

Criteria for Rural Grants Assistance application

(a) An application can be made by a rural organisation or a rural Parish Council. The Borough Council must be satisfied that the Rural Parish Council considers the application to be in the interests of their local inhabitants. An application will not be accepted unless it has been signed by the Chairman or Clerk to the Parish Council stating it to be in the interests of their local inhabitants.

(b) Applications can be made at any time, although they will only be considered by the Committee three times a year (normally, in April, September and January). To ensure an application is considered applicants should ensure that it is submitted six weeks before the date of the meeting. The Mayor may consider urgent applications at other times where it is considered appropriate that the application be considered outside of the normal committee cycle.

(c) Grants may only be made for capital projects.*

(d) Applicants seeking funding towards building projects valued at £100,000 or more are required to submit a Business Plan in support of the project and may be required to make a presentation to the Rural Affairs Committee.

(e) Applicants seeking funding towards a project of £20,000 or more may be required to make a presentation to the Rural Affairs Committee at the first meeting that will consider the application.

(f) The Borough Council must have the statutory power to make a grant for the purpose applied for (for example, community premises improvements/refurbishments to such premises and provision of recreational facilities).

(g) Applicants are required to demonstrate that their projects meet one or more of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives as set out in Section 3 of the application form.

(h) Projects which would normally be funded by statutory agencies, are unlikely to be eligible for a grant (e.g. improvements to street lighting, improvements to educational premises (unless to facilitate community use)).

(i) Funding for projects on land not directly in the ownership of the organisation concerned will ordinarily only be considered if the organisation can demonstrate that the land will be available for use for the purpose of the grant for a period of at least 10 years (e.g. the construction of a multi-use sports area on third party land leased to an organisation for a period of over 10 years).

(j) The Borough Council wishes to see its assistance maximised and, in any event, it may not have sufficient resources to assist all the requests put forward by a rural organisation or a rural Parish Council. The Borough Council would prefer to give assistance to a Rural Parish Council or an organisation approved by the Parish Council that has made efforts to provide a reasonable contribution from its own resources or other sources. Therefore, the Council's contribution to a project in the form of a rural grant will normally be limited to 50% of the cost of the project and applicants should be able to demonstrate that at least 50% of the cost of the project will be met from sources other than the Borough Council such as:

- (i) Fundraising generally
- (ii) Grant applications from other bodies
- (iii) Seeking loan assistance from the Association of Local Councils
- (iv) Loan from the Public Works Loan Board
- (v) Fundraising from the Parish Precept
- (vi) Contribution by the Parish Council

(k) In determining the grant application due regard will be given to the level of contribution proposed by the Parish Council, the level of non-earmarked reserves held by the Parish Council and level of Council Tax Precept. Capital projects in rural parishes generally provide benefit mainly to the immediate community of the parish. The rural grants scheme recognises that parishes may experience difficulty in raising finance for capital projects, however, it is expected that local residents should contribute towards the cost of projects which will directly benefit the local community. Therefore, normally applications where the Parish Council is contributing towards the cost of a project will be viewed more favourably than applications where the Parish Council is not contributing.

(l) In determining the grant application from organisations other than Parish Councils due regard will also be given to the level of financial reserves held by the organisation, the annual income and expenditure, and the ability or otherwise to generate additional income.

(m) Levels of past funding by the Borough to individual Parish Council areas and parish precepts may be taken into account in assessing new grant requests.

(n) Where funding is awarded the Borough Council will not be responsible for meeting any ongoing revenue costs. Applicants may be required to demonstrate that arrangements are in place to meet any ongoing costs arising from the project. Evidence may be requested that the project and/or its ongoing operation will meet any legislative requirements (for example health and safety requirements).

(o) Where funding is awarded the recipient organisation will, if considered appropriate by Bedford Borough Council, be required to display a plaque provided by Bedford Borough Council recognising the grant awarded or otherwise will be required to recognise the funding on their letter heads/publicity material.

(p) Where funding is awarded, payment will be made to the Parish Council upon completion of the project and receipt of evidence of the completion and the costs incurred (for example receipts for payments and a copy of the supplier's invoice). Where the funding is a contribution to a larger or more complex project consideration may be given to the release of funding on a phased basis as elements of the project are completed, subject to the whole project being fully funded and scheduled for completion (applicants requesting release of part or all of the funding prior to completion of the whole project should contact the Borough Council prior to commencement of the project).

(q) Support for any project will normally be limited to £20,000 and the maximum amount awarded in respect of projects in any parish area should not normally exceed £20,000 in any period of two financial years.

(r) Applications in excess of £1,000 will not normally be considered unless three independent quotations are provided for each aspect of the works, goods or services, costing in excess of £1,000 for which the grant is sought. Awards will be based on the lowest

quote provided except where the applicant can demonstrate that this option does not represent the best value for money. The Borough Council may seek independent corroboration of any costs/quotes set out in the application.

(s) Release of funding will be dependent upon the whole project being fully funded unless otherwise explicitly stated in the award letter.

(t) Awards must be claimed within two years of the award being approved. Where unavoidable delays arise in respect of the project, and it is not possible for the award to be claimed within two years, the applicant should contact the Borough Council to request an extension to the claim period setting out the reasons for the delay. Where the Borough Council is satisfied that the delays are unavoidable an extension of up to one year will be allowed to the claim period. Normally only one extension will be allowed after which time a new application will be required.

(u) Awards must be used only for the purposes set out in the application and as specified in the award letter. Where a change is proposed to the project, for any reason, the applicant must seek confirmation from the Committee that the offer of funding remains valid.

(v) In the event that the cost of either the project as a whole or specific items for which a grant has been awarded are less than set out in the application, the Council may reduce the award accordingly. Applicants are advised to seek confirmation of the final award in these circumstances.

(w) It is expected that VAT will be reclaimed wherever possible where the applicant is a Parish Council. Applications should clearly set out the VAT element of any costs and state the position regarding the reclaiming of VAT. Where, in the opinion of the Borough Council, VAT may be reclaimed any award will be based on costs net of VAT. * Capital expenditure is generally expenditure on the acquisition or enhancement of an asset. Expenditure on routine maintenance and repair cannot normally be classed as capital expenditure.