

Report to Council Leader

Subject: Gedling Community Grant provision

Date: 30th March 2026

Author: Director of Transformation

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To request approval to implement minor changes to grant funding for 2026/2027 following consultation with affected parties in January and February 2026.

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:

The Council Leader approves the following grants for 2025/26:

- 1) A one-year grant to Citizen's Advice totalling £40,000. This is no change to the previous year.
- 2) A one-year grant to Phenomenal Futures totally £10,000. This is no change to the previous year.
- 3) A one-year grant to the Play Forum totalling £5,000. This is no change to the previous year.
- 4) Removal of the £2500 grant provided to RCAN for the Parish Conference.
- 5) Retention of member's pots and a minimum spend cap of £200 per allocation of funding to ensure administrative efficiency, with no change to the overall amount that each member has available to spend overall.
- 6) Authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to review and update the Member's Pot Scheme to reflect the limit and provide clarity around governance in the process.
- 7) The retention of the Children's and Youth Activity budget within the Communications and Engagement team, with decisions on spend to be made in liaison with the relevant portfolio holder/s, considering the Council's capacity for delivery alongside the funding available.

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 Area	£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 and the Council's overall revenue budget continues to be placed under significant pressure. In January 2026, a consultation was launched to consider making potential changes to grant funding, with the rationale for change set out below.

2. Rationale for considering changes

2.1 There were several reasons for considering changes to grant funding, as follows:

- The 25/26 spend on Citizen's Advice included a one off £15,000 allocation from reserves that is not available in 2026/27.
- The high effort of administration 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.
- Outputs and outcomes from some spend not being consistently measured.

2.2 It was proposed to split the current grant arrangements into two different types of grant funding streams, with a small reduction in overall provision to support the delivery of the essential wider efficiencies that the Council must make.

- 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).

2.3 The commissioned grant funded services that were recommended to 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 was proposed through ceasing to fund the annual Parish Conference and the related funding to **RCAN**.

2.4 It was proposed that Members' Pots (£41,000) and the current Children and Youth Activities budget (£12,700), together totalling £53,700 were to be 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.

3. Consultation

3.1 Consultation commenced on Thursday 22nd January and closed on 11th February, with some additional comments accepted after the consultation closure. Feedback was specifically sought on:

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 All councillors were asked for their views by email and each group in scope of the proposed future funding or changes was also contacted directly.

3.3 In total 19 emails were received and six meetings held about the proposals. 14 councillors responded (two on behalf of their group), one parish councillor responded, and the remaining comments came from grant recipients.

Of all the responses received:

- Two respondents raised objections to the proposals in relation to the external grant funding. One of these suggested a lesser amount for Citizen's Advice and the other raised concerns about the proposal to remove funding from RCAN.
- 2 respondents were supportive of the proposals overall.
- 1 respondent was neutral about the proposals overall.
- 16 respondents raised specific concerns about elements relating to members' pots and were not supportive of this element of the proposals.

3.4 By far the biggest concerns raised related to the proposed removal of members' pots and replacement with a Grant fund. The most frequently cited concerns were:

- Loss of local influence / representation in the allocation of awards.
- The importance of local knowledge to determine where money is best spent.

- The ability of smaller organisations and particularly volunteer led organisations to bid for funding that may be larger in scale and require some administrative effort.
- The potential loss of small-scale community events as a result.
- Concerns about the composition of the grant panel, with recommendations made including consideration of rural / urban balance, political representation and size of awards.

3.5 A higher cap on existing member's pots was suggested by several respondents as being a way to find a compromise between administrative effort and retention of local benefit

4. Recommendation

4.1 The Council has listened carefully to all comments made and as a result is proposing a more limited change than first proposed. It is recommended that following consultation, the Leader approves:

- No changes to the awards to Citizen's Advice, Phenomenal Futures and the Play Forum.
- The removal of the £2500 grant for the Parish Conference with RCAN. This is because Gedling Borough Council will no longer exist from 2028, with a shadow authority likely to be in place from May 2027. As a result, there will be a need to be early consideration as to how parishes across a wider geography can be brought together as part of planning for Local Government Re-organisation rather than operating a conference for Gedling alone.
- The Council does not implement a Council wide Community grant scheme and instead refines the existing Members' Pots to include a minimum spend per allocation of £200 to balance the desire for local impact with the reality of administrative overheads within the Council. This would enable up to 205 local awards (£41,000 / 200) per year.
- The retention of the Children's and Youth Activity budget within the Communications and Engagement team, with decisions on spend to be made in liaison with the relevant portfolio holder/s, taking into account the Council's capacity for delivery alongside the funding available.

4.2 If the above proposals are accepted it is proposed that authority be given to the Monitoring officer to update the Member's Pot Scheme to reflect the minimum threshold and provide clarity around the governance arrangements for administering the Member's Pots to ensure there are no conflicts of interest.

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, with a one off top up of £15,000 coming from one off reserves. If the

originally proposed approach was to be agreed, a saving of £16,200 would have been made against the Council's revenue budget in 2026/27 and an additional £15,000 contribution from the Homelessness Prevention Grant would have been made to Citizens Advice to meet the proposed £40,000 total.

The updated proposal after consultation means that a smaller saving of £2500 will be achieved based on the removal of the grant to RCAN. The Homelessness Prevention Grant will be used to part offset the Citizen's Advice costs by £15,000.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 All grant awards will be subject to consideration under the Subsidy Act. This work is underway to ensure awards can take place at the start of the new financial year, subject to approval.
- 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. This work is underway, subject to approval.
- 6.3 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 There are no direct equalities implications as a result of this paper. The range of funding proposed offers benefits to a wide range of individuals across all protected characteristics.

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 Leader's Report – January 2026.

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:

Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: Francesca Whyley

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer