



CABINET – 24TH JULY 2024

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FUND – TREATMENT OF UNDERSPENDS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend to Cabinet that all remaining Community Empowerment Fund underspends from the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years that are not allocated by 30th September 2024, are returned to the General Fund.
- 1.2 To recommend to Cabinet that in future financial years, any Community Empowerment Fund underspends from the previous financial year that are not allocated by 30th September each year, are returned to the General Fund.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report will update Cabinet on the performance of the Community Empowerment Fund since its inception in late 2021. It will highlight some of the issues that have been experienced in a small number of wards over the last 3 years, in terms of the funding being utilised. It will also suggest to Cabinet an approach to dealing with an underspends from the previous three financial years (as well in any future financial years) in order to ensure that the spend within wards supported by individual Councillors is maximised.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That all remaining Community Empowerment Fund underspends from the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years that are not allocated by 30th September 2024, are returned to the General Fund.
- 3.2 That in future financial years, any Community Empowerment Fund underspends from the previous financial year that are not allocated by 30th September each year, are returned to the General Fund.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that spend against the budget for the Community Empowerment Fund is

maximised, and that any unused allocations not utilised within the first six months of the following financial year are returned to the General Fund, to be used for other purposes.

- 4.2 Allowing six months into a new financial year for underspends to be utilised would allow a reasonable time for further engagement with communities. Return of any unused underspends to the General Fund would help to support the significant financial challenges facing the Council

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) has been in operation since 2021. Cabinet Members will recall that they approved its inception at their meeting on 21st July 2021.
- 5.2 The CEF was established to allow the Council to focus on further strengthening the relationships between it and its communities – residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly county borough benefits from a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation. Therefore, the CEF was seen as a mechanism for enabling this relationship to be strengthened.
- 5.3 In the Council's budget setting for 2021/22, Members approved a £328,000 annual funding allocation for the CEF, to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. In 2022/23 the budget was increased to £341,120 and subsequently was reduced to £250,000 in 2023/24 due to budgetary pressures.
- 5.4 The mechanism used to allocate the budget fairly across the county borough was to allocate a 'pot' of funding to each individual ward Member, which would allow direct support to local projects. Applications are invited from eligible organisations, but they must be supported, or, effectively, sponsored, by the relevant ward Member(s). This resulted in an allocation of £4,490 per ward Member in 2021/22 (73 Members), £4,940 per ward Member in 2022/23 (69 Members) and £3,630 per ward Member in 2023/24.
- 5.5 Members can choose to support projects individually, they can choose to merge their ward funding pots with other Members in the same ward to fund larger projects, and they can also choose to merge their funding pots across ward boundaries, in order to fund projects operating across a wider geographical area.

- 5.6 On the whole, since its inception the CEF has been broadly successful. A summary of the number of projects supported and the amount of funding allocated per financial year is shown in the table below. It should be noted that the first round of the CEF did not take place until October 2021, which affected the number of projects supported and value of awards in 2021/22:

Financial year	Number of projects supported	Total value of awards
2021/22	32	£98,516.02
2022/23	84	£414,783.99
2023/24	84	£288,428.16

- 5.7 Whilst the majority of wards have utilised their annual allocation effectively, there are a small number of wards where there have been underspends in individual financial years, and a very small number of wards have carry forward amounts in their funding pots from the very first year of operation of the CEF, as well as subsequent years.
- 5.8 The situation was more complex at the start of the 2022/23 financial year due to the Local Government Elections. The number of Councillors was reduced from 73 to 69, a significant proportion of the existing Councillors were not standing for re-election and there were a number of boundary changes across the county borough. Also, only two rounds of the CEF were operated during the 2021/22 due to approval not being given by Cabinet until July 2021 and the lead in time required to establish the new grant scheme. Therefore, it was agreed with the Chief Executive and Leader at that time that any CEF underspends from the 2021/22 financial year would be ringfenced at the ward level and then reallocated equally to ward Members in each ward following the Elections.
- 5.9 At the end of the 2022/23 a further discussion took place regarding underspends from the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, and it was agreed by the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance that any underspends would be ringfenced to individual Members. These decisions have therefore led to a small number of Members having large amounts remaining in their funding pots, due to carry forwards from previous financial years.
- 5.10 The issue of underspends was not addressed in the original Cabinet report of 21st July 2021, although there was a commitment that the CEF would be reviewed after 12 months in order to review the take-up of the fund and to identify and mitigate against any emerging barriers to the scheme. However, given the current financial position the Council is facing, it is no longer sustainable to continue to allow Members to carry forward unallocated amounts. At the end of the 2023/24 financial year, the total underspend across the county borough for the three financial years in question was £125,400.12. (this amount also includes funding circulated back into the scheme from underspends on individual projects, and a small number of projects approved that did not progress).
- 5.11 Officers have put significant effort into helping all Members to fully utilise the funding available within their wards – a leaflet was produced for all Members in advance of the scheme, which outlined the expectations on them in terms of sponsoring projects and how the scheme would operate; awareness sessions were held which were open to all Members when the scheme was launched and following the Elections; Officers have attended Community & Town Council meetings and other meetings within the

community to raise awareness of the scheme; Officers have provided assistance to Members for social media campaigns; there is a dedicated webpage with the application criteria on the Council website; Members are regularly updated via email with regard to the amount in their funding pots, including any underspends; finally, Officers regularly provide advice and assistance to Members in terms of eligibility for the scheme. However, despite this support, some individual wards still have significant underspends.

- 5.12 When the CEF was established, and in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, it was envisaged that it would encourage new groups to set up in order to build capacity locally and empower communities to do more for themselves. However, this has not happened and in the vast majority of cases funding applications have come from often long-standing, existing groups. Also, some groups have accessed the grant scheme every year, which reduces the opportunity for other groups or new groups to apply for funding.
- 5.13 Therefore, given the significant financial pressures faced by the Council, it is recommended that all remaining CEF underspends from the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years that are not allocated by 30th September 2024, are returned to the General Fund. The latest application round closed on 31st May 2024 and a further round was planned to close on 30th August 2024, however this date can be extended to the 30th September, depending on the outcome of this report. Where applicable, carry forwards from previous years will be used to fund projects received in these two rounds, for those individual Members who still have carry forward balances. Any carry forward balances that still remain for individual Members after these two rounds would be returned to the General Fund. The further month in the funding round is being added to give Members an opportunity to engage with their communities following recess.
- 5.14 In addition, it is recommended that in any future financial years, any CEF underspends from the previous financial year that are not allocated by 30th September each year are returned to the General Fund. This will encourage Members to maximise allocations from their funding pots and avoid the large carry forward balances that have built up over the past three financial years for a very small number of individual Members.

5.2 Conclusion

- 5.2.1 The report above summarises the performance of the CEF since its inception in 2021. It highlights the successes of the grant scheme, but also the issues faced in a small number of wards, despite the significant support provided by Officers over the past three years. The report provides a recommendation on dealing with the underspends from the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, as well as an approach for managing underspends in any future financial years.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no assumptions within the report. The CEF budgets for the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years have been confirmed.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An IAA was compiled when the CEF was established and this report relates to changes in the treatment of underspends, and not allocation of the fund itself

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The financial implications of the recommendations are detailed in the report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The grant scheme is administered by the Council's Policy and Partnerships Team. Currently the underspends need close monitoring, but if these are returned to the General Fund, it will reduce the administrative burden of managing the grant scheme, thereby freeing up the time of the Officers involved to undertake other duties.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Responses from consultees will be reported during the Cabinet meeting.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. One of the specific duties covers matters of engagement.

Author: Vicki Doyle – Policy Officer (doylevm@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees:

- Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
- Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
- Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Environment and Economy
- Gareth Jenkins Interim Director Social Services
- Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of the Council
- Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
- Cllr James Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change
- Cllr Lindsay Whittle, Leader of Plaid Cymru Group
- Cllr Nigel Dix, Leader Independent Group
- Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
- Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
- Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
- Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
- Leanne Sykes, Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
- Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager
- Mark Richards, Assistant Accountant
- Hayley Lancaster, Transformation Manager - Engagement

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Cabinet report – 21st July 2021

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CABINET – 21ST JULY 2021

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FUND

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present a proposed approach to the delivery of the council's newly instigated Community Empowerment Fund (CEF).
- 1.2. To seek endorsement of the proposed funding criteria and grant management arrangements for the Community Empowerment Fund.
- 1.3 To seek views on appropriate support required to enable elected members to effectively champion the Community Empowerment Fund across their communities.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* transformation strategy endorsed by Cabinet in June 2019, highlights the importance of effective community engagement and the subsequently endorsed *Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025* commits to promoting and supporting the principles of community empowerment and building resilient communities.
- 2.2 The council is focussed on further strengthening the relationships between it and its communities – residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly county borough benefits from a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation.
- 2.3. In the council's recent far-reaching resident survey 'The Caerphilly Conversation', 78% of respondents to that survey felt it was a positive suggestion to make a community budget available to residents, to enable them to do more things for themselves in future. 89% of respondents also agreed that offering incentives to communities would likely encourage them to take greater pride in their area.
- 2.4. In the council's budget setting for 2021/22, members approved a £328,000 annual funding allocation for a 'Community Empowerment Fund' to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services.
- 2.5. This report sets out the proposed approach to the delivery of the newly instigated Community Empowerment Fund, with the draft application form and guidance for the

fund and draft community engagement guidance for ward members attached at appendix one and appendix two respectively.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet endorse the proposed approach to the delivery of the Community Empowerment Fund, and comment on and endorse the funding criteria and grant management arrangements for the fund.
- 3.2 That Cabinet offer their views on appropriate support required to enable elected members to effectively champion the Community Empowerment Fund across their communities.
- 3.3 That Cabinet support a review of the Community Empowerment Fund after 12 months in order to review take up of the fund to date and to identify and mitigate against any emerging barriers to the scheme.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure the council has a Community Empowerment Fund with robust funding criteria and grant management arrangements, in order to enable communities to bid for funding to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting local need.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* transformation strategy endorsed by Cabinet in June 2019, highlights the importance of effective community engagement and the subsequently endorsed *Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025* commits to promoting and supporting the principles of community empowerment and building resilient communities.
- 5.2 Community groups are increasingly playing a strong role in planning and delivering services that meet local needs, complementing those provided by public services. This community provision has a particular strength in developing innovative and flexible activities that are valued by local people and helps to build a real sense of community pride and cohesion.
- 5.3 The council is focussed on further strengthening the relationships between it and its communities – residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly county borough benefits from a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation.
- 5.4 In the council's recent far-reaching resident survey '*The Caerphilly Conversation*', 78% of respondents to that survey felt it was a positive suggestion to make a community budget available to residents, to enable them to do more things for themselves in future. 89% of respondents also agreed that offering incentives to communities would likely encourage them to take greater pride in their area.
- 5.5 In the council's budget setting for 2021/22, members approved a £328,000 annual funding allocation for a 'Community Empowerment Fund' to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. This allocation amounts to £4,490 per elected member per year.

5.6 The Community Empowerment Fund will enable communities to bid for funding in order to develop and deliver community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. Projects will aim to support communities to:

- Build community capacity
- Better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
- Make good use of existing assets, with the projects having the support of local communities
- Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement with groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach
- Develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their local communities
- Develop projects that are capable of becoming sustainable community projects
- Complement existing services in an area by providing additional activities

5.7 Grant management

Applications must be made by a non-profit organisation based within Caerphilly county borough. All organisations must have their own bank account in the name of the organisation.

For non-constituted community groups that have an interest in bidding into the fund, support in advance of submitting the application can be sought from the council's Caerphilly Cares team, to enable them to become a constituted community organisation.

In calculating allocations the £328,000 has been divided by 73 (the number of elected representatives within Caerphilly county borough), meaning an allocation of £4,490 per ward councillor. In wards where there are more than one ward councillor, the allocation is multiplied according to the number of ward councillors. For example, Penyrheol ward has four elected representatives, therefore the Penyrheol ward would benefit from an allocation of £17,960 (£4,490 x 4).

It should be noted that the Community Empowerment Fund allocation of £328,000 for Caerphilly county borough during 2021/22 is allocated to wards, and not directly to local ward councillors.

The maximum allocation available to an organisation/community group is £4,490 (in a single member ward). Approved projects in a single member ward where the total cost is less than £4,490, can be awarded a grant of up to 100% of the project costs (depending on the number of applications received in a particular application round).

Larger projects in a single member ward costing over £4,490 can receive a grant of up to the maximum amount (depending on the number of applications received in a particular application round), with the expectation that the remainder of the funding is sourced by the organisation/community group from other sources, or their own funding.

For multi member wards the ward councillors can choose to 'pool' their allocation to fund larger projects, up to the maximum amount that the ward members have agreed to pool (i.e. up to £8,980 in a 2 member ward, up to £13,470 in a 3 member ward). Ward members are not required to pool their allocation if they do not wish to.

Organisations/community groups may be offered less than the maximum amount if there are multiple applications from organisations or groups in individual wards in a single application round.

It is suggested that all applications are for a minimum of £1,000, which can be made up of a number of different items. No group/organisation can apply for a grant in consecutive financial years.

50% of the grant amount will be paid when the grant is approved. The remaining 50% will be released on receipt of the necessary financial records to show that the grant released on project approval has been spent in accordance with the original application form submitted. Invoices/receipts and bank statements will be required as evidence.

The Policy and Partnerships Team have considerable experience of managing and administering community grants, using the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel as a post-allocation reporting mechanism after officer delegated decisions against the agreed criteria. It is proposed that while elected members will act as 'sponsors' for bids, the management, administration and ultimate grant allocation of the Community Empowerment Fund will follow this established mechanism, with funding allocated via officer delegated decisions and information reports to Cabinet every six months.

Full details of eligibility and grant criteria to apply to the Community Empowerment Fund is included at Appendix One.

5.8 Application criteria

The council's recent resident survey '*The Caerphilly Conversation*' sought views on what the Community Empowerment Fund could be spent on, with eight priority areas emerging from the feedback, therefore forming the basis for the application criteria for projects:

- Environmental projects, including awareness of biodiversity and increasing community activity
- Projects that support greater community cohesion
- Projects that aim to tackle isolation and loneliness across the community
- Digital inclusion projects
- Projects to encourage greater physical and mental wellbeing
- Activities for young people/educational activities (non-statutory)
- Initiatives that promote and encourage community safety
- Supporting community groups to establish

Funding would be utilised to support communities to become more sustainable and resilient, which also supports the principles of the council's newly established *Caerphilly Cares* model for service delivery and the council's Place Shaping and Wellbeing Framework.

Applicant organisations will be required to evidence the need for their project or activity and the lasting benefits it will provide for the local community. Full application criteria for the grant can be found at Appendix One.

5.9 The role of elected members

As highlighted at section 5.5 of this report, the £328,000 annual allocation to the Community Empowerment Fund amounts to the equivalent of £4,490 per elected ward councillor per year. In wards where there is more than one elected ward councillor, communities can choose to combine their funding allocation, to enable larger scale projects to be undertaken.

Local ward councillors have a key 'sponsor' role in the roll out of the fund and in the subsequent development of community projects.

Bids for funding from the Community Empowerment Fund must have support in writing from their local elected ward councillor prior to submission, and members must consider any potential conflicts of interest before 'sponsoring' any application.

Councillors will also be encouraged to consider:

- Carrying out community engagement activity to raise awareness of the fund across their ward area
- Discuss priorities within their local area with their constituents and seek agreement and support for these priority areas in supporting groups to bid to the Community Empowerment Fund
- Work alongside other ward councillors and local organisations where possible on joint projects, where co-funding becomes the enabler for delivery
- If projects require resources, or ongoing commitment e.g. maintenance from a council service areas, agreement must be received in writing from the relevant service area(s) before the project is approved.

Supplementary community engagement guidance for local ward councillors in relation to the Community Empowerment Fund can be found at Appendix Two.

In addition, virtual training opportunities for elected members will be available over the summer in areas of public engagement including community involvement, coproduction and participatory budgeting, which will help inform conversations with community members in prioritising ward-level projects.

5.10 Conclusion

Community groups are increasingly playing a strong role in planning and delivering services that meet local needs, complementing those provided by public services. This community provision has a particular strength in developing innovative and flexible activities that are valued by local people and help to build a real sense of community pride and cohesion.

Feedback from residents through the '*Caerphilly Conversation*' resident survey has been instrumental in shaping the remit of the Community Empowerment Fund, enabling communities to feel empowered in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

It is considered that the implementation of the Community Empowerment Fund supports the principles of community empowerment, as outlined in the council's *Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025*.

The Community Empowerment Fund will be reviewed after 12 months in order to review take up of the fund to date and to identify and mitigate against any emerging

barriers to the scheme.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 This report has been written with the assumption that ongoing annual funding will be available to support the Community Empowerment Fund.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and submitted alongside the development of this report.
- 7.2 The premise of the Community Empowerment Fund is to engage with and empower residents to do more for themselves in future. Feedback from 'The Caerphilly Conversation' resident survey has been instrumental in the development of this fund; with 78% of respondents indicating they felt it is a positive idea to make a community budget available to residents. Feedback on how the funding should be spend has also been key in developing the criteria for submitting a bid.
- 7.3 As already highlighted, projects would aim to support communities to:
- Build community capacity
 - Better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
 - Make good use of existing assets, with the projects having the support of local communities
 - Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach
 - Develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their local communities
 - Develop projects that are capable of becoming sustainable community projects
 - Complement existing services in an area by providing additional activity

A link to the full Integrated Impact Assessment can be found at:

https://caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/IIA/IIA_CommunityEmpowermentFund_June2021

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As per section 6.1, this report was written with the assumption that ongoing annual funding will be available to support the Community Empowerment Fund from 2022/23 onwards.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The council's Policy and Partnerships Team have considerable experience of running and administering community grant initiatives. While capacity to manage the Community Empowerment Fund bids would be a relevant consideration particularly given the two-tiered approach to funding allocation (50% on approval, 50% on completion), it is thought that implementing a minimum £1,000 amount on

applications to the fund would be appropriate for administering the fund within current resources.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This report has been sent to the consultees listed below and comments received are reflected in this report.

10.2. In addition, the report was considered at a meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 23rd June 2021.

Members were provided with an overview of how the CEF will work and advised that it is planned to review the procedures after 12 months.

The scrutiny committee sought further clarification on the types of projects that would be successful under the criteria and were advised that the criteria has been developed and is based upon the feedback received from communities. Community groups can apply and will be encouraged to broaden the projects they submit to include wider aspects and areas.

Members were advised that ward Members will have a pivotal role in considering what projects they will endorse to ensure they keep within the allocated funding for their area. Members sought advice on how they would prioritise when there are a number of potential projects and limited funding. It was suggested that Members could consult with ward colleagues, if applicable, and also consult their communities to see which projects have most support.

Members sought advice on how they can support applications for funding where they may be involved in management/running of the organisation submitting the bid. This may be a particular issue for single member wards. The scrutiny committee were advised that the process includes a 'Declaration of Interest' process, whereby any member can declare their interest when endorsing a bid. If it is a multi-member ward they could also ask a ward colleague to endorse the bid. The expectation is that in multi-member wards, that Members will work together for the benefit of the whole community.

The scrutiny committee referred to the restriction in the policy that prohibits organisations from submitting bids in consecutive years and queried whether this is detrimental to smaller wards that have fewer organisations. Members were advised that smaller wards also have proportionately less money, and this may result in fewer successful bids, due to prioritisation. It is planned to review this procedure after 12 months, and any barriers to access for organisations in smaller wards can be identified in that review.

The scrutiny committee endorsed the recommendations in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. One of the specific duties covers matters of engagement.

Author: Hayley Lancaster, Senior Communications Officer
Vicki Doyle, Policy Officer

Consultees: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Environment and Economy
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Cllr Philippa Marsden, Leader of the Council
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member Customer, Performance & Property
Cllr James Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Chair Policy and Resources
Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Gez Kirby, Vice Chair Police and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Colin Mann, Leader Plaid Cymru Group
Cllr Kevin Etheridge, Leader Independent Group
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Corporate Finance / Section 151 Officer
Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager
Tina McMahon, Caerphilly Cares Manager
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities, Welsh Language and
Consultation

Background papers:

Caerphilly County Borough Council Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 - [15694ConsultationandEngagementFramework.pdf \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](#)

Findings from 'The Caerphilly Conversation' resident survey 2020/21 - [Caerphilly - Join the Caerphilly Conversation](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Application Criteria – Community Empowerment Fund
Appendix 2 Draft Engagement Guidance for Members – Community Empowerment Fund
Appendix 3 Draft Application Form – Community Empowerment Fund



Community Empowerment Fund - Application Criteria

Purpose of the Grant

Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to supporting communities to become strong and resilient, and recognise that one of our county borough's greatest assets is the thriving network of local community groups and organisations across the area, particularly so in light of the Covid pandemic.

This grant scheme has been created to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. Key to this will be the involvement of local elected members as one of the key contact points in local communities, who will work with and support local community groups to develop project ideas that meet identified need on a ward basis.

The Council's budget setting for 2021/22 includes a £328,000 annual funding allocation for a 'Community Empowerment Fund' to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services.

In calculating allocations the £328,000 has been divided by 73 (the number of elected representatives within Caerphilly county borough), meaning an allocation of £4,490 per ward councillor. In wards where there are more than one ward councillor, the allocation is multiplied according to the number of ward councillors. For example, Penyrheol ward has four elected representatives, therefore the Penyrheol ward would benefit from an allocation of £17,960 (£4,490 x 4).

It should be noted that the Community Empowerment Fund allocation of £328,000 for Caerphilly county borough during 2021/22 is allocated to wards, and not directly to local ward councillors.

Projects will aim to support communities to:

- Build community capacity
- Better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
- Make good use of existing assets, with the projects having the support of local communities
- Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach
- Develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their local communities
- Develop projects that are capable of becoming sustainable community projects
- Complement existing services in an area by providing additional activity

Who can apply?

Projects must be managed by a non-profit organisation based within Caerphilly county borough, of one of the following types:

- (i) Unincorporated voluntary/community organisation or club with an adopted constitution or rules (an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit e.g. voluntary group or sports club)
- (ii) Charities or Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) registered with the Charities Commission (these can be new or existing charities)
- (iii) Community organisations who are Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) with no share capital and are registered with Companies House (company is owned by guarantors and any profits are re-invested to help promote the non-profit objectives of the company)
- (iv) Community Interest Companies (CICs) which are not established or conducted for private gain: any surplus or assets are used exclusively for the benefit of the community (designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good)

Please note: All organisations must have their own bank account in the name of the organisation. If the organisation does not currently have a bank account, this must be addressed before a formal grant offer can be made.

The following types of organisations will not be funded:

- (i) Any commercial/trading or profit-making organisations where the profits are shared amongst the Directors, shareholders or members
- (ii) This list is not exhaustive

What can be funded?

The council's recent resident survey 'The Caerphilly Conversation' sought views on what the Community Empowerment Fund could be spent on, with seven priority areas emerging from the feedback, therefore forming the basis for the application criteria for projects:

- Environmental projects, including awareness of biodiversity and increasing community activity
- Projects that support greater community cohesion
- Projects that aim to tackle isolation and loneliness across the community
- Digital inclusion projects
- Projects to encourage greater physical and mental wellbeing
- Activities for young people/educational activities (non-statutory)
- Initiatives that promote and encourage community safety
- Supporting community groups to establish

Applicant organisations will be required to evidence the need for their project or activity and the lasting benefits it will provide for the local community.

What cannot be funded?

- (i) Usual running costs of any organisation e.g. rent, utilities, insurance etc. The only exception to this is where organisation's have been formed in the six months prior to an application being made, where they can apply for one-off start-up costs.
- (ii) Subsequent grants for the same project or activity (by this we mean that any new application must be for activity substantially different to previous applications)
- (iii) Retrospective costs for any project i.e. costs for work already undertaken or equipment and/or materials that have been purchased or ordered prior to a formal grant offer being made and the Terms & Conditions of the grant being signed and submitted. If using a tender process, tenders cannot be awarded prior to a grant approval being made
- (iv) This list is indicative only and is not exhaustive

When can an application be submitted?

The closing date for the first round of the grant scheme will be 31st October 2021. Subsequent rounds will be dependent upon there being funding remain in the relevant ward pot, i.e. if all the funding in a particular ward is allocated in the first round there will be no further grant rounds for that ward in that financial year, however, there may be further application rounds in other wards. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application approximately 6-8 weeks after submission, depending on the total number of grants submitted in each round overall.

Applicants cannot apply for further grants in successive years i.e. if a successful application is made in the 2021/22 financial year (i.e. between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022), the applicant cannot make a further application until 1st April 2023 at the earliest.

How much can be applied for?

The maximum allocation available to an organisation/community group is £4,490 (in a single member ward). Approved projects in a single member ward where the total cost is less than £4,490, can be awarded a grant of up to 100% of the project costs (depending on the number of applications received in a particular application round).

Larger projects in a single member ward costing over £4,490 can receive a grant of up to the maximum amount (depending on the number of applications received in a particular application round), with the expectation that the remainder of the funding is sourced by the organisation/community group from other sources, or their own funding.

For multi member wards the ward councillors can choose to 'pool' their allocation to fund larger projects, up to the maximum amount that the ward members have agreed to pool (i.e. up to £8,980 in a 2 member ward, up to £13,470 in a 3 member ward). Ward members are not required to pool their allocation if they do not wish to.

Organisations/community groups may be offered less than the maximum amount if there are multiple applications from organisations or groups in individual wards in a single application round.

It is suggested that all applications are for a minimum of £1,000, which can be made up of a number of different items.

Estimates/quotes

Applicants must submit comparable estimates/quotes to support their application. A minimum two written estimates/quotes are required for every item listed in the 'Financial Details' section of the application form.

Estimates/quotes must be itemised, detailed and comparable (in terms of measurements, rates, quantities, specification etc.). They must also detail VAT where applicable.

Any grant offered is made on the basis of the cheapest quote provided. Applicants can choose a more expensive supplier or contractor to complete the work or provide goods/services, but this will be at the applicants' cost.

Payments

50% of the grant amount will be paid when the grant is approved. The remaining 50% will be released on receipt of the necessary financial records to show that the grant released on project approval has been spent in accordance with the original application form submitted. Invoices/receipts and bank statements will be required as evidence.

Project timescales

All approved projects must be completed within 18 months of the date of the formal offer letter. The funding for any projects not completed within this timescale will be automatically withdrawn.

After six months of the first tranche of funding being released, if an organisation has not made progress in undertaking the project (or is unable to offer an adequate explanation for not doing so), no further grant funding will be released and we will seek to recover the funding already paid.

Who to contact?

For more information or if you have any queries, please contact XXXXX, Policy and Partnerships Team, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Penallta House, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7PG. Tel: 01443 86XXX or e-mail XXXXXX

Appendix two

Community Empowerment Fund – Community engagement guidance for local councillors

Overview:

Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to supporting communities to become strong and resilient, and recognise that one of our county borough's greatest assets is the thriving network of local community groups and organisations across the area, particularly so in light of the Covid pandemic.

This grant scheme has been created to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. Key to this will be the involvement of local elected members as one of the key contact points in local communities, who will work with and support local community groups to develop project ideas that meet identified need on a ward basis.

This guidance document has been produced using insight from the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 and the LGA's 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' as a handy tool for local councillors in their key role in supporting the facilitation of the Community Empowerment Fund.

Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025

This key strategic document was endorsed by the council in February 2020 and states that:

"Through Team Caerphilly - Better Together, the council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement is central to our decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

In addition, we are focussing on further strengthening the relationship between the council and the community - residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Caerphilly county borough has a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation".

The principles of engagement outlined in the document are that as a council:

- We will listen and understand
- Caerphilly county borough people will help inform and shape the decisions we make - and in turn we will keep people informed
- We will be inclusive and act with purpose
- We will make the most of what already exists in our communities
- Empower local residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them

- Increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- Help us to understand the needs of our communities which in turn, helps to ensure that the services we deliver meet those needs and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- Ensure people are involved in the democratic process and enable communities to have greater input on issues that affect them
- Support communities to take action by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community-led solutions

How did the Community Empowerment Fund come about?

In the council's far-reaching resident survey 'The Caerphilly Conversation', carried out during December 2020 and January 2021, respondents told us that 78% of felt it was a positive suggestion to make a community budget available to residents, to enable them to do more things for themselves in future. 89% of respondents also agreed that offering incentives to communities would likely encourage them to take greater pride in their area.

In direct response to this feedback, in the council's budget setting for 2021/22, members approved a £328,000 annual funding allocation for a 'Community Empowerment Fund' to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. This allocation amounts to £4,490 per elected member per year.

What will the fund support communities to do?

The Community Empowerment Fund will enable communities to bid for funding in order to develop and delivery community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. Projects will aim to support communities to:

- Build community capacity
- Better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
- Make good use of existing assets, with the projects having the support of local communities
- Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach
- Develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their local communities
- Develop projects that are capable of becoming sustainable community projects
- Complement existing services in an area by providing additional activity

In calculating allocations, the £328,000 has been divided by 73 (the number of elected representatives within Caerphilly county borough), meaning an allocation of the equivalent of £4,490 per elected member. In wards where there are more than one elected member, the allocation is multiplied according to the number of ward councillors. For example – Penyrheol ward has four elected representatives;

therefore the Penyrheol ward would benefit from an allocation of £17,960 (£4,490 x 4).

What is my role in all this?

As elected representative, you have a significant role to play in the successful delivery of the Community Empowerment Fund across your communities.

Community groups will require your 'sponsorship' (support) for their project idea prior to their application for funding being submitted, with the project(s) in question needing to meet the criteria outlined above.

Bids for funding from the Community Empowerment Fund must have support in writing from you, their local elected ward councillor prior to submission, and members must consider any potential conflicts of interest before 'sponsoring' an organisation's project.

Having listened to feedback from residents on how the funding should be spent across communities, projects should also address one or more of the following:

- Environmental projects, including awareness of biodiversity and community projects
- Projects that support greater community cohesion
- Projects that aim to tackle isolation and loneliness across the community
- Digital inclusion projects
- Projects to encourage greater physical and mental wellbeing
- Activities for young people/educational activities
- Initiatives that promote and encourage community safety
- Supporting community groups to establish

Key to this will be the involvement of you as local elected members, as one of the key contact points in local communities, to work with and support local community groups to develop project ideas that meet identified need on a ward basis.

Elected members and community engagement:

The LGA's 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' states that:

'Ward councillors, as democratically-elected leaders representing their communities have a unique role to play in enabling the local engagement which will drive strong, connected communities – what we refer to as 'community engagement'.

'Ward members are in the front line of neighbourhood and community engagement. As a community leader, you are best placed to understand the particular challenges faced by your constituents. And working with a wide range of individuals and organisations in the area, you can help them to decide how best to respond.

'It is only at a local level that problems such as access crime, environmental concerns and anti-social behaviour can be understood and addressed. Few other community leaders have the mandate to coordinate different interests, reconcile diverse views and encourage open debate and dialogue in the way that you can.

The particular strengths and knowledge that you bring to this engagement process are:

- An understanding of your ward – the demographics, the key issues facing local people and the way that services are being delivered
- The representation of local voices – you are a channel of communication between the communities you serve and the council, representing the views of others and speaking up for the 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard'
- Communicating and influencing skills – you can help to ensure that the views of local people are taken into account when decisions are made by the council or outside bodies

How can I support the roll out of the Community Empowerment Fund?

The Local Government Association's useful 'Councillor workbook: neighbourhood and community engagement' gives lots of useful advice on how you as local elected representatives can encourage greater engagement with your communities.

The document can be found here: [11 26 LGA Cllr Workbook Neighbour hood engagement workbook December 2016.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

In addition, councillors will be invited to attend a series of online training opportunities on 'Community Involvement', 'Community Empowerment' and 'Coproduction' throughout the summer months. Please contact Hayley Lancaster at lancah@caerphilly.gov.uk for further details.



CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Penallta House, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed CF82 7PG
Tel: 01443 86XXXX

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FUND – APPLICATION FORM

The completed application form and supporting documents should be returned to XXXXX, Policy and Partnerships Team at the above address.

Any additional information which cannot be supplied in the space provided may be given on a separate sheet which should be signed and dated by the applicant.

Name of organisation:

Does the organisation have a constitution?

- Yes (please provide a copy) No

Please provide the organisations' bank account details

(these must be supplied and must be in the name of the organisation. All payments will be made via BACS transfer direct to this bank account)

Name of Bank:

Branch address:

Sort code:

Account number:

Name and address of secretary or main contact:

Email address:

Telephone no:

Is the organisation a charity/voluntary organisation/other?

Charity (please state registration number)

Voluntary organisation

Other (please state)

Please give a brief description of the general aims of the organisation?

Please state which electoral ward the project is located in:

Please state the name of ward councillor(s) that is/are supporting this project, together with a brief summary of the support provided to date:

Does the ward councillor that is/are supporting this project have a personal or prejudicial interest in the organisation or its activities?

Yes (please provide details below) No

(Note: The ward councillor(s) must also complete a 'Declaration of Interests' form and submit it alongside this application)

PLEASE READ THE GUIDELINES AT THE END OF THE FORM BEFORE COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

THE PROJECT

Please provide a general description of the project that you are seeking funding for:
(continue on additional sheets if necessary, which should be signed and dated)

[Empty text box for project description]

What specifically do you require funding for?

[Empty text box for funding requirements]

How have you identified the need for the project? How will the project help to meet the identified needs?

[Empty text box for need identification and project impact]

What benefits/effects will this project have for the local community?

[Empty text box for community benefits/effects]

If there are ongoing maintenance costs associated with the project how will these be met and who will be responsible?

BUILDING/PHYSICAL WORKS

If the project involves the undertaking of building/physical works, please complete the following. If no building/physical works are involved please go to the 'FINANCIAL DETAILS' section.

Is Planning Permission required for the planned work?

- Yes (please provide details below) No

If no, why do you believe this to be the case?

Has Planning Permission been obtained if needed?

- Yes (please provide details below) I

If yes, please quote Ref No and date awarded:

Have Building Regulations been obtained if needed?

- Yes (please provide details below) I

If yes, please quote Ref No and date awarded:

Is the building owned by the organisation applying? Yes No

If the building is not owned by the organisation, who is it owned by?

If the building is not owned by the organisation, is it rented or leased?

Rented (please give details of the rental agreement period)

Leased (please detail the expiry date of the current lease or if it renews annually)

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Please provide a summary of the financial details relating to your project. Please note that the Community Empowerment Fund cannot support retrospective costs. (Retrospective costs are costs for work already undertaken or equipment that has been purchased prior to a formal grant offer. These are ineligible from this fund and should not be included in any application you may wish to make).

You **must** provide a breakdown of the costs for the whole of the project for which you are applying (not just the grant amount).

Breakdown*	Cost (£)**
Total cost of project	

* Applicants must ensure the detail provided in the previous table corresponds with **the original quotes/estimates submitted with this application**. A minimum of two written quotes must be provided for each item in the above list.

** Applicants must ensure that all costs listed are inclusive of VAT where appropriate

Notes:

- (i) The minimum grant available is £1,000 per application. This can be made up of a number of different items in order to reach this minimum limit. Applications for less than £1,000 will not be considered
- (ii) The maximum grant available is £4,490 per ward councillor (in single member wards), unless the relevant ward councillors have agreed to combine their funding pots (this will need to be discussed with the relevant ward councillors)
- (iii) Organisations may be offered less than the maximum amount of £4,490 (or multiples thereof in multi member wards) if there are multiple applications in individual wards in a single application round. Should this be the case, ward councillors in the relevant ward will be involved in discussions around prioritising which projects should be supported.

- (iv) Approved projects costing up to £4,490 (in single member wards, or multiples thereof in multi member wards) can be fully grant aided if there are no other applications in the same ward in the same round
- (v) Approved projects costing more than £4,490 (in single member wards, or multiples thereof in multi member wards) will need to secure match funding

Amount of grant sought?

How much is being sought from or provided by other sources? (please provide details – this can include funding provided by other organisations or funders, or match funding from the applicant organisation)

DECLARATION

I/we consent to the information provided on this form, and any information subsequently provided by me/us either verbally or in writing, to be processed for the purposes of the assessment of my/our request for assistance by Caerphilly County Borough Council. I/we understand that the information may be disclosed to other department of the Council, and to the Council's external auditors.

I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all answers on this application form are true and accurate. I also confirm that I am authorised to sign this agreement and to act on behalf of the organisation making this application.

Print name:

Signature:

Capacity in which signed:

Date:

We are collecting your personal data (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address and bank account details) in order to process this application for grant funding. Should your application be successful, this information will also be used for the purposes of making payments in relation to your grant award.

If your grant application is successful, your information will be retained for a period of 6 years plus the current year and will also be accessed by the Authority's Corporate Finance

and Audit Teams for the purposes of the administration of the financial affairs of the Authority and audit purposes. If your grant application is unsuccessful, your information will be retained for a period of 2 years.

You have a number of rights in relation to your information, including the right of access to information we hold about you and the right of complaint if you are unhappy with the way that we have handled your request or your information. If you wish to make a request to see your data, or to object to the manner in which it is processed, please contact the Data Protection Officer at the Information Unit on 01443 864322.

Under the Head of Corporate Finance's role as Section 151 Officer, with responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of the Authority, all applications may be subject to review. As the authorised representative of the Section 151 Officer, the Council's Internal Audit Services must be granted access to all financial documents or records held by the applicant in relation to the approved grant funding. Any review may, if considered appropriate, include site visits to premises.

If it is found that the grant has been used for purposes other than those as stated within the application, or that any of the terms and conditions of the grant have not been complied with, the Authority, at its discretion, may withhold or recover part or all of the funding.

Please note:

All organisations receiving financial assistance must:

- Have principles of operation which accord with legislation on employment, health and safety, racial and sexual discrimination, disability discrimination and language for employees and volunteers.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to equal opportunities concerning access, language, culture, gender and ethnic issues.

The following principles will be followed when dealing with applications to the Community Empowerment Fund:

- (i) 50% of the grant amount will be paid when the grant is approved. The remaining 50% will be released on receipt of the necessary financial records to show that the grant released on project approval has been spent in accordance with the original application form submitted. Invoices/receipts and bank statements will be required as evidence. No organisation is able to apply in consecutive financial years.
- (ii) Retrospective costs i.e. costs for work already undertaken or equipment that has been purchased prior to a formal grant offer, are ineligible from this fund and should not be included in any application you wish to make.

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