 must complete within 12 months of the award date, projects receiving more than £10,000 must start work within 18 months of the award date, unless we give an extension to the term.
- Projects awarded more than £10,000 must complete work within 36 months of the award date
- Organisations must consult the grants team before making any significant changes to the project, to ensure the grant is unaffected
- The organisation must acknowledge the council's support in any publicity on the project receiving a grant.

We'll include the following standard condition on all grants over £25,000:

- Organisations must register a restriction or charge on the registered title in the council's favour with the Land Registry, before work starts on the project, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the council.

We may add extra conditions to any grant if we consider it necessary.

The head of corporate strategy has delegated authority to remove any agreed grant conditions following a request from the applicant.

Officers will confirm applicants have met all the conditions before making any payment. Failure to meet all the agreed conditions may delay payment or, in extreme cases, result in us withdrawing our grant offer.

Payment of grants

We will only pay towards costs incurred after our decision date.

We pay the grants in two stages, half when we receive their signed acceptance form (for awards under £10,000) or, for awards over £25,000 their grant agreement is in place and we have confirmation that a charge or restriction in our favour has been placed on the registered title. We pay the balance when the project completes, upon receipt of evidence of expenditure.

In exceptional cases like property purchases, we may make a single upfront payment, which officers will recommend as part of their evaluation.

If the project costs less than expected, we'll reduce our final payment accordingly and, if necessary, request back some of the first payment (the minimum amount for us to request repayment is £500)

Appendix two - scoring and award matrix for CG applications

Scoring matrix:

Criteria	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
New facilities or activities	The project offers very little if any new activities or facilities	The project replaces existing facilities or allows existing activities to continue	The project improves an existing facility or activity	The project will provide a new facility or will allow new activities to take place
Community benefit	The project offers little if any benefit to the community	A single sport or special interest group will benefit	More than two groups or a minority group will benefit from the project	The whole community will benefit
Funding the project	They haven't secured much if any of the other funding needed for the project	They've secured some of the other funding needed but still have some to find	They've secured most of their other funding and have a plan in place for raising the rest	They've secured all the other funding needed for the project
Organisation's contribution	They aren't contributing to the project	They're contributing less than 25% of the project cost	They're contributing between 25 and 50% of the project cost	They're contributing over 50% of the project cost

Award matrix:

0-4 points	Low priority, no funding
5- 8 points	Medium priority, award between 50 and 75 % of request
9-12 points	High priority, award full amount requested (up to 50 per cent of the project cost)

