



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE – 23RD JUNE 2022

BRIEFING NOTE: MATTERS RAISED BY THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE

1. UPDATE REPORT ON GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, WELSH CHURCH ACTS FUND, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FUND AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND GRANT SCHEMES

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update in relation to a formal request at the VSLC meeting of 17th March 2022 for a report encompassing the criteria, eligibility, publicity, application process and the amount remaining in the various budgets in relation to grant schemes operated by the Policy & Partnerships Team within the Council. The following provides the requested information for each of the different grant schemes.
- 1.2 In recent months a range of changes have been made to application forms, application criteria and webpages, and consistency across the various documents has been improved, in order to make the application process more straightforward and to provide more clarity for potential applicants on the various grant schemes. We do not make application forms available online as we prefer to have an initial conversation with potential applicants, so we can understand what their proposed project entails and so we can check that it meets the appropriate application criteria. Application forms for the Grants to the Voluntary Sector Fund, the Welsh Church Acts Fund and the Technical Assistance Fund can be requested by emailing communitygrants@caerphilly.gov.uk, and applications forms for the Community Empowerment Fund can be requested by emailing cef@caerphilly.gov.uk. Alternatively, application forms can be requested by calling 01443 866391.

2. Grants to the Voluntary Sector Fund

- 2.1 This grant scheme offers very small grants to voluntary sector organisations and are a contribution towards the running costs of the organisation. Applications for a grant are made via a short application form which is sent to potential applicants via email or by post, and payment is made to successful organisations/individuals on approval. There are no formal grant criteria and instead funding is allocated according to which category a voluntary sector organisation fits into from a set of 'General Criteria' as detailed below:

Category	Criteria	£
a	OAP Association with own building	300
b	OAP Association without own building	150
c	Individuals (amateur) representing Wales at home	130
c1	Individuals (amateur) representing Wales Top Up Grant	120
d	Individuals (amateur) representing Wales abroad	250
e	Jazz Bands	100
f	Choirs	100

Category	Criteria	Value
g	Junior Sports Club (up to 50 members)	100
g1	Junior Sports Club (over 50 members)	200
h	Boys & Girls Clubs/YMCA/Scouts/Cubs/Brownies/Guides/Boys Brigade/Crusaders (up to 50 members)	100
h1	Boys & Girls Clubs/YMCA/Scouts/Cubs/Brownies/Guides/Boys Brigade/Crusaders (over 50 members)	200
l	St John Ambulance (up to 50 members):- Cadets/Badgers	100
j	St John Ambulance (over 50 members):- Cadets/Badgers	200
m	Brass and Silver Bands	400
n	Allotments	100
o	Arts Society	100
p	Writers Clubs	100
q	Theatre Groups	200
r	Community Groups	100
s	Beekeepers Groups	100
t	Garden Clubs	150
u	Tenants & Residents Association	100
v	Websites - Initial design stage only	100
w	Pigeon Clubs	200
x	Clubs run From Churches/Chapels	200
y	Sports Club (up to 50 members)	100
z	Sports Club (over 50 members)	200
aa	Other - up to max	400

- 2.2 If the applicant organisation does not fit into one of the General Criteria categories, the application is referred to the Grants to the Voluntary Sector (GTVS) Panel for consideration, which is made up of Elected Members. They then make a recommendation in relation to whether the support the application and if so, the amount of grant to be awarded.
- 2.3 The annual grant budget for 2022/23 is £195,686. However, the budget is also used to fund applications for Discretionary Rate Relief for community/voluntary organisations, and the estimate of these costs for 2022/23 is £187,367, which leaves an in-year balance of £8,319. There is a brought forward balance of £110,882.67 from previous years, giving a combined total of £119,201.67 to be used to fund applications in 2022/23.
- 2.4 In 2019 a number of suggestions were made on behalf of the voluntary sector which related to the historical underspends on this budget, improving publicity of the grant scheme, making the application process simpler and reducing the number of General Criteria categories. The GTVS Panel considered these suggestions at their meeting on 19th December 2019 and recommended maintaining the current application process and General Criteria categories. They did however recommend that the current level of awards (which had remained unchanged since 2015) be increased by 10% from 1st April 2020 and in subsequent years to review annually in line with inflation.
- 2.5 However, subsequent to this meeting it was agreed by Cabinet (as part of the Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme) to undertake a wider review of the funding that the Council gives to the voluntary sector, and therefore these increases were put on hold until the outcomes of this review were available. Due to the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic this review has seen limited progress to date.
- 2.6 The governance for the GTVS grants is that where applications can be approved under the General Criteria, these awards are made automatically and are signed off under delegated powers by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer and then reported to the next available GTVS Panel meeting for information only.

- 2.7 Where applications fall under the 'Other' category, applications are reported to the GTVS Panel as described above for a recommendation, which is then signed off under delegated powers by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer. All reports to the GTVS Panel are published on the Council website and can be accessed here [Browse meetings - Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](#).
- 2.8 Following the recent Council elections, when the GTVS Panel next meets (14th July 2022) Members will be given a presentation on the existing criteria and the opportunity to make recommendations on any changes they see fit. Any changes will need Cabinet approval before they can be implemented.
- 2.9 Information on this grant scheme is available on the Council website [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#). The information on the webpage has recently been updated to include the grant criteria, to make it clearer for applicants in relation to the grant amount they are likely to receive when making an application under the General Criteria.

3. Welsh Church Acts Fund

- 3.1 The Welsh Church Acts Fund (WCAF) is available to churches, chapels, places of public worship, community organisations and charities operating in Caerphilly county borough. It provides support to these organisations in the form of capital grants for the repair or refurbishment of buildings and the purchase of equipment to support the aims of the organisation and meet the identified needs of the local community. It is intended that projects supported will have a lasting effect on the communities in which these organisations and buildings are located. In addition, limited support may be provided for 'exceptional' individuals in relation to the advancement of education.
- 3.2 The WCAF was established from the proceeds and assets of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales. These assets were distributed evenly amongst the former county councils in Wales, and then divided between the Welsh Unitary Authorities when they were formed in 1996. The WCAF is an independent charitable trust which is managed by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC).
- 3.3 There are a number of 'Charitable Purposes' for which the fund may be applied, and each Unitary Authority has the flexibility and discretion to decide on how the fund is managed and allocated locally according to needs and circumstances, providing it is in line with the Charitable Purposes (see Appendix 1).
- 3.4 Within Caerphilly county borough, the Council's Cabinet has approved local application criteria for the grant scheme (see Appendix 2), and in line with this criteria the following types of projects can be supported:
- (i) The restoration or maintenance of any place of public worship and community or village halls
 - (ii) Organisations working to address disadvantage for people on low incomes or those who are sick or disabled
 - (iii) The provision of services or facilities by organisations promoting the welfare of elderly persons
 - (iv) The provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation which are available to members of the public at large, with a view to improving the lives of individuals. This can include the provision of playing fields, sporting facilities, parks, open spaces and centres/halls for meetings, lectures, classes or training
 - (v) The advancement of the education and public benefit of residents by promoting their interest in aesthetic, architectural, historical or scientific matters relating to Wales

- 3.5 Applicant organisations are required to evidence the need for their project or activity and the lasting benefits it will provide for the local community. Applications must be made on a formal application form, which is sent to potential applicants via email or by post. Payment is made in arrears on the submission of invoices and bank statements to evidence spend, and payments are usually processed within 7-10 days. Staged payments can be made if required, and this will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.6 Within Caerphilly county borough the maximum WCAF grant available to any organisation is £5,000. Approved projects where the total cost is less than £5,000 can be awarded a grant of up to 100% of the project costs. Larger projects (costing over £5,000) can receive a grant of up to the maximum amount, with match funding being provided from the organisations' own funds or other match funding sources.
- 3.7 For projects which involve the refurbishment, development, extension, or construction of land and/or buildings, applicants should be the owner of the land and/or buildings or have a formal agreement in place with the landlord that the work can be undertaken. In addition, where the landlord is Caerphilly County Borough Council and a private contractor will be undertaking the work, a lease or license will be required within a minimum of six years left to run when the application is submitted.
- 3.8 The Council receives an annual allocation from MCC of around £60,000, depending on the prevailing investment conditions. For 2022/23 this figure is £57,760, and in addition there is a brought forward balance of £105,175 from previous years, resulting in a total available budget of £162,935 for 2022/23.
- 3.9 The governance for the WCAF grants is that where applications meet the application criteria they are recommended for approval by officers and signed off under delegated powers by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer. Awards are then reported to the GTVS Panel meeting for information only.
- 3.10 Significant changes have been made to the application form recently, in order to make it easier to apply. In addition, the webpage on the Council website has been updated and the Charitable Purposes and Caerphilly county borough specific application criteria have been added to make it easier for potential applicants to ascertain whether their proposed project meets the criteria. The webpage can be found here [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#).

4. Community Empowerment Fund

- 4.1 The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) was created in 2021/22 to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. Key to this is the involvement and sponsorship of local Ward 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.
- 4.2 The Council's 2021 residents' survey 'The Caerphilly Conversation' sought views on what the CEF could be spent on, with seven priority areas emerging from the feedback. Therefore, these seven priority areas have formed the basis of 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 well-being
 - Activities for young people/educational activities (non-statutory)
 - Initiatives that promote and encourage community safety
 - Supporting community groups to establish
- 4.3 Applicant organisations are required to evidence the need for their project or activity and the lasting benefits it will provide for the local community, and applications must be made on a formal application form.

- 4.4 For capital projects which involve the refurbishment, development, extension or construction of land and/or buildings, applicants should be the owner of the land and/or buildings or have a formal agreement in place with the landlord that the work can be undertaken. In addition, where the landlord is Caerphilly County Borough Council and a private contractor will be undertaking the work, a lease or licence will be required within a minimum of six years left to run when the application is submitted.
- 4.5 The Council's annual budget setting in 2022/23 includes a £341,120 funding allocation for the grant scheme, to support community-led initiatives that complement and support those provided through public services. It should be noted that the CEF allocation of £341,120 for Caerphilly county borough is allocated to wards and not directly to local Ward Members. The allocation equates to an amount of £4,940 per Ward Member.
- 4.6 Applications must be made on a formal application form, which is sent to potential applicants via email or by post. If an application is successful, 50% of the grant awarded is paid on project approval. Organisations then have to provide evidence that this has been spent (by providing copies of invoices and bank statements) before the remaining 50% grant is released.
- 4.7 The maximum amount available to any organisation/community group is £4,940. Approved projects where the total cost is less than £4,940 can be awarded a grant of up to 100% of the project costs. Larger projects costing over £4,940 can receive a grant of up to the maximum amount, with match funding being provided from the organisations' own funds or other match funding sources.
- 4.8 Due to each Ward Member having an allocation of £4,940, organisations may be offered less than the maximum amount if there are multiple applications in individual wards in a single application round. Should this be the case, Ward Members in the relevant ward will be involved in discussions around prioritising which projects should be supported. Ward Members can also choose to merge their ward pots with other Members. There is no requirement for them to do this and will need to be discussed with the relevant Ward Members on a project by project basis as required.
- 4.9 Applications should be for a minimum amount of £1,000, and this can be made up of a number of different items in order to reach this minimum amount. Applications for less than £1,000 will not be considered. There are set application rounds for the CEF grant scheme and closing dates will be communicated via Ward Members. For information on the Ward Members for each ward, please visit this webpage [Your Councillors \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](http://YourCouncillors.caerphilly.gov.uk).
- 4.10 In addition to the £341,120 detailed above there was an underspend of £229,484 in the CEF budget in 2021/22 due to the grant scheme going live later in the year. Discussions are ongoing with Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Council's Cabinet in terms of how this underspend will be allocated among the new electoral wards.
- 4.11 The governance for CEF grants is that a small panel of officers meets to discuss the applications received and makes recommendations for approval and the amount of funding to be awarded. These recommendations are then signed off under delegated powers by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer. A summary of awards made are reported to Cabinet on a six monthly basis.
- 4.12 Some changes have been made to the application form recently, in order to make it easier to apply. In addition, the webpage on the Council website has been updated and the criteria for the grant scheme added, to make it easier for potential applicants to ascertain whether their proposed project meets the criteria. The webpage can be found here [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#).

5. Technical Assistance Fund

- 5.1 The Technical Assistance Fund (TAF) is designed to help voluntary organisations and community groups in Caerphilly county borough to meet the costs of pre-application professional fees, leases and technical or legal costs, in relation to capital projects connected to land and/or buildings. Awards are made on the basis that the organisation will make their best endeavours to obtain funding for the project if a TAF grant is approved. Applications must be made on the appropriate grant application form.
- 5.2 The criteria for the grant scheme are as follows:
- the application for professional fees must relate to a capital project
 - applications must show clear evidence that the project will result in wider community benefit
 - applicants must provide proof that the owner of the land and/or property affected by the project has agreed to the project
 - any known constraints on the development
- 5.3 For 2022/23 the budget for this grant scheme is £11,619. The maximum grant available is up to £4,000 plus VAT (at 20%), a maximum amount of £4,800, although applications for lesser amounts will be viewed more favourably. The Council's Property Division/Legal Service will normally carry out the work unless there is a strong case for employing other professionals.
- 5.4 Applications must be made on a formal application form, which is sent to potential applicants via email or by post. Payment is made in arrears on the submission of invoices and bank statements to evidence spend, and payments are usually processed within 7-10 days. Staged payments can be made if required, and this will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.5 The governance for TAF grants is that a small panel of officers meets to discuss the applications received and makes recommendations for approval and the amount of funding to be awarded. These recommendations are then signed off under delegated powers by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer.
- 5.6 Information on this grant scheme is available on the Council website [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#). The information on the webpage includes the application criteria for the grant scheme.

6. Publicity

- 6.1 Each of the above grant schemes has a separate webpage on the Council's website [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#), along with a number of other grant schemes available to the voluntary sector, although not all of them are operated by the Council. Each of the webpages have been updated recently to include relevant information and the appropriate grant criteria, as this is different for each of the individual grant schemes. Potential applicants can view the criteria to ensure that their proposed project meets the relevant criteria, before requesting an application form. Council officers will work with potential applicants to ensure that the application process is as straightforward and simple as possible.
- 6.2 GAVO is aware of all the Council grant schemes available for the voluntary sector and can provide advice and assistance to organisations in terms of applying for a grant. Assistance is also available from the Council's Caerphilly Cares team (01443 811490 or caerphillycares@caerphilly.gov.uk).
- 6.3 In addition, the following are suggested as ways in which the Council and its partners can improve the publicity of and increase awareness of these grant schemes:
- Use of volunteering platforms (GAVO etc.) using their contact/distribution list
 - Direct contact with groups we've built relationships with over the years.

- Links with our Communications Teams to help promote (they also have links with community groups that have Facebook pages etc. to get the information posted on their individual pages)
- Sharing on voluntary sector groups and local community social media sites
- Discussion with current groups/individuals who have accessed grants in the past to find out how they found out about them to build on this
- Discussion with groups to find out where they normally look for grants – find out if there are sites, places that they use, and whether or not we are promoting on these
- Leaflets, posters (not date specific but general so they don't go out of date too soon), social media activity to promote grants – are there particular cycles of when funding becomes available that there could be targeted campaigns?
- Our own website – again is there a particular time of the year that the information could be highlighted on the front page?
- Visits to community centres and places where groups meet to promote the grants
- Presentations, online sessions advertised - inviting people to attend sessions to find out about grants and availability
- Produce a promotional video or animation – this could be emailed out to contacts and used on social media feeds
- Briefing sessions to Councillors about grants available for them to promote in their surgeries/sessions they have with residents
- Internal promotion to staff – they may be part of a voluntary sector group and could promote the grants to these group(s)
- Work with schools to send messages out on their social platforms – schools have various ways of contacting parents and may be willing to send out information on grants
- Leaflets in libraires, other Council connections (housing, Social Services etc.) – if people are out and about in the community, they may be aware of groups that they could promote the information to and may also be aware of social media groups
- Leaflets at places where people go socially – cafes, theatres etc.
- Use Dewis to advertise online