

1. Background

The Members Community Infrastructure Fund is financed from Council Reserves and is to be operational again between July 2021 and March 2022.

£10,000 is set aside for each Ward Member. The £10,000 is to be invested in projects that support the delivery of the Council's policies and priorities. Money left unallocated by Members in 2021/22 will return to Reserves. The Fund will receive bids until the 14th February 2022 and the Project Development and Funding Unit (PDFU) will project manage proposals that have been tabled by the current Administration, i.e. those that have been presented by Councillors and have gained approval at Cabinet prior to purdah and the 28th March 2022.

Ward Members are to identify priority projects within their own Ward and present these proposals for consideration of Cabinet.

The Project Development and Funding Unit within ELLL will act as the Grant Management Organisation (GMO) and will have strict control and governance of the Fund.

The Members Community Infrastructure Fund is for the benefit of all of the communities within the 42 Electoral Wards of Neath Port Talbot. The Fund will be encoded, one Folio Number per Member, and spend against each Folio will be monitored by NPTCBC Technical Accounts.

2. Aim of the Members Community Infrastructure Fund

The money will be used to address local needs and to fund projects and initiatives that will contribute towards creating vibrant and sustainable communities.

Applications and proposals that demonstrate how Council funding will be used to lever in additional resources in support of Council policies and priorities are welcomed. It is intended that the Members Community Fund will endeavour to maximise other funding

streams and draw in additional external funding which will add value to inward investment within the Ward under determination, (whilst recognising there are time constraints that will impact upon the likelihood of this happening in Tranche II of the Members Fund).

3. Principles

The following are Guiding Principles used to prioritise and help in the determination of bids made to the Members Community Fund.

Projects will:-

- Directly address identified issues, needs and opportunities in a particular community.
- Demonstrate added value to the local communities through clear outcomes.
- Be well thought out and have robust financial plans and delivery proposals.
- Demonstrate synergy and complementary activities with other projects and initiatives in the area.
- Demonstrate support from the local community and partner organisations.
- Meet the needs of existing and future generations.
- Recognise and respond to the diversity and uniqueness of the community.
- Be sustainable and should not ordinarily create ongoing operational/revenue costs.

4. The Members Community Infrastructure Fund

- Will be made available to Members as the 'Members Community Fund', which will be administered by the Project Development & Funding Unit (PDFU) within ELLL.
- The PDFU will act as the Grant Management Organisation (GMO).
- The Fund will be available as a means of directly funding or match funding those project proposals that come before the Grant Management Organisation (GMO).
- Projects that show merit will be reported to Cabinet for consideration and decision.

5. Grant Management and Administration

The Grant Management Organisation (GMO) will be responsible for the standard Award conditions and will promote consistency and fairness. The GMO will:

- Be the first point of contact for all Members wishing to access the Fund.
- Take enquiries about the Fund and advise upon eligibilities and ineligibilities.
- Equip the Members, who are interested in making a bid, with the appropriate Guidance Notes and Application Form.
- Provide advice upon complex bids which might require early and constructive dialogue. Information will be given upon project management issues such as the need for statutory undertakings, adherence to the Corporate Procurement Rules, H&S, site investigations and best value as befitting the individual project requirements.
- Check bids for completeness, accuracy, deliverability, and sustainability.
- Act as a Clearing House by appraising bids to ensure that proposals are credible, realistic and practical and are ready for determination/assessment.
- Undertake consultations with partner organisations that can add to the understanding of a project submission.
- Prepare Reports for Cabinet in a timely fashion so as to facilitate early decision making and rapid response.
- Write to the Members notifying of outcome.
- Process payments, ensuring the money has been allocated appropriately and in accordance with the grant offer letter.
- Record all transactions to allow immediate reconciliation of spend against 64 Headings
- Have transparent, robust, auditable and impartial governance procedures.

6. The Process

- It will be for Members to identify projects to go forward for consideration. The onus is on the Member to identify local priorities and bring proposals to the GMO.

- These projects may enhance existing Council services, support and augment existing voluntary sector provision or protect and refurbish capital assets that are in need of investment.
- Members can invest a minimum of £1,000 up to the maximum of the £10,000 allocation per Ward Member on any one or a combination of projects in 2021/22. Bids to the Members Community Fund will be accepted at any time up until the 14th February 2022 as this will be an Open Programme with no set cyclical Rounds of funding. Fully worked proposals will be presented to the cyclical Rounds of Cabinet meetings for appraisal .No approvals can be sought in purdah.
- Revenue projects and projects that involve the procurement of essential small items of capital equipment can be considered.
- Members may wish to augment a project that they have already supported in the earlier Round of the Members Fund, by building upon the earlier initiative with the 2021/2022 allocation (the GMO will need to be convinced that the earlier initiative has worked).
- Should a Member wish to develop a traffic calming, or a Traffic Regulation Order or a Highways Infrastructure type proposal these must be lodged with the GMO by the 31.12.21 to allow for approval to advertise, to explore objections to the proposal and to facilitate ongoing delivery.
- The Member may wish to use other locally sourced external grant aid (i.e. from Section 106 Agreements, Mineral Deposits, Renewable Energy sources, etc.) to match fund the £10,000 allocation. The PDFU can advise upon this course of action which will add value to local investment. All sources of match funding that are to be associated with the Total Project Cost must be in place and secure before a bid is made to the Members Fund and presented to Cabinet for approval.
- Certain Wards may be represented by more than one Ward Member. Where there is general agreement between Ward Members that they wish to pool their individual £10,000 allocation as a means of securing a bigger, more ambitious project, this is permissible under the Fund criteria.
- Should a Ward Member feel strongly about, and can evidence the need for, financially supporting a venture that is not within their own Electoral Ward, this is

permissible under the Fund criteria. The investment outside of the indigenous Ward can be made in any Ward providing that a need can be evidenced.

- Members are to complete the Members Community Fund Application Form and then seek a meeting (which may now be through a 'virtual' digital platform, like 'Teams' – an appointment should be booked as Officers will be working remotely.) with the PDFU (as the GMO) to go through the submission.
- The PDFU will complete all the relevant checks.
- The Member will personally sign off the bid and declare, to the best of their knowledge, that the information contained within the Application is correct and authentic.
- Further information will be requested if the bid is in anyway incomplete or ambiguous.
- A synopsis of the Project proposals received from Members will be reported to the next available Cabinet meeting for determination/award.
- During execution of this Fund, all parties will abide by all the relevant current legislation and regulations.

7. Examples of eligible Projects (N.B. These suggestions are indicative not exhaustive)

1. **Environment** – e.g. environmental enhancements, traffic calming, street furnishings community landscaping projects, nature trails, local interpretation, recycling initiatives, community gardens.
2. **Education** – e.g. Educational activities that are not part of the traditional school day, 'Forest School', Road Safety initiatives, non – statutory support for libraries('Friends of' Organisations, etc.) , non-statutory youth projects, one off materials, staging an exhibition, environmental education projects, community education activities.
3. **Health** – e.g. Essential capital items for Food co-ops, exercise referrals, health and well-being events.
4. **Culture** – e.g. cultural events, promotional leaflets, productions, gateway features.

5. **Recreation** – e.g. Community facilities, playground refurbishments and renewals, multi-sport games areas, improvement to sporting facilities, festivals of sport and Taster Days

8. Ineligible Projects

- Statutory Activity
- Any project that has already started cannot be considered, however separate stages of a project can apply for this Fund
- Any project where contracts have been signed or orders placed before approval
- The promotion of religious faith activities (although applications from religious organisations are allowed if the proposed project benefits the wider community)
- Highways schemes that have no evidenced need or community benefit (genuine outcomes will need to form part of the proposal in order to win through in assessment).
- Projects that impact upon or adversely affect the sustainability of existing provision perhaps elsewhere in the area of benefit
- Applications from private sector organisations
- Applications to assist Organisations that receive funding from the Public purse (Police, NHS, etc.)
- Applications on behalf of other organisations or in the name of a professional fundraiser
- Funding core staff
- Feasibility studies
- Trips and visits
- Funding of recoverable VAT costs
- Running costs such as utility costs, routine hall hire, etc.
- Insurance and/or legal costs
- Proposals that are without a specific project in mind – i.e. simply gifting money to keep an Organisation operational
- Projects that conflict or adversely affect the Council's aims, policies or priorities
- Fundraising campaigns

- Party political activity or fundraising
- Purchase of land
- Duplication of other projects being delivered locally
- Individual beneficiaries

9. General Requirements

Member Applications for financial assistance may be categorised into one of three potential bid types:-

1. Enhancement to Council Services – this will require the PDFU to work with Officers in Environment, Social Services, Neighbourhood Services, Leisure, etc. to gain assurances that the proposal is workable, strategically correct, affordable and sustainable going forward. The PDFU must be convinced of the project's worth before presenting it in a Report format to Cabinet.
2. Assistance to Voluntary sector Groups – if the Member's investment is intended to support community activity and the facilitator of that activity is within the voluntary sector (e.g. the Management Committee of a Community Centre); the PDFU will require sight of that Organisation's Constitution, Accounts, Insurances and Bank Account details so as to be convinced that they are a worthy Organisation to invest in. A Quote for the item to be purchased from the Award of grant will also be required in order to verify that the item has been economically sourced. There may be a requirement for additional information, relevant to the project e.g. evidence of ownership for capital projects. This would need to be specified on the Application Form completed by the Member.
3. Complex bids requiring a multi-faceted approach to funding – the PDFU would take a 'hands on' approach by working with the Member(s) to arrive at a total funding package that mirrors the total project cost. The PDFU would stay with such a project from inception to completion and would, according to the nature and complexity of the project, be responsible for site investigation works, commissioning, supervision, grant draw down schedules, Practical Completion, post installation inspection, etc.

10. Legal Implications

Section 56 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides sanction for non – executive Members to be given authority to carry out both Executive and Non – Executive functions, but only within their own Ward. There is detailed statutory guidance accompanying the above provision and this must be read in conjunction with other statutory requirements e.g. that Council resources must not be used to publicise political parties. The Cabinet Executive Members will make a decision on the bids that come forward for determination under the auspices of the Members Community Fund. Both Executive and Non – Executive Members will then deliver the proposed projects that have won through in assessment.

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced well-being powers which enable every Local Authority to have capacity to do anything which it considers is likely to promote an improvement to economic, social or environmental well – being of their area. There are limits on the power to promote well – being in that the power does not enable a Local Authority to do anything which it is unable to do *“by virtue of any prohibition, restriction or limitation on their powers which is contained in any enactment, whenever passed or made”*. The Members Community Fund Scheme should remain transparent and be consistently applied in order to safeguard public confidence .The Council’s Constitution should be referred to for explicit guidance upon governance.

In keeping with all other extra voluntary contributions, the Members Community Fund will be subject to Internal Audit.

11. Conflict of Interest

Any Cabinet Member who has a financial interest (or if a family member has such an interest) in a project under discussion, should declare the nature of his/her interest and withdraw from the room and the determination of any Award.

Similarly if a Cabinet Member acts as a Trustee or forms part of a Board or Management Committee of an Organisation which hopes to be a recipient of a grant from the Fund, that Member should not

be involved in decisions that directly affect the grant .The Cabinet Member should declare an interest and withdraw from the room.

Cabinet Members will declare an interest in projects that originate from their own Electoral Ward and play no further part in the determination of an Award by leaving the room.

Conflicts of interest will be a standing Agenda item and the Members will be bound by the Council's Code of Conduct.

Non – Executive Members will be responsible for bringing project proposals to the Cabinet for decision. These Members are also bound by the above and must declare on the Members Community Fund Application Form should there be a financial or personal conflict of interest, which would otherwise create a bias or affect broader community interest.

12. Payment of the Award

Following the assessment of bids that are made to the Members Community Infrastructure Fund PDFU, acting as GMO, will notify the Applicant of the Cabinet's decision to support or to reject the bid.

The Applicant Member will be asked, as part of the Application Form to declare that if successful with an Award the grant will be used solely and specifically for the purposes described or as intended.

Should the bid succeed, the GMO will, according to Section 9 'General Requirements' above:-

1. Arrange a Journal Transfer from the relevant Member Folio Code to a Project Code furnished by the Council Dept. charged with carrying out the work e.g. to 'Highways' if a traffic calming initiative, to 'Street Care' if tree planting or placement of street furnishings, etc.
2. Pay by electronic BACS proforma the Community Organisation that has been identified in the bid. This will be completed using the Bank Account and Sort Code

that was gleaned from the Organisation during the initial appraisal of the proposal when first delivered to PDFU by the Member Applicant.

3. PDFU pay through General Exchequer and receipted Invoice for goods and services that have been procured to arrive at some of the more capital intensive, complex projects that have been project managed 'in house'.

Second and subsequent bids made by the same Member will be accepted throughout 2021/22 up until the 14th February 2022, until such time as their allocation of £10,000 is fully utilised.

The above transactions are to be recorded against 64 Folio Headings (one for each Elected Member). Trackers and spreadsheets will be kept by Technical Accountancy to log expenditure against a working budget of £640,000.

The Member Applicant will be reminded that the GMO reserves the right to monitor a project post Award, and proof of outcomes associated with the project could be asked for.