



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes
Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet
Member for Leisure and Culture

SK Community Fund

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund which include amendments to grant levels and eligibility criteria. The proposed changes will allow for the Fund to re-launch for the 2026/27 financial year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Review the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund and provide comment.
2. Recommend to Cabinet that the delegation for decision making by the Chairs and, where necessary, Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be provided and that the proposed changes to the Fund's criteria are approved to allow for re-launch of the Fund for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Is this a Key Decision? | Yes |
| Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? | No |
| What are the relevant corporate priorities? | Connecting Communities |
| Which wards are impacted? | All Wards |

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 For 2026/27 the total for the SK Community fund is £200k which includes a growth bid of £100k which was approved as part of the 2026/27 budget report by Council at their meeting on 26th February 2026.
- 1.2 Eligibility and funding criteria for the 2026/27 scheme is outlined in this report and associated appendices

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report. The SK Community Fund is a discretionary scheme and the Council is able to determine appropriate eligibility criteria for both the Small Grants Fund and the Large Grants Fund.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.4 The SK Community Fund has been developed to support the communities of South Kesteven by means of making funding available to civil society groups and organisations within the district. The Fund is accessible to all within the eligibility criteria. It offers opportunity for groups within the community to advance opportunities and foster good relations between people who share a protected

characteristic and those who don't by supporting buildings, events and activities that bring people together.

- 1.5 The SK Community Fund is further supported by LotterySK and it is acknowledged that for some groups, particularly within faith communities, this creates a barrier to application. In such circumstances the Community Engagement Team will work with the group to determine alternative sources of funding and provide any necessary support.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The SK Community Fund has been in place since 2015. It is distributed, via application, to voluntary and community sector groups across four funding rounds each financial year.
- 2.2. The fund is currently allocated across two schemes:
 - **Small Grants Scheme: £100 - £2,000**
This is available to smaller groups with a maximum financial resource of £10,000. Groups can apply for 100% of project costs to the maximum £2,000
 - **Projects and Events Fund: £500 - £5,000**
Groups can apply for up to 80% of project/event costs to a maximum of £5,000. A minimum of 10% match funding is required, and the remaining 10% contribution can be in-kind contribution and volunteer time if relevant to the project or event.
- 2.3. Presently, the SK Community Fund supports capital expenditure only.
- 2.4. To date £855,651 of grants have been provided to Parish and Town Councils, voluntary, community, faith and sports-related groups across South Kesteven. The SK Community Fund is often used by groups to secure match funding for larger projects.
- 2.5. Decisions to fund applications are recorded and kept in a Decision Note, and details of awarded grants are published annually on the Council's website. This includes detail on the members of the panel present, any conflicts of interest and the reasons that applications are supported or not.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. A growth bid of £100k was agreed by Full Council on 26 February 2026 increasing the SK Community Fund to a total of £200,000. As it will be important for the Council

to ensure this amount of money is used to good effect and expended within the financial year, a review has taken place. It is also timely to refresh the governance arrangements around the SK Community Fund given that these have been in place since 2015.

3.2. It is therefore proposed that the Small Grants Fund remains in place, continuing to operate in the same manner save for two changes:

- To be eligible for support the maximum financial resource held by a voluntary or community group should be reduced to £5,000. This would ensure that funding is targeted to those community groups that have a genuine need and that newly established groups can be supported.
- The eligibility criteria be amended to include items requiring revenue funding. Small, newly formed groups often require financial assistance with basic running costs until they are established, e.g. utility bills, venue hire, office supplies, insurance premiums, volunteer training costs etc. Funding provided would be for one-off support and groups would be required to become self-sufficient as they become established.

3.3. Further information relating to the eligibility criteria, funding categories and making an application to the Small Grants Fund can be found at Appendix A and Appendix B.

3.4. It is proposed that a Large Grants Fund is introduced to replace the existing Projects and Events Fund with the maximum grant value being increased. It is further proposed that the groups and organisations eligible to apply should have financial resources of no more than £100,000. The minimum grant available would be £2,000 and the maximum £10,000 for community events and £20,000 for projects which support parish and community assets. Match funding of a minimum of 10% would be required against all large grants and applications could include in-kind contributions and/or volunteer time where appropriate and relevant.

3.5. The Large Grants Fund for projects which support parish and community assets would be open to applications from:

- Constituted voluntary or community groups or clubs
- Registered charities
- Charitable incorporated organisations (CIO)
- Community interest companies (CIC) and companies limited by guarantee
- Schools or PTFAs (but only for projects that benefit communities beyond the school and not for education costs or projects that only benefit the school itself)
- Scout, Guides, Cadet groups (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the group)

- Sports clubs (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the club)
 - Town and parish councils
- 3.6. Grants would be for projects with an expected lifespan of at least five years and would be available under the headings of:
- New buildings and repairs/refurbishment to existing buildings
 - Land, outdoor space, playgrounds, sports grounds, sports equipment
 - Indoor space
 - Community events and activities
- 3.7. Further information relating to the eligibility criteria, funding categories and making an application to the Small Grants Fund can be found at Appendix C and Appendix D.
- 3.8. It is further proposed that this element of the SK Community Fund also be opened to cover both revenue and capital costs. Whilst it is proposed that staffing costs remain excluded, allowing fees for sessional workers would enable the Fund to continue to support event costs.
- 3.9. Applications for recurring events would be required to have a significantly new or different aspect and applicants must also be able to evidence how such events will become self-sustaining.
- 3.10. As detailed within this report it is proposed that the Community Fund covers the provision of revenue and capital funding.
- 3.11. Revenue funding would be provided for activities where there is no lasting asset including events, performances and activities, or to cover the set-up costs of an organisation for example. Applicants would be expected to demonstrate the benefit that such activity supports the Council's priority of 'Connecting Communities'.
- 3.12. Costs would also be considered for activities such as fun days, coaching sessions, fetes, carnivals and festivals. Similarly, running costs for a group that puts on positive activities, e.g. venue hire, office/printing costs, volunteer expenses could be covered. Groups would however need to become self-supporting as the SK Community Fund does not support costs year after year.
- 3.13. Other activities could include the creation of social opportunities that help to prevent isolation and loneliness, therapeutic sessions such as community and dementia choirs, movement classes for older people, and the costs of training volunteers in topics such as safeguarding, data protection, first aid and food hygiene. All would help the voluntary and community sector to become self-sufficient.

- 3.14. The SK Community Fund currently has an Awarding Panel made up of the Chairs of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In the absence of a Scrutiny Chair, the relevant Vice-Chair is invited to attend Panel meetings.
- 3.15. No changes are proposed to the make-up of the Awarding Panel, but an appropriate delegation will need to be established and agreed by Cabinet.
- 3.16. In support of the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund, the Community Engagement Team will continue to host funding workshops and will also offer support through funding surgeries to take groups through the process of application.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Fund's criteria could remain unchanged. The proposed amendments, however, allow for increased opportunities which would greatly benefit civil society within South Kesteven.
- 4.2. UK Shared Prosperity funding has proven a need for grants which support larger projects hence the reasoning provided around the proposed introduction of the Large Grants Fund. Statistical information from the existing SK Community shows that, in the last two years, 69% of awards have been for grants of £2,000 and less, therefore providing evidence of need to continue the Small Grants Fund as proposed.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The recommended changes will improve opportunities offered by the SK Community Fund.
- 5.2. Establishing an appropriate delegation to allow for the decision-making authority of the Awarding Panel will ensure suitable governance.

6. Appendices

- 6.1. Appendix A – Small Grants Scheme – Eligibility Criteria (draft)
- 6.2. Appendix B – Small Grants Scheme – Making an Application (draft)
- 6.3. Appendix C – Large Grants Scheme – Eligibility Criteria (draft)
- 6.4. Appendix D – Large Grants Scheme – Making an Application (draft)