

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 11
DECEMBER 2025**



| | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Title of Report | COMMUNITY GRANTS ANNUAL REPORT | |
| Presented by | Councillor M Wyatt Community and Climate Change Portfolio Holder | |
| Background Papers | None | Public Report: Yes |
| Financial Implications | <p>The total general community grant budget for 2024/25 was £21,000.</p> <p>The total grant agreement budgets (Citizen Advice and Age UK Befriending) for 2024/25 was £86,660.</p> <p>Additional grant supported: Total Community Mental Health Grant for 2024/25 was £10,000.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery Scheme is financially self-sustaining with the Council's initial and on-going costs being met by income from the Scheme.</p> | |
| | Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes | |
| Legal Implications | <p>The grants constitute subsidies and are subject to the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Therefore, the Council have considered the grants and assessed them in accordance with the subsidy control regime.</p> <p>The NWL Community Lottery is subject to checks and a Data Protection Impact Assessment which was completed prior to the project commencing.</p> | |
| | Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes | |
| Staffing and Corporate Implications | <p>One part time member of staff is allocated to review the grant applications, gather further evidence (if required) and monitor the projects.</p> <p>Citizens Advice rent a space at Stenson House. They paid £12,480 (inc VAT) in 2024/25 to the Council under a lease arrangement.</p> <p>One full time member of staff allocated to implement the NWL Community Lottery project with the support of a project team including Communications, Finance, Legal and the Project Sponsor (Head of Community Services)</p> | |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes |
| Purpose of Report | <p>To provide an update on the Community Grant for the financial period from April 2024 to March 2025, highlighting any changes and additional updates.</p> <p>To provide an update on the first year of the NWL Community Lottery the allocation of funding and the impact and the future service.</p> |
| Recommendations | THAT THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROVIDES FEEDBACK ON THE 2024/25 COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME, AND ON THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY LOTTERY TO INFORM CABINET'S CONSIDERATION OF THE SCHEMES AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROCESS FOR 2026/27. |

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's Community Grant Programme, detailing the specific grants available, the allocation of funds throughout the year, and the measurable outcomes achieved from April 2024 to March 2025. It outlines how the Small Grant, Zero Carbon Grant, and Green Shoots initiatives were managed within the set budget of £21,000 and will illustrate the ways in which these grants have supported numerous local groups and projects across the district.
- 1.2 In addition, the report will present an update on the North West Leicestershire (NWL) Community Lottery, including a summary of its first year of operation, financial spend and revenue generated, the impact on the community, and planned developments for the future.
- 1.3 The intention is to highlight key successes, areas for improvement, and the ongoing contribution of both the grant programme and the lottery scheme towards the Council's priorities of supporting communities and advancing clean, green, and zero carbon initiatives.
- 1.4 The Committee is asked to provide feedback on both programmes to inform Cabinet's consideration of the schemes as part of the Council's budget process for 2026/27.

2.0 COMMUNITY GRANTS

- 2.1 The Council established a grant programme to provide support to the communities of North West Leicestershire. The Community Focus team administers these grants, including two key streams delivered in 2024/25. These were:
 - General Grants – Small Grant (up to £500), Zero Carbon Grant (up to £1,000), and the Green Shoots programme.
 - Grant Agreements – Leicestershire and Rutland Age UK Befriending and Citizens Advice Leicestershire.

Additionally, the team supported the Health and Wellbeing team (through a Community Mental Health Grant).

- 2.2 For the 2024/25 financial year, the grant budget was set at £21,000, covering the Small Grant, Zero Carbon Grant, and Green Shoots Scheme. The Small Grant has been particularly popular, likely supported by the transition to an online application process. To enhance outreach, officers assessed how voluntary and community groups learned about the grant scheme by surveying them with the question, 'Where did you hear about the scheme?'

Key Findings:

- Out of 32 applications the most common response was via Word of Mouth which was cited fourteen times, making it the most frequent way people discovered the scheme.
- Second most common source: the internet was mentioned eight times, highlighting its significance.
- Other sources:
 - Other (e.g., newsletters, leaflets, past applicants, external websites, or contacts such as VAL) appeared seven times.
 - Events were referenced three times, showing a smaller but notable contribution.

- 2.3 Engagement and Promotion Strategies:

Given that Word of Mouth is the primary way groups hear about the scheme, this has strengthened officer engagement efforts by increasing face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and follow-up support to assist with grant applications.

- 2.4 The internet/social media remains a key channel through GovDelivery messaging, Facebook, and Instagram. While events and other sources have a smaller impact, they remain valuable, and officers will continue to promote grant opportunities at community events attended by the Community Focus team. Additionally, Community Focus Officers will in the future actively promote the scheme while engaging with community groups and parish councils.

- 2.5 Another key component of the Community Focus grant funding is the Grant Agreements, which supported Leicestershire and Rutland Age UK Befriending and Citizens Advice in North West Leicestershire.

- Leicestershire and Rutland Age UK Befriending Service received a grant of £14,660, funding a part-time coordinator responsible for reviewing service referrals, matching clients with befrienders, and supporting volunteer befrienders.
- Citizens Advice Leicestershire was allocated a grant of £72,000, allowing them to operate from Stenson House and provide essential services to residents of North West Leicestershire. Their service includes face-to-face appointments, a well-utilised drop-in service at the Council's Customer Service Centre in Coalville on Fridays, and remote support via email and phone. This funding

ensures that local residents can access critical assistance, including benefits guidance, debt advice, housing support, and legal services.

3.0 SMALL GRANT, ZERO CARBON GRANT AND GREEN SHOOTS

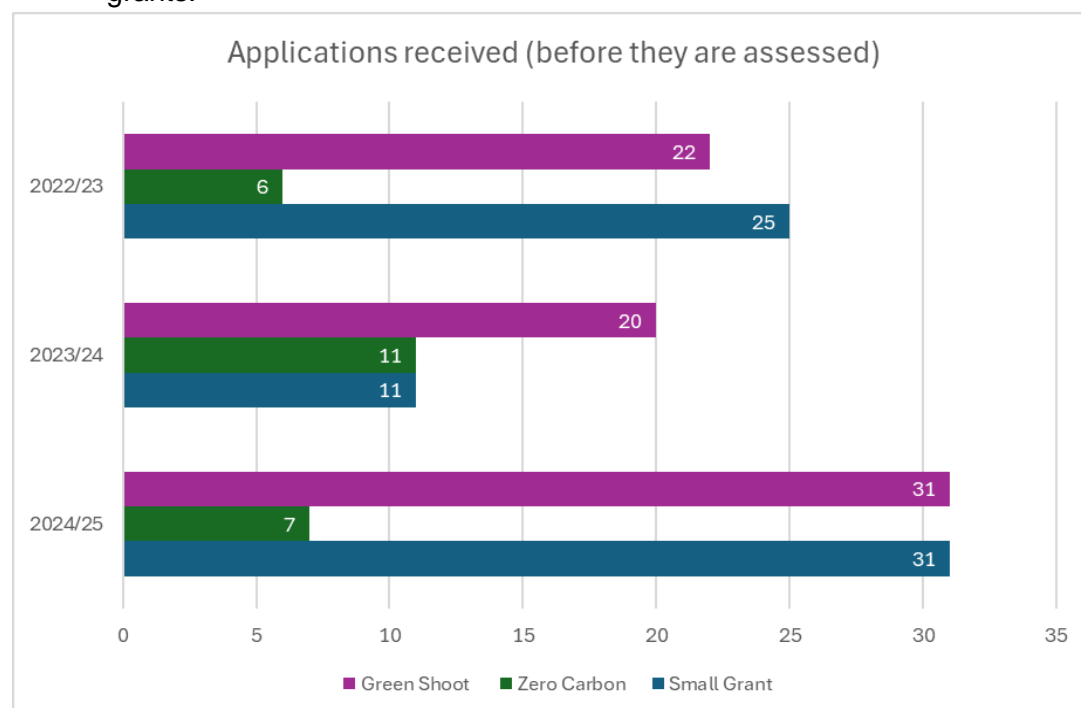
3.1 The Small Grant and Zero Carbon Grant are annual grants. The Green Shoots Scheme was also delivered in 2024/25.

3.2 These grants are popular given the voluntary and community sector are experiencing increasing pressures, such as:

- A shortage of volunteers required to maintain free services and to serve as hubs for promotion, education, and inspiration for both local residents and visitors
- Limited sources of funding, some funds having restrictive conditions
- Professional services increasingly relying on the voluntary and community sector to assist in addressing challenges related to youth provision, mental health, and overall community engagement and cohesion.

The significant role played by both small and large voluntary and charitable organisations within the community cannot be overstated. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when reliance on goodwill and support became paramount, a need that has persisted beyond the pandemic. Consequently, access to our Community Grant remains widely appreciated throughout the district.

3.3 The table below displays the number of applications received for each of the Council's general grant schemes over the past three years. Please note that these figures represent applications before assessment and do not indicate the number of approved grants.



- 3.4 Following the assessment process, the Small Grant had 25 approved applications, Zero Carbon Grant had six approved applications and Green Shoot Scheme had 24 approved applications.
- 3.5 The table below summarises the total grant fund awarded from the Community Grant budget in the 2024/25 financial year. It is important to note that the total value of supported projects considerably exceeds the Council's direct contributions, demonstrating that while our support is critical, it often forms part of larger initiatives. Additionally, through the Green Shoots Scheme, the Council recoups half of the bulb costs (£2,166), which reduces the net Grant Fund Awarded to £19,115 rather than £21,281.

| 2024/25 | Grant Fund Awarded | Total Value of the Projects | Income |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Small Grant | £11,678 | £61,178 | £0.00 |
| Zero Carbon | £5,271 | £12,446 | £0.00 |
| Green Shoots | £4,332 | £5,069 | £2,166 |
| TOTAL | £21,281 | £78,693 | £2,166 |

- 3.6 Further information along with statements, photographs, and videos that outline the effects of this funding on local groups can be found in Appendix A pages 3-8.

4.0 COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH GRANT

- 4.1 Community Focus helped the Health and Wellbeing Team administer an additional grant in 2024/25. A total of £10,000 from Public Health England was allocated to support mental health initiatives and address inequalities caused by COVID-19, including projects targeting loneliness and isolation.
- 4.2 Below the table shows the number applications received, approved, rejected and the total value of the project. As with the Council's Community Grant programme, the project value exceeds the funding awarded.

| Total Applications | Approved | Unsuccessful | Pending | Withdrawn | Total Funds Awarded | Total Value of the Projects |
|--------------------|----------|--------------|---------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 17 | 11 | 6 | 0 | 0 | £10,000 | £31,692 |

- 4.3 The unsuccessful applications were due to not meeting the criteria for the project. The monitoring of the project was carried out by Community Focus and Health and Wellbeing, a link to the projects is available in Appendix A.

5.0 GRANT AGREEMENTS – CITIZENS ADVICE LEICESTERSHIRE AND AGE UK LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

5.1 CITIZENS ADVICE LEICESTERSHIRE

Citizens Advice Leicestershire (CAL) was awarded a grant of £72,000 for the period from April 2024 to March 2025. This funding was designated to enhance CAL's services across Leicestershire, with a particular emphasis on North West Leicestershire. The key services provided by CAL under this grant include; debt advice and financial management, assistance with benefit applications, access to charitable funding, support for debt relief orders and breathing space initiatives, benefit checks and claims, energy advice, budgeting guidance, Macmillan advice, Pension Wise, family advice, support to help reduce the risk of homelessness, and advice on landlord and tenant issues, with a special focus on private landlords.

5.2 The grant enabled CAL to offer advisory services in-person at Stenson House, strictly by appointment. In addition, CAL ran a well-attended drop-in service at the Customer Services Centre in Coalville every Friday. As part of the grant agreement, CAL was required to submit relevant data and statistics, along with two case studies.

5.3 Each quarter, CAL engaged with approximately 600 residents in North West Leicestershire. While some individuals may access services more than once, the majority of contacts are new clients. The total debt written off and income gains achieved through these interventions highlight the significant impact of the financial support provided. Most client interactions occur via phone and email, yet the continued availability of face-to-face appointments remains a valuable option for residents.

5.4 Throughout 2024/25, CAL worked to provide increasingly detailed information. Starting in quarter three, CAL began sharing ward-level data indicating where service users reside. This data serves as a reference point and provides evidence to support potential future projects focused on financial literacy, debt management, and budgeting.

5.5 LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND AGE UK BEFRIENDING SERVICE

During 2024/25, the Leicestershire and Rutland Age UK Befriending Service received funding amounting to £14,660. This allocation was directed towards supporting the Befriending Coordinator, whose responsibilities encompassed reviewing client referrals, recruiting and providing ongoing support to befriending volunteers, and ensuring suitable matches between clients and volunteer befrienders.

5.6 Over the course of the year, the service assisted between 25 and 36 residents. While there was a modest decrease in the number of volunteers, those who continued their involvement maintained strong engagement with clients. The impact and activities of the befriending service are highlighted in a video included in Appendix A, which features an interview with a volunteer befriender.

6.0 NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE (NWL) COMMUNITY LOTTERY

- 6.1 The North West Leicestershire (NWL) Community Lottery has now been operating officially for a full year, from August 2024 to August 2025. Approval for the scheme was granted in February 2024, after which a period of project work took place leading up to the launch on 24 August 2024. Key highlights of this preparatory phase are detailed in Appendix B.
- 6.2 In addition to the Council's own good cause, a further 58 good causes have registered to participate in the NWL Community Lottery. These organisations represent a broad cross-section of the district, encompassing a variety of community and charitable groups. There are groups outside of the district, but they must confirm where and how they are supporting NWL residents and the funds are to be ring-fenced for those engagements only. Further information on each participating organisation can be found in Appendix B, page 3. The 58 actively promoting themselves have demonstrated considerable success in raising funds for their respective causes, collectively generating over £17,500 to support a range of projects, activities, and running costs. Notably, the top five organisations each raise approximately £100 per month. Appendix B, page 4, provides a table outlining monthly ticket sales and the corresponding funds raised collectively.
- 6.3 The Council's good cause, known as the NWL Community Lottery Central Fund, was initially forecasted to raise £36,735 over five years. However, within the first year alone, the scheme has achieved an impressive total of £30,960. In accordance with project approval requirements, initial project costs were recouped from the funds raised. Project costs have been minimised, as set out in Appendix B, page 5 and ongoing communication is now conducted through social media and electronic newsletters. This approach has contributed to a net total of £22,094 raised—substantially exceeding the original projection of just over £10,000 after on-costs.
- 6.4 The funds generated by both the good causes and the Council's good cause are attributable to the generosity of residents and supporters across the district. Currently, the NWL Community Lottery has approximately 600 participants ('supporters') who purchase tickets on a weekly basis. The chance to win prizes of up to £25,000 acts as a significant incentive, with additional bundle prizes provided by Gatherwell Ltd, the company managing the lottery. The value of community engagement should also be recognised. The Communications Team has played an instrumental role in promoting the lottery. Notably, whenever there have been social media posts or GovDelivery newsletters, there has been a corresponding increase in ticket sales.
- 6.5 Throughout the year, promotion of the lottery has been undertaken via a range of channels, including social media, electronic newsletters, emails, and face-to-face engagement at community events. Surveys and short workshops have provided opportunities to connect with good causes, determine any further support needs, and facilitate the sharing of best practice. Gatherwell Ltd has supported good causes with regular sessions, newsletters, and marketing materials. Feedback from community groups has been positive, with those actively promoting the lottery reporting satisfaction with the financial contributions received, which support a wide array of

activities. Furthermore, public support remains strong, and participation in the NWL Community Lottery has not diminished contributions to other fundraising activities by these groups at community events that has been seen. However, it must be noted that this is based on groups engaged with at events so not all good causes have been consulted.

- 6.6 Of the £22,094 raised through the NWL Community Lottery Central Fund, £20,000 has been allocated to a grant scheme aimed at supporting community groups and charities across North West Leicestershire in delivering new or enhanced projects and activities. Each successful applicant may receive up to £750. The remaining £2,094 has been ring-fenced and will contribute to next year's fundraising pot. Applicants must meet specified criteria, and the grant scheme is monitored in the same manner as the council's Small/Zero Carbon grants. Thematic criteria and funding amounts for the scheme may be reviewed and updated next year.

| Policies and other considerations, as appropriate | |
|--|---|
| Council Priorities: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well run Council |
| Policy Considerations: | n/a |
| Safeguarding: | <p>Grants: Applicants must provide copies of their safeguarding policies if the project directly involves children or young people or if deemed necessary.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: Good Cause must provide copies of their safeguarding policies if the group directly involves children or vulnerable individuals or if deemed necessary.</p> |
| Equalities/Diversity: | <p>Grant: applications are consistently evaluated against the grant criteria and undergo an approval process to ensure fair consideration for all. An Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted recently to make sure that the criteria and process is fair, transparent and does not negatively impact a protected characteristic.</p> <p>Following the assessment, it was clear that the criteria is robust and suitable and does not negatively affect any protected group.</p> <p>An addition from this review is, on receipt of Small Grant applications, it is noted if the application aligns with any protected characteristics.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: The community lottery is open to any community group that can provide the necessary information to prove the legitimacy of the group.</p> <p>Supporters can support by submitting details online or by phone.</p> |
| Customer Impact: | <p>Grant: Successful grants awarded directly enhance the community of North West Leicestershire and its residents.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: residents (supporters) sign up for a direct debit of £1 a week with the chance to win extra tickets or monetary prize. Residents/supporters can leave at time by emailing or calling.</p> <p>If there are any changes to term and conditions set out, all residents/supporters are notified.</p> |
| Economic and Social Impact: | <p>Grant: Successful grants awarded directly provide an economic and social impact by providing employment opportunities to organisations and businesses within the district who are contracted to provide goods and services. The Council</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | encourages organisations to work within the local community. |
| Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon: | <p>Grant: schemes actively support and promote the Council's Zero Carbon Roadmap and Action Plan</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: any purchases for the lottery are considered from make to landfill/recycling.</p> |
| Consultation/Community Engagement: | <p>Grant: Ward members are notified on the outcome of the applications in their ward. Grants are promoted to all the voluntary and community organisations in North West Leicestershire and promoted via social media.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: ward members are notified on the receipt and outcome of the applications.</p> <p>The NWL Community Lottery is promoted via social media, electronic newsletters and at community events.</p> |
| Risks: | <p>Grant: Reputational risk is managed by ensuring positive community applications are supported. Support is provided to applicants to ensure applications are not refused where possible.</p> <p>NWL Community Lottery: Reputational risk is managed by ensuring safeguarding processes are in place at various levels. This is done by NWLDC and Gatherwell Ltd.</p> |
| Officer Contact | <p>Paul Sanders Head of Community Services Paul.sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> |