

# **Title of report: Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme**

**Decision maker: Cabinet Member Adult Health and Wellbeing**

**Decision date: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

**Report by:**

**Talk Community Development Lead**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

Following the approval of the outline business case for the community spaces capital grant scheme this is to approve the approach and drawdown of the £2million allocated within the capital budget. The aims of the grant scheme are to:

- a. transform and improve existing/unused buildings for community benefit
- b. create improved spaces for communities to connect and for events and activities to be delivered
- c. increase opportunities for people to access integrated services in their community
- d. target areas of health inequalities and deprivation

# Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The £2M of funding for the community spaces capital grant scheme is approved to progress the programme of work to deliver enhanced community hubs and assets across the county.**
- b) **Authority is delegated to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing to draw down the funding and to take all operational and budgetary decisions to implement the recommended option.**

## Alternative options

1. Do not utilise the funding for this scheme. This is not recommended because the delivery of enhanced community hubs and spaces will support the council's plan and ambitions by enabling residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. It will do this by continuing to develop approaches through Talk Community that build on people's strengths and the many resources they have in their local communities, such as our exceptionally strong voluntary sector.

## Key considerations

2. Funding for a community spaces capital grant scheme was made as part of the 2024/2025 budget to invest into our communities to further develop community hubs and assets across the county.
3. The aims of the grant scheme are to:
  - a. transform and improve existing/unused buildings for community benefit
  - b. create improved spaces for communities to connect and for events and activities to be delivered
  - c. increase opportunities for people to access integrated services in their community
  - d. target areas of health inequalities and deprivation
4. The objectives are to ensure that the projects are multi-purpose and flexible and provide an inclusive space for services and activities for all ages, allowing the community to connect and host a range of activities and services that are used by everyone through an all age/whole family approach. They will also support and enhance the delivery of statutory services at a local level and be located in areas of need, with demonstrated community engagement involvement in the projects.
5. The capital funding is recommended to support communities in developing community hubs and assets that focus on reducing the demand on health and care services. This will, support families and vulnerable people in their communities and, through the delivery of statutory services from the hubs, help to improve the wellbeing of the local population.
6. Allowing communities to develop and lead the community hubs will enable them to identify the needs in the communities and the solutions to meet those needs. The capital funding will allow communities to build on their existing work and networks to support people in their communities to stay and live well.
7. The capital funding allows other community groups across the county to enhance and improve their community facilities.

8. In order to understand and demonstrate the impact of the investment, an outcomes framework will be developed and the community groups will be required to report and measure the provision against these outcomes.

## Community impact

9. This project supports the Council Plan and the People objective: “we will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.”
10. Whilst also recognising that communities across Herefordshire differ tremendously, through this approach we want to develop further preventative family-centred approaches with partners. This will include building up our early help approach by making best use of community spaces which might include Talk Community hubs and children’s centres
11. The project will support the delivery plan objective: support all children to have the best start in life, support all residents to live health lives within their communities and to work with resident and partners to build connected and resilient communities.

## Environmental Impact

12. This decision will have significant impact on some of the environmental factors and success measures that are outlined in the Council Plan

- i. Reduce the council’s carbon emissions
- ii. Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
- iii. Improve the air quality within Herefordshire

13. The aim of the community spaces capital grant scheme is to increase access to services within local communities. This will decrease the amount of travel required across the county to access these services.

14. 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.

15. The environmental impact of this proposal will be considered through the applications for the funding and will include appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This will be managed and reported through the grant conditions and monitoring.

16. The implementation and allocation of the funding will seek to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

## Equality duty

17. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

18. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation through the contractual terms and conditions.

19. As part of the capital bid process all applicants will be requested to assess the equality impact of their project as part of their application. Guidance on EIA's will be provided to the applicants.

## Resource implications

20. The £2 million project budget allocation includes £50,000 to be spent on resources needed to deliver the project with the remainder to be spent on successful grant awards on external community groups. A detailed application process will be designed for capital bids to be submitted and measured against. The grant awards will only be for capital works.

<b>Capital cost of project</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Project management/internal professional fees</i>	20	30	0	0	50
<i>Grant awards</i>	100	1,500	350	0	1,950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1,530</b>	<b>350</b>		<b>2,000</b>

<b>Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Capital Receipt Reserves</i>	120	1,530	350	0	2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1,530</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,000</b>

21. There are no revenue implications associated with this project, as this will be the responsibility of the community organisation running the hub.
22. Where projects require a procurement via external service providers this will be undertaken in line with the council's contract procedure rules to ensure a compliant procurement route and value for money when delivering these projects.

## Legal implications

23. This report appears to simply be a request for allocated capital funds to be released to officers to utilise.
24. The presumption therefore is that the criteria and future decision making in relation to award will be co-ordinated to ensure funds are prioritised to ensure such delivers to the council's plans and strategies and that suitable contractual arrangements will be in place with any third parties to ensure delivery.

## Risk management

25. Project risks will be managed as part of business as usual processes. Anything requiring escalation will be through the Community Wellbeing Transformation Board and if deemed necessary will be recorded on the Community Wellbeing directorate risk register.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Community Interest – if there is insufficient interest from the community for the capital grants, the project may not meet its potential.	Some community interest has already been identified. Engagement with communities through various methods will be undertaken to promote and support the scheme.
Future sustainability of the project following the capital investment.	Sustainability will form part of the grant criteria to ensure that successful bids have considered and planned for future sustainability.
Lack of available appropriate spaces and assets in communities to deliver the recommendations.	The project is linked in with the strategic assets review to ensure it is sighted on potential options. Also a number of Talk Community Hubs are already established so new assets may not be required.
Assets may not have a long term lease or freehold arrangement for the asset which could have an impact if a grant is awarded to enhance the building and it is then not used in the future by the community.	Legal services will support the development of the criteria to ensure this risk is mitigated against.

## Consultees

26. Political Group Consultation held on 15 October. Points raised by attendees listed below;
- The Conservative Party member- Not feasible to renovate a building in complete disrepair. Would be better to utilise buildings that are already in use and need enhancements
  - The Conservative Party member- Submissions don't have to meet every part of the criteria, dependant on area / request.
  - The Green Party member- Set of criteria is particularly stringent.
  - The Green Party member- Wanting to make sure that the locations don't become professional workspaces but remain as part of the community.
  - The Green Party member- Geographical spread across the county is needed but to reach all criteria of application, it may be that people may work across two buildings in the same market town.
  - The Green Party member- Need to match where populations are centred. Still concern around the clashing of bids due to locality and distance to another hub.

- Liberal Democrat member- Concerns around targeting the budget and how it will be distributed across the county. Additionally, not sure how the impact will be assessed before submissions are approved.
- Liberal Democrat member- Suggestion for money from this project be used to provide better services to families and children with complex needs.
- Independents for Herefordshire member- Concerns around opening the funding to everyone across Herefordshire, meaning a lot of bids will come forward that won't receive funding. Process and expectations need to be managed, suggestion of pre-qualification beforehand, necessary to not upset people.
- Independents for Herefordshire member- Concerns that after a few years, the buildings won't be used or the drivers of the groups move on to something else, losing the sustainability. Requirement / guarantees needed for sustainability long term.

## Appendices

None

## Background papers

None

### Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 07/10/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 18/09/2024
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 11/09/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 11/09/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellen	Date <a href="#">Click or tap to enter a date.</a>
Procurement	Carrie Deeley	Date <a href="#">Click or tap to enter a date.</a>
Risk	Jessica Karia	Date <a href="#">Click or tap to enter a date.</a>

Approved by  Click or tap here to enter text. Date  Click or tap to enter a date.

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**