

BMSDC Grants - Communities

Mid Suffolk District Council Rural Support Fund

Community Asset Fund Guidance Notes

1. Introduction

Mid Suffolk District Council offers Community Grants to organisations that deliver community support, projects or activities within Mid Suffolk. [The Mid Suffolk Plan](#) outlines the priorities of Mid Suffolk District Council. All funding awarded by the Council aligns to one or more of our priorities.

As part of Mid Suffolk District Council's NEW Rural Support Fund a discrete fund has been created 'Community Asset Fund' to help community groups and social enterprises trying to save threatened village facilities like shops and pubs. Community groups can apply for up to £100,000 to support the purchase of assets of community value, if they operate as a social enterprise.

These notes are designed to help you firstly complete our Community Asset Fund expression of interest and subsequent application form.

Details on our other available Grants can be found on our website. View information on Community Grants in [Babergh](#) or [Mid Suffolk](#).

2. Community Asset Fund

The aim of the Community Asset Fund is supporting communities in the purchase of property to enable social enterprises such as community pubs, shops, post offices, banking hubs and cafés to take root in communities which would otherwise lack these important spaces to shop and socialise.

Mid Suffolk is home to a wide variety of community pubs, shops and cafés, in communities and locations which would otherwise lack such provision. This includes Coddendam's award-winning community shop, Thurst Café at Thurston's New Green Centre and Suffolk's first community owned and operated pub, the Punch Bowl in Battsford. While there are hundreds of thriving hospitality businesses throughout the District, there are villages where the pub or shop, often the heart of a rural community, have closed in recent years, leaving the parish without often essential facilities.

The Fund is only open to parishes and villages which lack, or at risk of losing, such an asset. As such, villages or towns with a pub, shop or café (depending on the proposed social enterprise) are ineligible to apply.

Applications must demonstrate a clear need for their project and the asset within their community and Mid Suffolk. There must also be clear and evidenced wider community backing, buy-in and involvement for the purchase of the asset. Applications which are not fully filled or lack required supporting documentation will not be considered eligible.

Expressions of interest can be submitted at any time with the Fund open on a first come, first served basis.



3. Terms and Conditions

3.1. Organisations

Applications for grants will only be considered from constituted Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations which:

- Already provide a service for the benefit of Mid Suffolk residents (place based).
- Are capable of obtaining from its own funds or other funding sources (grants) sufficient funding to cover the total project cost.
- Are financially viable, as evidenced by audited or independently examined accounts.
- Have Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities policies for employees, volunteers and attendees in place.

Eligible organisations include, but are not limited to, Community Benefit Societies (CBS), Community Interest Companies (CIC), Parish Councils, or Limited Companies with Exemptions.

3.2. Ineligible Organisations

The Community Asset Fund is not available for:

- Private individuals
- For-profit businesses
- Statutory authorities
- Community groups without an independent bank account

3.3. VAT

If your organisation is registered for and can reclaim VAT, any Grant awarded will be exclusive of VAT. If your organisation is unable to reclaim VAT, Grants awarded will be inclusive of VAT.

3.4. Conditions

- The Fund can only be applied for by organisations established with the purpose of purchasing and operating an asset as a social enterprise or community business such as a pub, shop or café. Only not for profit organisations such as Community Benefit Societies (CBS), Community Interest Companies (CIC), Parish Councils, or Limited Companies with Exemptions.
- The Fund is limited to parishes or villages where there is no similar provision currently in operation. Any application would require consideration of the impact on any business operating in the same or adjoining villages on a commercial basis.
- Funding is limited to the purchase or renovation of property for use as a social enterprise such as a community pub, shop or café.
- Up to £100,000 can be applied for, with no requirement of being a funder of last resort.
- The viability of proposed social enterprises would need to be demonstrated through a comprehensive business plan and fundraising strategy.
- Parish Council support such as through Neighbourhood CIL is encouraged.
- Priority will be afforded to those Parishes with a Neighbourhood Plan or Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) featuring the asset in question.
- A grant approval given in advance of other decisions required from the Council does not imply that any other form of consent by the Council will be forthcoming, such as Planning Permission or Building Regulations approval.

- Some applications will need to be supported with additional documentation so that an accurate and complete understanding of the proposal is provided. The amount of information and supporting documentation will be proportionate to the project, namely its size, complexity, and cost, and this can be discussed with the Grants Team prior to application submission.
- The Council reserves the right to request a copy of any applying organisation's policies or constitution prior to an application being assessed or funding being released to a successful applicant.
- If any conditions are breached, the Council reserves the right to seek recovery of all or part of the grant. If you do not immediately repay these monies, when requested to do so by the Council, the Council reserves the right to commence County Court proceedings for recovery of the outstanding monies, together with interest and Legal costs.
- Funding will not be released until the full funding package for the project has been evidenced.

4. Process

This is a two stage application process. Stage one requires the applicant to submit an Expression of Interest form, which provides an overview of the project, the identified need and gap that the project will fill as well as the difference it will make. This information will be used to decide whether the applicant is eligible to make a full application. We will use our local knowledge we have for the area as well as considering other nearby provision. This will enable us to understand how the project will benefit and fill a gap in provision within the community.

A Community Asset Fund Application Form cannot be submitted until your Expression of Interest Form has been approved.

Stage two applications must be submitted within 6 months of our stage one decision. Significant changes to the plans outlined in the stage 1 process must not be made, such as the overall aim of your project, beneficiaries, the area or the budget.

Funding cannot be used to cover costs for services or activities that form part of the government's statutory responsibility.

4.1. Assessment

All applications will be scored by a publicly available scoring matrix. Applications which score under 50% on the Community Asset Fund Scoring Matrix will not be considered eligible for funding.

In assessing your application priority will be given to applications that identify a demonstrable gap in provision and a clearly evidenced community need.

Expression of Interest outcomes are at the discretion of the Council and cannot be appealed.

4.2. Offer Letters

Successful applicants will receive an offer letter setting out conditions, outcomes and the period during which the service/project needs to be completed and the grant offer claimed. Offers are valid for **4 weeks**, and after this period the offer will expire.

If the purchase falls through or the project fails to meet any of the conditions contained in the grant offer letter or the agreed targets/outputs, then consideration will be given to the grant offer being

withdrawn and any grant monies already paid being recovered together with any interest applicable.

4.3. Payment

Funding will normally be released on receipt of invoices/receipts showing that expenditure has taken place. Projects or purchases must complete within 12 months of funding being awarded.

If any service/project fails to meet any of the conditions contained in the grant offer letter or the agreed targets/outputs, then consideration will be given to the grant offer being withdrawn and any grant monies already paid being recovered together with any interest applicable.

4.4. Monitoring

Successful applicants will be expected to provide information on how the fund is spent and how well their project achieved its aims. They will receive monitoring forms alongside their award offer so that it is clear before the project starts what information needs to be collected.

5. Contact

If you have any queries, would like more information or would like to discuss a potential project and funding application, please email the Grants Team at BMSDCGrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.