

Councillor Ward Improvement Scheme – Pilot 2026/27

Purpose

To enhance the capacity of Councillors to undertake their community leadership role through the granting of funds within their ward to support community projects. The grant is paid out of public funds. All grants should have a positive impact on residents of the ward the Councillor represents and enhance the lives of the ward residents.

Allocation per Ward Councillor

The total grant available to each Councillor to spend in their ward for the benefit of their community for year one is £3,000. Councillors have the freedom to allocate their grant allocation within an approved governance framework contained in this Scheme.

Restrictions

- Use of designated budgets will be suspended during all pre-election periods.
- Any funds remaining unspent/uncommitted at the end of the financial year will be returned to reserves.
- The grant allocation is for use within the Councillor's own ward. It can be spent in conjunction with other Councillors for the same ward or in an adjacent ward with the approval of the relevant Ward Councillor.
- Payment of grants will only be made by BACS, due to administration costs and efficiency.

Transparency

Councillors need to be mindful of how they spend their budgets and be clear of the community benefit. Information will be published on the Council's website in line with the transparency code, giving the general public opportunity to scrutinise expenditure, it will also be reported at the end of the year as part of a review of the Pilot Scheme.

Criteria

Applications need to meet the following criteria:

- Be spent within Blaby District boundary for the benefit of the residents in the ward
- Proposals should be for one-off items of expenditure and not for anything which could create an on-going financial commitment
- Funding is not available for the direct employment of staff or general running costs
- Awards should meet a minimum payment of £100 and a maximum of £3,000 or the amount of remaining grant allocated for that Councillor.
- Awards should be for items or initiatives within the current financial year
- Awards should be avoided where there is an alternative, more suitable funding source (Parish Council precept/ government grant)

Examples only:

What this grant CAN be spent on

- ✓ Improvements to community facilities within the ward (eg Changing rooms)
- ✓ Improvements to the visual amenity of the ward area (eg Flower beds/hanging baskets)
- ✓ Community events or activities within the ward that benefit all/a wide range of residents of the ward (eg open day events)

- ✓ Investment in community infrastructure or street furniture within the ward (eg Benches)
- ✓ Support to a religious organisation, school, academy or local established community group where the project/event to be delivered benefits the wider ward
- ✓ Section of the community within the ward with a specific need. (eg Facilities supporting disabled persons)

What this grant CANNOT be spent on

- × Projects of a party political nature, including supporting political organisations
- × Supporting religious or specific groups, where the benefit is for that group only
- × Requests which directly benefit a sole individual or family
- × Support to lobbying or campaign groups
- × The direct employment costs of staff, general running costs or hospitality payments
- × Anything that will bring the Council into disrepute or damage the Council's reputation.

Governance and Process

- Organisations or individuals should contact the local ward councillor directly, the Councillor is responsible for all communication with the recipient.
- Councillors are asked to check additional funding sources when approached.
- Proposals for expenditure must be submitted by the relevant ward councillor using the electronic application form available on the Councillors' SharePoint Portal.
- A separate electronic form must be completed for each application.
- Applications must contain up-to-date bank details for the recipient of the funding (provided in writing) and evidence which supports the application being made
- Two or more Councillors may agree on a joint proposal for their own or adjacent wards, one Councillor should complete the application and provide all details.
- The Democratic Services team will keep a record of all applications.
- **No commitment for expenditure should be made until the application is approved.**
- Councillors need to declare on the application form any personal interest that they may have and be mindful of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, the Local Code of Corporate Governance and the Nolan Principles.

Decisions and Monitoring

- The intention of this scheme is for Ward Councillors to regulate the use of this fund
- The Monitoring Officer will hold the associated budget and will be responsible for signing off the expenditure or a designated representative.
- If an application does not initially meet the criteria for the scheme, they will discuss this with the relevant Councillor.
- Decisions will be made by the Council's Monitoring Officer or their designated representative and will be final.
- Application forms will be reviewed against the criteria above. Reasons for turning down an application will be provided to the Ward Councillor.
- A record of grants awarded and refused in each ward will be kept on the Member SharePoint site to enable Councillors to monitor expenditure. Individual Ward Members will be solely responsible for keeping track of the expenditure against their allocated fund.
- The Council's communications team will be happy to work with ward Councillors to support promotion of activities funded by this scheme.