

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026



Title of Report	LEGACY FUND GRANT AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS/CEMETERIES GRANT SCHEME	
Presented by	Councillor K Merrie Corporate and Finance Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	General Fund and Council Tax 2026/27 - Council 19 February 2026	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	<p>At its meeting on 19 February 2026, Council approved funding of £2m to establish a Legacy Grant scheme. This decision was made following consideration of the General Fund and Council Tax 2026/27 report, which outlined the rationale for creating the Legacy Grant scheme as a means to support local initiatives and provide long-term benefits to the community. The report detailed the allocation of resources and emphasised the Council’s commitment to investing in projects that would have a lasting positive impact. The approval of this funding marks a significant step in delivering on the priorities identified in the Council’s financial planning for the forthcoming year, ensuring that the Legacy Grant scheme is both fully resourced and aligned with the strategic aims set out in the February report.</p> <p>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes</p>	
Legal Implications	<p>The Council must ensure compliance with relevant legislation, including public sector procurement rules, the Subsidy Control Act 2022, and equality legislation.</p> <p>Grant criteria and decision-making processes must be transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory, with robust governance arrangements in place to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure accountability.</p> <p>Data protection and confidentiality requirements must also be observed when dealing with applicants’ information.</p> <p>Additionally, the terms and conditions of the grant should clearly outline the responsibilities of recipients and the Council, including provisions for monitoring, reporting, and clawback of funds if necessary. Failure to address these legal aspects could expose the Council to legal challenges or reputational risks.</p>	

	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Funding of £100,000 will be made available to provide administration of the system. This allocation is intended to cover all necessary staffing costs associated with managing the Legacy Grant scheme, including the recruitment or redeployment of administrative personnel, training requirements, and ongoing operational support.
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes
Purpose of Report	To ask Members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to review the Legacy Grant process and Closed Churchyards/Cemeteries Grant Scheme and provide comments.
Recommendations	<p>THAT CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES THE DETAILS OF THE LEGACY GRANT PROCESS FOR APPLICATIONS AS SHOWN AT APPENDIX ONE AND PROVIDES ANY COMMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET AT ITS MEETING ON 24 MARCH 2026 2. NOTES THE DETAILS OF THE CLOSED CHURCHYARDS/CEMETERIES GRANT SCHEME SHOWN AT APPENDIX FOUR AND PROVIDES ANY COMMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET AT ITS MEETING ON 24 MARCH 2026

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 19 February 2026, the Council gave approval for the establishment of a Legacy Grant Scheme as well as a scheme designed to support requests for additional funding for closed churchyards. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the proposed administration arrangements and outlines the assessment criteria that will be applied to both schemes, ensuring clarity and transparency for all stakeholders involved.
- 1.2 In addition to the Legacy Grant Scheme, the Council also approved a dedicated grants scheme for closed churchyards and cemeteries at its meeting on 19 February 2026. This scheme is specifically designed to support capital projects, enabling improvements to infrastructure, restoration works, and essential maintenance of these sites. The intention is to help preserve and enhance the sites, ensuring they remain accessible and well-maintained for the benefit of the wider community.
- 1.3 Details of both the above schemes are set out below.

2.0 LEGACY GRANT

- 2.1 On 19 February 2026, the Council formally approved the establishment of the Legacy Grant Scheme. This scheme is designed to provide financial support to local organisations and initiatives that contribute to the community's long-term wellbeing and

development. The primary purpose of the Legacy Grant is to enable projects that have a lasting positive impact, such as enhancements to public spaces, improvements to community facilities, and activities that foster social inclusion and cohesion.

- 2.2 The Legacy Grants Programme is established to provide targeted financial support to local organisations delivering projects that benefit residents of North West Leicestershire. The programme is intended to complement, rather than replace, existing small grant schemes operated by the Council, such as the Community Lottery Grant and Zero Carbon Grant, by introducing a structured and proportionate route for larger-scale community investment.
- 2.3 The programme will operate through two distinct funding strands:
- **Revenue grants of up to £25,000 (£2,500 minimum)**, designed to support the delivery of time-limited community activities, services or pilot projects. The minimum amount for the Legacy Grant Scheme was established after careful consideration of the existing Small Grant Scheme (£500 minimum), the Zero Carbon Grant (£1,000 minimum), and the NWL Community Grant (£750 minimum). By setting a higher minimum, the Legacy Grant Scheme is clearly positioned to support larger-scale projects, ensuring it complements rather than duplicates the Council's smaller grant programmes.
 - **Capital grants of up to £250,000 (£10,000 minimum)**, designed to fund the creation or improvement of community assets and facilities that provide long-term benefit.
- 2.4 By offering both revenue and capital support within a single framework, the Council aims to enable community groups not only to run activities, but also to invest in the buildings and infrastructure that allow communities to thrive over the longer term. Once the bidding round opens, there will be a sufficient period allotted to ensure applicants have adequate time to prepare comprehensive and detailed submissions. The Council will communicate information regarding the scheme's timing and application deadlines in due course, allowing all potential applicants to plan accordingly and maximise their chances of success. The proposed framework is set out in Appendix One.

Assessment

- 2.5 The Legacy Grant Fund uses a structured and transparent assessment framework to ensure that funding decisions are fair, consistent and evidence-based. All applications are assessed by Council officers against published criteria using scoring matrices that reflect the size, risk and nature of the grant. Proportionality is a key principle: smaller revenue grants are assessed with lighter-touch requirements, while larger or higher-risk awards are subject to enhanced due diligence and, where appropriate, Member oversight. A minimum score threshold applies to both revenue and capital grants to ensure that only high-quality, well-aligned projects are considered. A proposed application form is shown in Appendix Two.
- 2.6 Revenue grants are assessed on factors including demonstrated local need, clarity of community benefit, deliverability, inclusion and equality of access, value for money, governance and strategic fit with Council priorities. Capital grants place greater emphasis on readiness to deliver, long-term sustainability, asset life, match funding and ongoing maintenance arrangements, reflecting the scale and longevity of investment. Across both funding strands, applicants must clearly show how their proposals support community wellbeing, fairness, inclusion and long-term benefit for residents of North West Leicestershire, with monitoring arrangements in place to ensure accountability and learning.

Governance

- 2.7 Cabinet will be asked to approve the overall design, purpose and governance framework of the grant scheme, with responsibility for assessing applications and making decisions on individual grant awards delegated to officers.
- 2.8 Member involvement would, therefore, be limited to the approval of the scheme objectives, eligibility and assessment criteria, financial parameters and assurance arrangements. Once the scheme is approved, officers would assess applications against the agreed criteria and determine awards in accordance with delegated authority, ensuring that decisions are taken consistently, transparently and in line with relevant legal and financial requirements. A clear audit trail would be maintained setting out the basis for each decision.
- 2.9 Where an individual grant award, or a cumulative award to a single organisation, is proposed to exceed £100,000, the decision would be taken in accordance with the Council's Constitution, including any requirements relating to executive decision-making, key decision thresholds or additional Member approval.

Conflicts of Interest

- 2.10 Any potential conflicts arising from Members' associations with applicant organisations would be managed through the Council's Code of Conduct and existing constitutional arrangements, with Members exercising oversight only at a policy and framework level rather than in relation to specific awards.
- 2.11 By removing Members from the assessment and determination of individual applications, this approach supports fairness, objectivity and public confidence in the grant process, and represents the lowest governance risk option.

Guidance for Applicants

- 2.12 A comprehensive range of media will be utilised to promote the Legacy Grant Fund scheme to ensure broad awareness and engagement across North West Leicestershire. This includes digital channels, local press, printed materials, social media platforms and community networks, as set out in the communications framework in Appendix One. The proposed guidance for applicants is set out in Appendix Three.

3.0 CLOSED CHURCHYARD/CEMETERIES GRANT SCHEME

- 3.1 The responsibility for closed churchyards was moved from special expenses in 2024/25 primarily because the nature and cost of their maintenance, particularly regarding liabilities associated with boundary walls and other structures, are exceptionally high. These costs could not be adequately funded through special expense precepts, as any increase necessary to cover them would surpass the Council Tax referendum limits, making it financially unviable and potentially burdensome for local taxpayers.
- 3.2 The grant scheme has been established specifically to assist parish councils in covering revenue and capital costs associated with the maintenance of closed churchyards. The scheme prevents the financial burden from falling onto local

precepts, which would otherwise risk exceeding council tax referendum limits and placing undue strain on local taxpayers. The scheme operates transparently and equitably, enabling the Council to allocate funds efficiently while ensuring compliance with financial regulations. Details of the proposed scheme are set out in Appendix Four.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Insert relevant Council Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	None.
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	In setting up a grant scheme, careful attention has been given to equalities and diversity to ensure fair and inclusive access for all potential applicants. The scheme is designed to be accessible to groups from a wide range of backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
Customer Impact:	The introduction of a grant scheme is likely to have a positive impact on customers by providing them with financial support and opportunities to access resources that may otherwise be unavailable. This can help individuals, community groups, and organisations to deliver projects or services that address local needs and priorities.
Economic and Social Impact:	<p>Economically, the scheme provides financial support to individuals, community groups, and organisations, enabling them to undertake projects or deliver services that might otherwise be unattainable. This injection of funds can stimulate local economic activity, promote job creation, and encourage innovation by supporting initiatives that address specific local needs and priorities.</p> <p>Socially, grant schemes foster inclusivity and empowerment, allowing diverse groups to access opportunities and contribute to community development. By supporting projects that enhance social cohesion and improve quality of life, grant schemes can strengthen communities and help build a fairer, more resilient society.</p>
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	When establishing a grant scheme, especially for capital projects, it is essential to assess the environmental, climate change, and zero carbon

	<p>implications of funded activities. Capital projects supported by grants should be encouraged to adopt sustainable practices, minimise carbon emissions, and contribute positively to the environment.</p> <p>Considerations might include the use of energy-efficient materials and technologies, waste reduction measures, sustainable sourcing, and promoting biodiversity. Applicants should be guided to evaluate the carbon footprint of their projects and incorporate strategies such as renewable energy installations, eco-friendly construction methods, and efficient water management. The scheme should also prioritise projects that actively support the transition to net zero, including those that reduce reliance on fossil fuels and enhance climate resilience within the community.</p>
<p>Consultation/Community Engagement:</p>	<p>During the process of establishing the 2026/27 budget, consultations were conducted.</p>
<p>Risks:</p>	<p>.</p> <p>Financial Risks: There is a possibility that funding may be insufficient to support all proposed legacy projects, or that projects may exceed budget due to unforeseen costs. Mismanagement or inadequate allocation of resources could also lead to financial losses.</p> <p>Project Delivery Risks: Legacy projects may face delays, fail to meet their intended objectives, or encounter challenges in maintaining quality standards. Issues such as lack of expertise, poor planning, or ineffective project management could hamper progress.</p> <p>Reputational Risks: If legacy projects do not deliver the expected outcomes or encounter significant problems, the Council's reputation may be negatively impacted. Stakeholder dissatisfaction or public criticism can arise if projects are perceived as wasteful or unsuccessful.</p> <p>Compliance and Governance Risks: Projects must adhere to regulatory requirements, council policies, and governance standards. Failure to comply could result in legal issues or audit findings.</p> <p>Environmental Risks: Capital projects may have adverse environmental impacts if sustainability and climate considerations are not adequately addressed. Poor environmental practices could lead to increased carbon emissions or ecological harm.</p>

	<p>Community Engagement Risks: Insufficient consultation or lack of community support may lead to resistance or disengagement, reducing the effectiveness and sustainability of legacy projects.</p> <p>Operational Risks: Risks such as inadequate staffing, lack of continuity, or unforeseen external factors may affect the smooth operation and long-term viability of legacy projects.</p>
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