

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Improving The High Street Grant Scheme Criteria

Introduction

South Cambridgeshire District Council has launched a new grant scheme which will provide £90,000 worth of funding to help support the improvement of the local high street. The project aims to improve the aesthetics of our high streets, promote rejuvenation, encourage residents to shop locally and attract more local businesses to the area. To support projects that boost the heart of communities across South Cambridgeshire.

This grant scheme is funded by the UK [Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF). The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is the lead authority for the UKSPF delivery within Cambridgeshire, with South Cambridgeshire District Council being responsible for delivering the grant scheme.

Details

Grants of between £5,000- £20,000 per project can be applied for by local businesses, charities, community groups and Parish Councils across South Cambridgeshire.

There is no match-funding requirement, however projects that have a match-funding contribution will be welcomed.

The Council reserves the right to award funding depending on the merit of the supporting detail provided with each application. As the funds end, awards will be apportioned based on the remaining funds available. The Council reserves the right to close the scheme at any time and will do immediately upon 100% fund allocation.

The funding will be available from July 2025 to March 2026. All funding must be spent by 31 March 2026.

Eligibility

The project must be located on the front elevation and/or within the high street of a South Cambridgeshire village/town local authority area.

We appreciate that in some circumstances there will be uncertainty in whether the project sits within a high street, as there will be some projects, for example, improving an underpass that leads to a high street that will improve footfall to the high street itself. If you are unsure, please contact us to confirm eligibility

Sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk.

Business Applicants must:

- Be a small, independent business (including Community Interest Companies, CIC) which operates within the high street of the South Cambridgeshire District.

Business applicants will be eligible to apply for the grant, if they can answer YES to the following questions:

- Can the premises be seen clearly from the street?
- Do you anticipate that the change will make a positive difference to the surrounding area?

Community Groups must:

- Either be a non-profit group, organisation or charity based in South Cambridgeshire or benefiting South Cambridgeshire residents
- Have a written constitution or mission statement

- Have an elected committee or representative steering group
- be able to provide an up-to-date copy of their accounts and any relevant protection policies.

Parish Councils must:

- Be an active Parish Council
- Have a written constitution or mission statement
- Have an elected committee or representative steering group
- Be able to provide an up-to-date copy of their accounts and any relevant protection policies

Exclusions:

The following are ineligible for the programme:

- Business that have already received grant payments that equal the maximum permitted levels for Subsidy Control.
- Business intermediaries acting on behalf of other businesses.
- Partnerships that only exist to operate investment funding and other types of finance.
- Businesses that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking off notice has been made.
- Partnerships or businesses with a registered address in South Cambridgeshire but no trading activities within the South Cambridgeshire area.
- Applications which do not directly apply to the geographical location of the South Cambridgeshire Village/Town's high street
- Projects that do not bring about positive benefits to the high street (please consult with us before applying if unsure

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Examples of what the Scheme can support:

External renovations or improvements to the front elevations of buildings, including, but not limited to;

- General repairs
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes
- Painting/Decorating
- Signage
- External lighting
- Window display equipment and lighting
- Street art / Sculptures
- Commemorative plaques
- Improving bus shelters
- Decorative planting
- Street cleaning
- Hardboard maps
- Benches
- Parklets
- Biodiversity/Greening projects
- Improving accessibility
- Family friendly schemes, such as high street safari or similar augmented reality interactive trails to encourage footfall.
- Event and pop-up opportunities

*Installation costs of any of the above can be included in the application

Examples of what the scheme cannot support:

- Applications from brands and franchisees
- Retrospective costs –any costs incurred before the project start date.
- The cost of getting any permissions or consents, such as planning permission.
- Salaries and running costs
- Businesses that are connected to sensitive or regulated industries, such as those with potential ethical concerns and restrictions. For example, gambling, vaping etc.

Application Process:

The scheme will be launched for applications in July 2025. The applications windows are from 1st to 29th of each month.

Applications will be accepted until all funds are allocated. The Council reserves the right to close the application window once funding is exhausted.

All applicants will be required to complete a full online application form and must include a description of the project, outlining why there is a need for this project, its objectives and how it will enhance the local high street. They must also provide details on how the project will impact the wider community (social value) and if the project includes any elements that will improve sustainability and biodiversity.

The application process will allow the Council to undertake proportionate pre-payment checks to confirm eligibility relative to grant scheme.

Completed application forms will be assessed and scored by a panel of two officers from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of:

- Project Description; outline of the project, why it is needed and how it will bring about benefit to the local high street, local businesses and the local community.
- Financial Case; what is the total cost of the project and is it value for money, in terms of economic and social value.
- Risks and Mitigation; what are the key risks to delivery and success of the project
- Social Value: Sustainability what are the steps the project will take towards achieving carbon net zero or improving biodiversity?

- **Social Value: Inclusion and Diversity** what steps will the project take towards achieving inclusion and diversity. How will the project ensure that it is inclusive as possible?

Once the application has been assessed we will contact you to confirm if your application has been accepted.

Decisions to reject an application cannot be appealed, but feedback will be provided which can be used to support subsequent further applications if required.

Supporting Information:

- Photo ID, such as a driving licence or passport. Photo Id's may be subject to further control measures in accordance with due diligence
- Evidence of your business last two years of financial accounts and three consecutive months of the most recent bank statements
- Evidence of case study, market research, feasibility studies or consultation undertaken
- Evidence of any match funding obtained
- Evidence of planning permission, including your reference number, listed building consent, building regulations approval, county highways approval, faculty approval (please indicate all that apply)
- Evidence of permission from the landowner. If you are the landowner please upload evidence of this
- Evidence of permission from an authorised person to apply for this grant
- Evidence of consultation undertaken or written support from district Member/Parish Council
- Evidence of three quotes and indication of the preferred choice

As part of the grant application process, we require applicants to provide three quotations for the proposed expenditure. Each quotation must be from a different supplier or service provider & include contract information for each supplier or service provider. The quotes must be from reputable and VAT registered businesses, as well as a preference of your preferred choice. If it is not possible to provide three quotations, please email

Sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk explaining the reason why as it may be possible to consider the application dependant on the circumstances.

Permissions, consents and licences:

If a project needs specific permissions, consents and licenses for the proposals to go ahead, the applicant must send confirmation that they are in place to the Local Authority. This includes planning permission and environmental consents such as an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency and any other permission require for the project.

Note – If the applicant confirms that full planning permission for a building is not needed, written proof of this should be included with the application. Applications cannot be accepted that do not have planning permission in place, if this is required.

Proof of tenancy:

If the activity involves investments in immoveable assets and the applicant is a tenant, the landlord's written permission for the improvements must be obtained where this is a condition of the tenancy. In addition, the applicant must provide written evidence of the tenancy agreement, including the duration of the agreement remaining if it is a fixed term arrangement.

It is the applicant's responsibility not to make any substantial changes to the assets or how they are used and continue to use them for the purpose described in the application, for at least 5 years after receiving the final payment. In the event that the tenancy agreement ends within the 5-year period and is not renewed on substantially the same terms as the previous agreement, the applicant must contact the Local Authority as it may be necessary to repay some, or all of the grant monies received.

For evidence of the tenancy agreement, applicants must send a copy (not original documentation) of the tenancy agreement sections that show:

- The holding address,
- Tenant,
- Landlord,
- Signatures and
- For fixed term agreements, the tenancy term

Conditions and payment of funding:

A funding agreement will be prepared for all successful applicants. It will explain when work can start on the project and the terms and conditions. If the applicant can meet all the timings and the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement, they must return a signed copy of the grant funding agreement within 30 working days of the date of issue. If they don't the funding offer will expire. No payments can be processed until this agreement is in place.

Standard practice will be for grants to be paid in arrears once expenditure has been incurred and payment made in full. Payment will only be made to the business bank account associated with the application.

In exceptional circumstances an agreement may be reached whereby the whole grant, or an element of the grant, will be paid in advance of expenditure being incurred based on a Risk Assessment taking into account the amount being claimed and the financial health of the organisation.

Expenditure must be made from the applicant's bank account before claiming the money back from the Council (Purchases through Personal Credit Cards will be deemed ineligible).

All projects must be completed by 31st March 2026. Final invoices to be made by 1st March 2026 to allow for BACS payments before month end.

An end of project evaluation must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 6 months of project completion.

Any publicity must acknowledge the award provided and must adhere to the [SPF Branding and Publicity](#)

The District Council reserves the right to visit any organisation receiving grant assistance to ensure the grant has been used for the purpose it was intended and as stated in the application form, check the location of the asset, and inspect records to show costs have been incurred in line with the grant award letter.

Appeals:

Award decisions will be based on the merit of the application received demonstrating clear outcomes on their business plan.

Decisions to reject an application cannot be appealed, but feedback will be provided which can be used to support subsequent further applications if required.

Project reporting:

All successful applicants will be required to report on their progress at **quarterly intervals** from the date of receipt of funds. Projects must set out how they will measure and report how they have met the objectives.

Larger, more complex projects will be monitored closely to ensure that key milestones are achieved, and risks mitigated. Contracts will set out reporting obligations to ensure we track and capture outputs and expenditure. A variety of bodies are entitled to inspect projects and project documentation at any time with a minimum of advance notice. Notice will normally be at least 48 hours in advance although in some circumstance it may be less. As well as South Cambridgeshire District Council officers, these bodies include the National Audit Office and Govt. Departments. In an inspection, they will check that project meets all terms, conditions, and timings from

the grant funding agreement. Applicants must co-operate fully at any inspection. This is a condition of any funding agreement.

An end of project evaluation must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 6 months of project completion.

Changes during the grant period.

The applicant is expected to use the grant money to buy items as specified in the application and grant funding agreement. During the grant period, exceptional circumstance may arise where applicants need to change elements of a project, or senior personnel might change. The Council must be informed in writing immediately and where appropriate seek a contract variation. For example:

- Changes to use of buildings, equipment or any other assets bought with the grant.
- Disposing of or selling any of the assets.
- Closing, selling or transferring the business that's associated with the grant.
- Change of project manager

This applies during the project and for five years after the payment of the final claim. Agreement to an amendment is not automatic and if the applicant goes ahead with a change that the Council has not agreed to, there may be an obligation to repay part or whole of the grant.

Procurement rules or regulations:

Recipients of funding will be expected to comply with central Government regulations:

- If the value of individual items being purchased is less than £4,999 (net VAT) then you may place a direct award. (i.e., no need to secure multiple quotes)
- If the value of individual items being purchased is between £5,000 and £24,999 (net VAT) then you must request and supply 3 written quotes from relevant suppliers of goods, works and/or services.

- If the value of individual items being purchased is greater than £25,000 (net of VAT) then you must run a formal tender process. Please notify sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk for advice

UK Subsidy Control Regime:

For business applicants: You will need to declare all grant funding received in the last 3 years. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the 'Act') came into force on 4th January 2023. The Act sets out the UK's prevailing subsidy control rules.

Payments received by the applicant from any business grant schemes administered by local authorities or anything similar from the government, for all business properties they are responsible for, counts as Subsidy Allowance.

Full details can be read [here](#)

To qualify for this grant your business must not have received more than £315,000 of subsidy allowance in the last three years. You will need to include any Covid19 grants you may have received.

Other Key Information:

For business applicants: Grant income received by a business is taxable. The Improving High Grant will need to be included as income within a business tax return. However, only businesses which make an overall profit once grant income is included will be subject to tax.

Anti-fraud Measures:

As part of the appraisal of each application, credit checks may be carried out which will include overdue creditors, bankruptcy, county court judgements and director disqualification. Deliberate manipulation and fraud will not be accepted. Any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.

By applying for the fund, you are confirming that you are eligible for the fund scheme. We are required by law to protect the public funds we administer, and South Cambridgeshire District Council will review the funds claimed. In the event that a claim is later deemed to be incorrect or fraudulent, action will be taken to recover the grant in full. We may share information provided to us with other bodies responsible for auditing, administering public funds, or where undertaking a public function, in order to prevent and detect fraud. Further information is [available on our Fraud webpage](#).

Use of organisational & personal information:

Information submitted by organisations applying for grant funding may be shared with partner organisations to support marketing activity, to assess impact and to undertake independent programme evaluations.

Information provided to the Council will be disclosable to Government offices such as Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and the Cabinet Office.

The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and as such may be compelled to release details of applicant's application form, personal details will be redacted. Business financial details will also be redacted for up to 2 years after the application period but then potentially become disclosable.

Where there are commercially sensitivity, applications this must be advised at the time of application. South Cambridgeshire District Council Privacy Notice can be found [here](#).

Any further enquires can be made at SharedProsperityFund@scamb.gov.uk