

Report to Council Leader

Subject: Gedling Community Grant provision

Date: 22nd January 2026

Author: Director of Transformation

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To request approval to start formal consultation with Gedling Borough councillors and RCAN in relation to changes to the current Members' Pots and grant awards, to enable the creation of a Community Grant scheme, governed by a cross-party group of councillors, that positively impacts outcomes for residents in the borough.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision, because whilst the proposals will have an impact on all wards in the borough, they do not have a financial impact that is above £500,000.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) The Council Leader approves the start of consultation with Gedling Borough Councillors in relation to proposed changes to Member's Pots to create a Gedling Borough Grant Scheme.

1 Background

1.1 The Council currently operates a small number of revenue funded grant streams and related activities. A breakdown of these is set out below:

Grant type	Budget 25/26	Outcomes
Members pots	£41,000 (£1000 per councillor)	No defined outcomes, discretionary awards made by councillors. 217 awards made in 2024/25, average spend was £290.46. The lowest was £3.94 and highest was £2,200.
Citizens Advice	£25,000	Independent, confidential advice. Target 1000 Gedling residents per annum (350 in Gedling, 650 main office). In addition, there is a £15,000 contribution from Housing for benefits advice making the total grant £40,000.
Phenomenal Futures	£10,000	Free, confidential counselling services to individuals
The Play Forum	£5000	Delivery of craft play activities against key themes to community partners and at events.
RCAN	£2,500	Parish conference – delivered annually
Children and Youth Activities budget	£12,700	A specific funding pot for allocation towards activities for children and young people
Total Base Budget or Service Areaa	£96,200	Total base Budget for Service Area
Contribution from Housing Prevention	15,000	A contribution from the Housing Prevention Grant made to Citizens Advice
Total Grants Paid	£111,200	

1.2 The Council's grant spend is discretionary. The Council must deliver £733k of savings in 26/27 and a further £281k in 27/28 to deliver a balanced and lawful revenue budget. As a result, all discretionary spend is being examined to determine whether there are opportunities for improved outcomes to be delivered at a lower cost.

1.3 The listed controllable grant funding to the Council excludes one off external funded grants or grants administered by the Council on behalf of other organisations over which it has no control (e.g. Disabled Facilities Grant, Energy Grants).

1.4 In addition to mainstream grant awards (which have grant agreements in place), included in the table at 1.1 is £12,700 of discretionary budgeted spend for Children and Youth Activities, which is recommended to come within the

scope of any future grant scheme to ensure a cohesive approach to the allocation of community orientated funding and to maximise the positive impact to Gedling residents.

- 1.5 While the budgeted spend for 2025/26 is £111,200 in total, this includes a £15,000 one off allocation from reserves towards the funding for Citizen's Advice which is no longer available for 26/27 and beyond.
- 1.6 In addition to the need to address the budgetary pressure, there are several opportunities to improve the way grants are currently administered, to address the following issues, however after the governments fair funding review this could potentially be funded through the ring-fenced homelessness prevention grant.
 - There is currently a high administration effort for small amounts of spend, particularly in relation to the Members' Pots, where the volume of individual transactions is high and every transaction has to be raised and logged, processed and accounted for, impacting resources in the Communications and Engagement Team and the Finance team. With new demands coming into the Council from 2026/27 onwards, including Simpler Recycling requirements and Local Government Reorganisation, productive time needs to be maximised.
 - For some funding, including Members' Pots, outcomes are not captured (and it would not be cost effective to do so given the likely administrative overhead required). This means that the impact of this spend is unknown.
 - There are opportunities to improve targeting of grants to support community needs, and to ensure that grant spent is not only transparent, but determined against a set of principles that are created with involvement from all councillors.
 - There is some potential duplication to grant giving with county grants and other funding sources, also available covering the Gedling area, including the launch of a new Greater Carlton Sports and Community Grant fund that is due in Autumn 2026.
 - Finally, there are existing, regular engagement mechanisms in place between the Council and local parish councils, including regular Parish Clerk meetings with council officers. Additionally, engagement with parish councils will be a feature of forthcoming local government reorganisation plans, and in a dynamic environment that requires a more continual form of engagement, the value of an annual conference may be limited.

1.7 Some elements of the current spend do show positive outputs and / or outcomes. In particular, Citizen's Advice has been able to consistently demonstrate positive economic impacts for Gedling residents that significantly exceed the cost of the grant that is paid and Phenomenal Futures are able to evidence that there is increasingly complex service demand. It is critical that in considering making changes to current grant provision, consideration is given to the impact of change on Gedling's communities.

2. **Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to split the current grant arrangements into two different types of grant funding streams as follows, with a small reduction in overall provision to support the delivery of the essential wider efficiencies that the Council must make. If approved following consultation, two streams would be:

- a. Commissioned services provided via a grant agreement.
- b. A Community Grant Fund, enabling voluntary and community organisations to bid into a single pot, against funding criteria that will be defined as a result of this consultation, and overseen by a cross party group of councillors (Gedling Community Grant Board).

2.2 The commissioned grant funded services that would continue are:

Citizen's Advice – with a £40,000 allocation for 26/27, £25,000 of which would be funded through the Council's general revenue budget and a further £15,000 funded through the now ring-fenced Homelessness Prevention Fund for one year, with an assessment made after year 1 as to the effectiveness of the preventative spend. This would mean no change in 26/27.

Phenomenal Futures - with a £10,000 allocation for 26/27, funded through the Council's general revenue budget. This would mean no change in 26/27.

The Play Forum – with a £5000 allocation for 26/27, funded through the Council's general revenue budget. This would mean no change in 26/27.

A saving of £2500 is proposed through ceasing to fund the annual Parish Conference and the related funding to **RCAN**.

2.3 It is proposed that Members' Pots (£41,000) and the current Children and Youth Activities budget (£12,700), together totalling £53,700 are removed and replaced instead with a £40,000 Community Grant Fund against which clear criteria are defined for organisations to bid on an annual basis for funding that benefits the borough's communities. This would deliver a saving of £13,700 in 26/27, balancing a contribution towards the overall savings figure that the Council needs to find, with the continued desire of the Council to support the community and voluntary sector locally.

3. Consultation

3.1 In the first instance, and before detailed design of the fund takes place, all members, and RCAN, will be consulted about the changes. The consultation will welcome feedback from all parties in relation to:

1. The proposals and rationale for change.
2. Alternative suggestions for the Council to consider.
3. Suggestions on the scope of the grant fund.
4. Suggestions on grant criteria and grant amounts (minimum and maximum).
5. Suggestions on the construct of the cross party panel.

3.2 A direct consultation will commence with an email to all councillors, and contact with RCAN, on Thursday 22nd January 2026 and will close on Wednesday 11th February 2026 (21 days).

3.3 During the consultation period, each political group, and RCAN will separately be asked if they would like to meet to discuss the proposals and to capture feedback on what is proposed, and on the shape of any potential future grant scheme.

3.4 All parties will also be given the opportunity to send feedback by email, or to meet one to one to discuss the proposals, should they wish to do so.

3.5 All consultation feedback received will be logged and responded to and will be considered in the proposals that are taken forward for decision. A summary of the feedback received will be shared with Cabinet members ahead of a final decision being made and, if a grant scheme is approved, will be used to inform the later design of it.

3.6 It is anticipated that following consultation, a decision will be taken by Cabinet at its Budget Cabinet meeting on Thursday 19th February and, if it is decided to proceed with the proposed Grant Scheme, detailed design will then be subject to a further approval thereafter.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 There are alternative options available to the Council. These, and the rationale for not recommending them, are set out below.

Option	Rationale
Do nothing – make no changes to current	At a time when the Council faces a budget deficit unless savings are delivered, it is a requirement

arrangements.	to consider all discretionary spend. Doing nothing would not deliver the savings necessary to balance the Council's revenue budget – and could put additional pressure and strain on core, essential service delivery, leading to reduced quality of services.
Remove all grant funds – do not replace with alternatives.	This is not considered a viable option on the basis that some of the existing grant funded activity clearly supports vulnerable residents at times of acute financial and / or emotional hardship. While this option would deliver a more significant saving, the detrimental impact that it would have on the borough's most vulnerable residents would be disproportionate.
Retain the commissioned services and remove Members' Pots in their entirety with no replacement.	This option was considered, but was not considered viable on the basis of the community impact that would be lost as a result of an outright removal of funding.
Consider an application process for the current Member's pots.	This was considered but is considered too administratively burdensome to deliver within existing resources, and would lead to increased costs for the Council if current funding amounts and volumes were maintained.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Existing Base Budget for the service area in 2025/26 is £96,200 as set out in the table in 1.1, If the proposed approach is agreed, the budget for 2026/27 will be £80,000 a saving of £16,200 will be made against the Council's revenue budget in 2026/27. In addition a £15,000 contribution from the Homelessness Prevention Grant will be made to Citizens Advice to ensure the total grant remains at £40,000 for 2026/27.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 If proposals to deliver a new grant scheme are agreed, the Council will need to ensure a fair and transparent application process, with clear criteria and will need to assess compliance with the Subsidy Act.

6.2 All awarded grants will need a legally compliant grant agreement with appropriate reporting and monitoring provisions to ensure compliance with legal requirements of the Council's Constitution.

6.3 Further consideration will be required in relation to services commissioned under grant agreements to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 This proposal seeks to minimise negative impacts of budgetary reductions by protecting services to Gedling's most vulnerable residents while ensuring a transparent and fair grant scheme is created to enable support to be directed to where it can deliver greatest impact.

There are no direct equalities implications as a result of this paper, however an Equality Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken in the design of any new grant scheme resulting from the consultation process.

8. Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

8.1 There are no adverse impacts on environmental sustainability as a result of this paper.

9. Appendices

9.1 None

10. Background Papers

10.1 None.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

11.1 To ensure that Gedling's grant funded activity is transparent, value for money and maximises positive impact while operating within the available revenue budget of the Council.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by: Tina Adams

Date: 20/01/2026

Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: Francesca Whyley

Date: 19th January 2026

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer

