

Title of report: Introducing a Herefordshire Councillor ward fund grants scheme.

Decision maker: Finance and corporate services

Decision date: 31 March 2026

Report by: Democratic Services Manager

Classification: Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To seek approval to commence a new initiative (for Herefordshire Council) to introduce a new Herefordshire Councillor ward grant scheme which provides each individual ward member with their own personal budget (of £1000) to spend in their own ward area.

Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member:

- a) **Approves the commencement of the new Herefordshire Councillor ward grant scheme which provides each individual ward member with their own personal budget (of £1000), and**
- b) **Provides delegation to all members to commit spend of up to £1000 to allocate to community groups and projects within their Ward area in alignment to the priorities of the Council Plan and in accordance with the grant scheme (set out at Appendix 1 and 3).**

Alternative options

1. To not take forward this new initiative. This is not recommended. The Corporate Services budget, which was agreed by full Council in February 2026, included an ward member fund of £1,000 per to allocate to community groups and projects within their Ward area (aligned to the priorities of the Council Plan).

Key considerations

2. Herefordshire Council is seeking to introduce a Ward Member Grant Fund to enable all ward members to facilitate small scale projects and activities in their respective wards. This is designed to foster closer member involvement in local initiatives being led by their communities. A key principle behind this scheme is to encourage more localised participation in delivering the council's strategic priorities.
3. Initiatives like this are not new. There are several Local Authorities across England running similar schemes. In considering this scheme, for Herefordshire, a sample of other schemes have been reviewed to inform Herefordshire's proposals. Links to the ward member grants schemes run by the Local Authorities in the sample reviewed can be found in the background papers.
4. The purpose of the Herefordshire Council Ward Member Grant Fund is to enable all ward members to allocate funds to facilitate small scale projects and activities in their respective wards. This is designed to facilitate closer involvement in local initiatives being led by their communities. A key principle behind this initiative is to encourage more localised participation in delivering the council's strategic priorities.

How the scheme will work

5. A light touch standard application form has been created (see Appendix A) to assist community groups in applying for funds from your £1000 allocation. This application form will be filled in by community groups and will be used as the basis to assess funding applications. Members will receive applications for spend from £50 up to the full £1000 and given discretion to decide which applications should be funded.
6. Members will be given discretion to decide items of expenditure which will benefit their ward. Two or more members may agree on a joint applications from community groups where funding is sought on projects/initiatives (for example, to fund a joint initiative which covers two or more wards).
7. There will be a transparent audit trail in respect to grant funding decisions members will take under this scheme. Members will be responsible (with support from Democratic Services) for ensuring a record is kept of all spend allocated in connection with this scheme. The rationale for each area of spend will clearly state and explain how it aligns to the council's agreed policies and plans (principally those set out in the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#)).
8. Democratic Services will publish, on the public website, quarterly reports on all ward budget spend during the course of the financial year.

Community impact

9. This grant scheme accords with the core values and objectives set out in the 2024 to 2028 Council Plan. Grants will be allocated, at the discretion of the local ward member, where applications can demonstrate that they will be furthering the following priorities:
- a. **People** - *We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported.*
 - b. **Place** - *We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.*
 - c. **Growth** - *We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county. We want to attract inward investment, create more jobs, enable housing development and provide the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.*
 - d. **Transformation** - *We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.*

Environmental impact

10. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
11. Wherever it is possible to do so members will be strongly encouraged to ensure that applications to this grant scheme help minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and support opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The development of this grant scheme does not conflict with the council's policies to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

Equality duty

12. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
13. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision, and it has been found to have low impact for equality. The checklist can be found at Appendix 2. Due to the potential impact of this project/decision/activity being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Resource implications

14. The Corporate Services budget includes an allocation of £1,000 per Ward Member to allocate to community groups and projects within their Ward area in 2026/27 to align to the priorities of the Council Plan. Payments will be made retrospectively upon receipt of an invoice from the successful applicants. Any unspent funds will not be able to be carried over in the following financial year. This will have the following financial implications:

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
Revenue – allocated at £1k per ward member	£53k	£000	£000	£000	£53k
TOTAL					£53k

Legal implications

21. The legal parameters for Herefordshire Council to introduce the Herefordshire Councillor Ward Grant Scheme (HCWGS) have been established under s236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This allows local Members to discharge the Council's functions in relation to their local electoral Ward.
22. The Localism Act 2011 also grants local authorities a 'General Power of Competence' - expressly giving authorities the power to take the reasonable action they need 'for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area'. This scheme is in alignment with council agreed Council Plan.
23. The members' Code of Conduct applies to members administration of this scheme. Members must declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) or Other Disclosable Interest (ODI). Where there is any doubt over the legality of propriety of the expenditure, the Democratic Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Finance will determine whether the expenditure is lawful and proper, and their decision will be final.
24. Other relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

Risk: Members fund activities/projects in contravention of the policy and guidance set out in Appendix 1.

Mitigations: Members will be encouraged to seek legal advice if they are in any doubt over the items they are considering funding under this scheme.

The policy guidance will be kept under review and updated as the scheme develops over the course of the financial year.

All funding allocations will be openly and transparently published on the council's web-site indicating what projects have been funded and how they align with Council Plan priorities.

Risk: Members spend more than their allocated £1000 p/a limit.

Mitigations: Democratic services will track spend against each ward member. Where the £1000 allocation is reaching its limit, members will be notified of the remaining available spend. There will be no scope given to exceed the allocated amounts. All of the allocated £1000 grant will be required to be spent in this financial year (2026/2027)

25. All risks will be managed at a service level.

Consultees

26. None.

Appendices:

- **Appendix 1:** Introducing A Herefordshire Councillor Ward Fund Grants Scheme.
- **Appendix 2:** Application Form
- **Appendix 3:** Scheme Policy
- **Appendix 4:** Equality Impact Checklist

Background papers:

The sample of other Local Authority schemes reviewed to help inform the Herefordshire Council Scheme can be viewed here:

- I. [Ward Budget Scheme - Malvern Hills District Council](#)
- II. [Councillor Ward Budgets Scheme - Wealden District Council](#)
- III. [Councillors' Divisional Fund Scheme | Worcestershire County Council](#)
- IV. [Locality budgets - Democracy in Devon](#)
- V. [Warwickshire Councillors Grant Scheme](#)