

TITLE: A new East Cambridgeshire District Council fund to support emerging neighbourhood plans

Committee: Finance and Assets Committee

Date: 27 November 2025

Author: Rachel Hogger, Senior Strategic Planning Officer.

Report number: 103

Contact officer: Rachel Hogger, Senior Strategic Planning Officer

Email: rachel.hogger@eastcambs.gov.uk Tel: 01353 616206 Address: The Grange, Ely

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To consider the terms of a new match funding scheme to support parish councils with the development of neighbourhood plans.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are requested to:
 - i) approve the proposed scheme, set out in Appendix 1 to this report, for implementing the new district-wide match fund to support emerging neighbourhood plans
 - ii) delegate authority to the Director (Operations) to approve the grant allocation to parish councils, where they meet the terms of the scheme as set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. The updated 2025-26 Action Plan, associated with the Corporate Plan 2023-27, was agreed by Full Council on 18 September 2025.
- 3.2. This Action Plan for 2025-26 included an item '**Provide match funding to parishes producing Neighbourhood Plans of up to £5,000 per parish**'.
- 3.3. The proposed scheme for implementing this fund is set out at Appendix 1.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 4.1. Full Council resolved to create a neighbourhood plan fund in recognition of the additional difficulties faced by parish councils since the Government's 2025 spending review, which resulted in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) not continuing the previous funding and support regime offered to neighbourhood plan groups via Locality.
- 4.2. Appendix 1 to this report proposes a scheme for implementing, administering and monitoring this fund. It includes a proposal to report back to the Finance and Assets Committee in early autumn 2026 for the purpose of providing an overview of how the fund has been spent and used to date, together with a recommendation on whether and, if applicable, how the fund can be continued into the financial year 2027-28.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications YES	Legal Implications NO	Human Resources (HR) Implications YES
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) NO	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) NO	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) NO

- (a) **Financial implications.** The decision for making the fund available was made by Full Council on 18 September 2025 on the basis of a maximum of £5,000 per parish council. It is proposed to this committee that a fund of £50,000 will be made available. If the fund is operated up to 31 March 2028, and assuming a maximum of £5,000 per parish, it is envisaged this fund could be useful to approximately 10 parish councils. Appendix 1 refers to fund monitoring and proposes the Finance and Assets Committee is provided with an update in autumn 2026.
- (b) **Human Resources Implications.** The administration and implementation of the fund will require officer time within strategic planning and development management (within the Operations Directorate) as well as officer time within the Finance Directorate. The decision for committing these resources however was made by Full Council on 18 September 2025 when the updated Action Plan was agreed.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 'Proposed Scheme for setting up and administering the Neighbourhood Plan Fund'

7.0 Background documents

Corporate Plan, report to Full Council 18 September 2025

<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/Agenda%20Item%2012%20-%20Corporate%20Plan%20September%202025.pdf>