

Local Improvements Process & Guidance

For Community Voice Members



What is a local improvement?

A local improvement is something which make a lasting and noticeable improvement to the neighbourhood or environment and the enhances the quality of life for the whole local community.

Examples include

- Improvements to communal gardens
- Improvements to planted areas and verges
- Schemes that deter flytipping
- Improved recycling facilities
- Improvements to signage
- Measures to deter the riding of motorbikes on footpaths
- Benches
- Notice boards

Who can apply?

Any resident of the area covered by each Community Voice can make an application, this includes Community Voice members and local Councillors.

A charity, school or CIC can make an application providing that they can demonstrate they have tenant / resident support for the scheme.

Staff members will not be eligible to make applications as there are other avenues open to them for making improvements and addressing environmental issues.

Funding

We will allocate a budget to each Community Voice annually, which is proportionate to the size of the area covered. Each Community Voice determine which projects in their area they will fund, usually up to a maximum value of £3,000 for an individual project. In exceptional circumstances projects requiring over £3,000 may be considered.

In order to ensure the allocated funds deliver the biggest impact, it is recommended that the applicant works with the Community Development team to apply externally for match funding for projects & schemes, and wherever possible the schemes are delivered in partnership with other agencies.

Where a scheme submitted for consideration exceeds the maximum value allowed for an individual scheme, the proposal will be submitted to the Asset Management team for consideration to be included in any future environmental improvement programmes.

Each Community Voice will be responsible for managing their allocated budget, ensuring that best use of the funds are made and that there is no over spend.

Criteria

Essential Criteria

- Schemes should have a direct, lasting and noticeable improvement on the appearance of a street or area.
- Schemes should be publicly visible and accessible.
- Should the scheme be on private land, the owners' permission must be granted before any agreements are made or works commence
- Should the scheme be on Local Authority land permission must be sought from and granted by the Council before any agreements are made or works commence
- Schemes must provide low or zero future maintenance costs or an ongoing maintenance regime in place at no cost to ForHousing or Community Voice.
- Agreement for future maintenance costs must be made with the land owner before any promises are made to the community or works commence
- The active involvement of local people in the delivery of the scheme or project.
- The potential for meeting key organisational objectives (e.g. improving community safety or contributing to wellbeing and health outcomes)

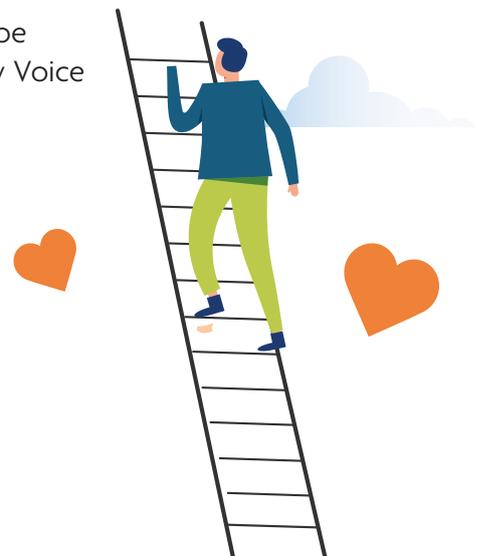
Desirable criteria

- The project will benefit a large number of local people.
- Additional 'partnership' / match funding sought.

Ineligible for funding

- Where a readily available alternative source of funding is available.
- Revenue projects (i.e. management and maintenance of existing facilities).
- Schemes that have already received Council or ForHousing funding (unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would not be 'top up' funding).
- Works that ForHousing or the Council are under an immediate obligation to carry out (e.g. *repair of dangerous footways*)
- Play areas
- Improvements in private gardens or projects that will only benefit an individual
- Any expenditure incurred before the grant is confirmed
- Routine repairs and maintenance
- Projects that cannot be completed within 12 months of the grant being confirmed.

Applications for a project that has previously been denied funding can be resubmitted for consideration providing any feedback from Community Voice has been taken on board and the scheme amended accordingly.



Procedure

The scheme will be advertised on the website, via social media and through word of mouth.

The application form will be available on the website, via social media and a paper copy will be available on request to a staff member.

Applications should be returned to communities@forhousing.co.uk

Applications will be considered as and when they are submitted.

The Community Development Team will review the applications submitted and will select those that meet the criteria for consideration by Community Voice members.

The applications that meet the criteria will be passed to the Regional Neighbourhood Manager for the following checks to be undertaken:

- Confirmation of ownership of the land
- Obtaining permission from the land owner for the scheme / project to be delivered and confirmation that it is appropriate to deliver it.
- Details of any reasons why the scheme cannot be delivered (for example utility pipes under verges)
- Details of any planning permissions required and associated costs
- Liaison with the Community Development team regarding external match funding opportunities – if not already identified within the application
- Obtaining quotes for the works to be undertaken
- Details of any amendments to the application that may be required to make it deliverable
- Where appropriate, obtaining a plan or drawing showing what the contractor aims to deliver and the exact siting of any installations.
- A delivery timescale and / or project plan

The Community Development Team will liaise with the Regional Neighbourhood Manager and Asset Management to ensure that the scheme or project is appropriate and does not duplicate other work taking place. The Regional Neighbourhood Manager and Asset Management will be kept updated at all stages of the scheme progression.

The Community Development Team will make the applicants aware of whether their application has been selected for consideration by Community Voice or not and why.

Community Voice members will review the applications that meet the criteria and select those that they would like to take forward for further investigation.

Community Voice will make the applicants aware of whether their application has been selected for further investigation or not, and why.

Community Voice members will be satisfied that there are sufficient funds to deliver the selected applications before submitting them for further investigation.

Where there are insufficient funds available, members may defer the scheme to the next financial year or request that it is presented to Asset Management for consideration to be included in any future environmental improvement programmes.

The Community Development Team will feedback to the Community Voice within one month of receipt of an application. This will include where there are gaps in the information due to delays in responses from external agencies.

Community Voice will review the information provided by the Community Development Team and make a final decision whether or not to fund the scheme or project.

Community Voice will make the applicant aware of the success or rejection of the scheme. Successful applications will be communicated by Community Voice to the Regional Neighbourhood Manager for delivery to commence.

If the scheme is expected to take longer than 3 months, progress updates will be provided to Community Voice at scheduled meetings and within the quarterly ezine.

Community Voice will be updated following completion of the scheme / project to allow for them to inspect the work

Feedback and Measuring Success

Feedback from the community, including photographs, regarding the success and positive impact of the scheme or project will be requested to be submitted by the applicants not later than 6 months following completion.

Applicants not providing feedback within 6 months will be ineligible to receive further funding until they provide the feedback.

A list of successful applications and delivered projects, along with feedback will be presented at each Community Voice meeting.

