



REPORT of CHIEF EXECUTIVE

to
COUNCIL
10 JULY 2025

COMMUNITY GRANT FUND

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the establishment and operational framework of the new Maldon District Council Community Grant Scheme, "Where Quality of Life Matters," including its funding priorities, tiered structure, eligibility criteria, and assessment methodology.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Members approve the establishment of the "Where Quality of Life Matters Grant Scheme" as detailed in this report, the accompanying Applicant Guidance (**APPENDIX 1**) and the tiered scoring matrix (**APPENDIX 2**).

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 On 3 April 2025 the Council approved the proposed projects to be delivered through the Maldon District's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation and the 100% match funding the Council is providing from its Reserves. This included the delivery of a Community Grant Scheme.
- 3.2 To devise a suitable scheme for delivery, a review of existing funding was undertaken, leading to the proposal for a new, comprehensive grant scheme: "Where Quality of Life Matters".
- 3.3 This scheme aims to streamline and enhance the Council's ability to provide financial assistance to a broad range of local organisations, including community groups, charitable bodies, educational institutions, Town and Parish Councils, and private businesses. By investing directly into impactful projects, the Council seeks to deliver tangible benefits that improve the quality of life for residents and strengthen the local economy.
- 3.4 The "Where Quality of Life Matters Grant Scheme" is designed to fund local initiatives that directly contribute to the four resident, community and business focused Corporate Plan Priorities. Applications will be rigorously assessed based on their alignment with the following four key funding priorities:
- **Supporting Our Communities:** Projects that bring people together, reduce social isolation, and enhance the mental and physical health of residents across all age groups.
 - **Investing In Our District:** Projects that enhance and maintain community facilities, green spaces, and public areas, making them more accessible and

enjoyable for everyone. Investment in culture, improving our offering to residents, businesses and visitors.

- **Growing Our Economy:** Funding to support the purchase of new goods or services, including technology upgrades, marketing efforts, specialist training, or product diversification. Projects to increase visitor numbers who stay longer and spend more
- **Protecting Our Environment:** Projects that contribute to reducing carbon emissions, promoting energy efficiency, enhancing climate resilience, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment within the Maldon District, aligning with the Council's Climate Action Strategy.

- 3.5 **APPENDIX 1** of this report is the proposed applicant guidance, which details the funding priorities, eligibility criteria, what the fund can and cannot support, tiered grant values, application process and deadlines.
- 3.6 All applications will be submitted via an online form, other formats will be available for accessibility purposes. Required supporting documents will vary by tier, with larger grants necessitating more comprehensive evidence, for example, multiple quotes and financial statements. Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant agreement, provide progress reports and a final evaluation, including evidence of expenditure and project outcomes. This robust monitoring ensures accountability and informs future scheme development.
- 3.7 A robust and transparent assessment process is critical to the scheme's success. This will involve the use of tiered scoring matrices (as detailed in **APPENDIX 2**) corresponding to each grant tier:
- **Small Grants (50 points):** Focuses on basic eligibility, community benefit, and feasibility.
 - **Medium Grants (75 points):** Requires more detail on strategic alignment, community impact, project design, financial management, and partnership.
 - **Large Grants (100 points):** Demands comprehensive detail across all criteria, with specific emphasis on strategic partnerships, robust financial planning, and long-term sustainability. The "Partnership & Collaboration" criterion has been specifically adapted to assess private businesses on their community impact and leveraging of resources for public benefit.
- 3.8 The proposed grant panel composition is set out in **APPENDIX 2** and adheres to the Council's Scheme of Financial Delegation for the Lead Specialist Prosperity and Health Integration and Community Manager. Members will be provided with a weekly update on the number of applications received, approved or declined, and the overall scoring achieved by each application. This information will be broken down to Ward level.
- 3.9 If approved, this scheme will be integrated into the Council's new process for 'one front door' for grant applications administered by the Strategy, Partnership and Communications team. Providing a streamlined, single point of access and support for applicants from the Community Grants Officer.
- 3.10 This new grant complements, rather than duplicates, the delivery of the UKSPF and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) by providing a sustained, locally responsive funding mechanism tailored to delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2025 – 2028 priorities and is capable of supporting smaller initiatives that may fall outside the scope or duration of larger, time-limited national programmes.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The proposed scheme, tiered structure and robust assessment criteria are designed to ensure responsible and impactful allocation of funds, delivering significant value for money against the Council's strategic priorities.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 One of the four priorities within the "Where Quality of Life Matters" supports this priority by funding projects that; bring people together, actively reduce social isolation, and enhance the mental and physical health of residents across all age groups. Think about how your initiative can foster connections and wellbeing.

5.2 Investing in our District

- 5.2.1 One of the four priorities within the "Where Quality of Life Matters" supports this priority by funding projects that; enhance and maintain community facilities, green spaces, and public areas, making them more accessible and enjoyable for everyone. We also welcome investment in culture, improving what we offer to residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

5.3 Growing our economy

- 5.3.1 One of the four priorities within the "Where Quality of Life Matters" supports this priority by funding projects that; stimulate local economic growth and aim to increase visitor numbers who stay longer and spend more in the district are also a high priority.

5.4 Protecting our environment

- 5.4.1 One of the four priorities within the "Where Quality of Life Matters" supports this priority by funding projects that; contribute to reducing carbon emissions, promoting energy efficiency, enhancing climate resilience, and actively protecting and improving the natural environment within the Maldon District are crucial. These projects should align with the Council's Climate Action Strategy.

5.5 Delivering good quality services.

- 5.5.1 This grant scheme will be integrated into the Council's new process for 'one front door' for grant applications providing a streamlined, single point of access and support for applicants from the Community Grants Officer.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Positive: Provides a clear, transparent, and structured pathway for applicants to secure vital funding for projects. Offers explicit guidance, defined eligibility, and a predictable assessment process. The tiered approach caters to varying project scales, making funding accessible to a wider range of organisations. For businesses, it provides an avenue to fund projects with community benefit, potentially enhancing their Corporate Social Responsibility profile and local engagement.

Potential Negative: Unsuccessful applicants may experience disappointment. The Council will need to manage expectations and provide clear feedback where appropriate, particularly for larger grant applications.

- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The scheme is designed to promote equality and inclusivity.

Fair Access: Eligibility criteria and application processes are intended to be accessible to a diverse range of organisations, including those working with specific vulnerable groups or in underserved areas.

Targeted Benefit: The funding priority "Supporting Our Communities" actively encourages projects that reduce social isolation and improve health for all age groups, explicitly aiming to address potential inequalities.

Accessibility Commitment: Applicants are required to demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and ensuring their services/projects are accessible to all, embedding this principle throughout the scheme's outcomes.

- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – Clear guidelines, robust tiered assessment process, and emphasis on strategic alignment mitigate the risk of funding inappropriate projects or a perception of unfairness.

All successful applications will undergo financial due diligence checks.

- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** - Members have approved the funding of the scheme from the Council's own reserves. Should Members be minded to continue the scheme, dependant on its success, this would require budgetary commitment from the Council's general funds.

The scheme has the positive impact of potentially leveraging external funding e.g. future UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation or similar, thereby maximising the impact of Council resources.

Represents a strategic investment in the District's social and economic capital, potentially reducing future costs associated with unmet community needs.

- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** - The delivery of the scheme will be undertaken as part of the existing duties of the primary assessors and Community Grants Officer once in post.

- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – Investing in "Where Quality of Life Matters" projects strengthens the unique identity and resilience of communities within the Maldon District, showcasing the benefits of local control over resource allocation. The successful implementation of this scheme provides a robust evidence base for the effectiveness and necessity of strong local governance in delivering strategic priorities for its residents. It positions Maldon District Council as an effective and essential delivery partner for local improvements.

Background Papers:

APPENDIX 1 – 'Where Quality of Life Matters' Applicant Guidance

APPENDIX 2 – 'Where Quality of Life Matters' Tiered Scoring Matrices

[Council 3 April 2025 UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025 / 26 Allocation](#) and [Appendix 1](#)

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