

**STRATEGIC COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY ALLOCATIONS
PANEL**

25 March 2024

Minutes of the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy Allocations Panel held at Bexhill Town Hall on Monday 25 March 2024 at 2.30 pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors C.A. Bayliss, A.K. Jeeawon, P.N. Osborne, V. Cook and T.M. Killeen (MBE).

Other Members Present: Councillor D. Oliver.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Ben Hook – Director of Place and Climate Change, Jeff Pyrah – Planning Policy Manager, Aaron Sams – Principal Community Infrastructure Levy Officer and Ben Yates – Planning Assistant.

CLIP39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CLIP40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T.M Killeen declared an interest on agenda item 4 as a Ticehurst Parish Councillor and did not take part in the vote on the application from Ticehurst Parish Council.

CLIP41 ELECTION OF PANEL CHAIR

Councillor T.M Killeen was elected Chair of the Panel.

CLIP42 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2023

The Panel approved the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.

CLIP43 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The Principal CIL Officer introduced the report, setting out that there were three applications for strategic CIL funding for consideration.

The Panel were informed that in addition to the two applications that they had invited at their previous meeting, from Ticehurst Parish Council and the NHS, there was an additional application from Rother District Council. This application is seeking funding from the Climate Emergency Bonus Fund for environmental sustainability aspects of the previously funded Sidley Recreation Ground Community Hub.

The Panel discussed and considered each application and made the resolutions as set out below:

Project Details	Panel and Officer Discussion	Panel Resolution
<p>Project: Improved sporting pavilions in Ticehurst.</p> <p>Submitted by: Ticehurst Parish Council.</p> <p>CIL requested: £61,974.00.</p> <p>Funding Pot: Rural Matched Infrastructure Fund.</p>	<p>The Panel heard that this project is seeking to refurbish the Bell Field Sports Pavilion in Ticehurst and create a modular multi-sports pavilion, with external lavatories at the Ticehurst Recreation Ground.</p> <p>The Principal CIL Officer informed the Panel that the application scored 36 on its assessment scoring, placing the project just below the priority categorisation. The project, the Panel were informed, is in accordance with a range of Rother Local Plan Core Strategy Policies.</p> <p>The Director for Place and Climate Change asked for clarity regarding how open access the pavilions will be. The Principal CIL Officer confirmed that the applicant has set out that, while primarily to support local football, the pavilions will also be community focussed and useable by all.</p> <p>The Panel welcomed the addition of publicly accessible lavatories.</p> <p>The Director for Place and Climate Change informed the Panel that Ticehurst Parish Council has previously secured strategic CIL which has been effectively used for public realm improvements.</p> <p>The Panel felt that although the provisions are primarily for local use</p>	<p><i>The Panel RESOLVED to allocate £61,974.00 of strategic CIL from the Rural Infrastructure Matched Fund for the funding of the refurbishment of the Bell Field Sports Pavilion in Ticehurst and the creation of a modular multi-sports pavilion, with external lavatories at Ticehurst Recreation Ground. The Funding is subject to any relevant planning approvals being granted. The project will be required to meet the funding requirements as set out in the Governance Arrangements and Funding Decision Protocol. The funding will be available for a period of two years from the date of the Panel decision.</i></p>

	<p>the improvement of sporting and recreational facilities will have secondary and strategic benefits across the district.</p> <p>The Panel were informed that Ticehurst has had high levels of housing development, including 40 additional homes currently under construction and that the proposed provision will support this development.</p>	
<p>Project: Robertsbridge Doctors Surgery</p> <p>Submitted by: NHS/ICB</p> <p>CIL requested: £1.2m</p> <p>Funding Pot: Rural Rother Infrastructure Fund</p>	<p>The Panel heard that this project is seeking to create a new GP Surgery in Robertsbridge. The new surgery will provide an improved primary care service for residents who use the current surgery.</p> <p>The Principal CIL Officer informed the Panel that the application scored 40 in its assessment scoring, placing the project into the priority categorisation. The project, the Panel were informed, does not feature on the current Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) but is likely to be included in the new IDP, which is being produced as part of the new Rother Local Plan. The project is in accordance with a range of Rother Local Plan Core Strategy Policies and is listed as an aspiration in the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p> <p>The Panel heard that the surgery forms part of a planning permission for 21 houses, which is due to be permitted shortly. There are also other yet undetermined permissions for housing in Robertsbridge. The Panel were further informed that the project is strategic in that it seeks also to address the demands placed on neighbouring surgeries.</p> <p>The Panel discussed the importance of using strategic CIL to fund provision such as this and felt that it</p>	<p>The Panel RESOLVED to allocate up to £1.2m of strategic CIL from the Rural Rother Infrastructure Fund. The funding will be subject to Planning Permission being granted. All funding will be required to meet the funding requirements as set out in the Governance Arrangements and Funding Decision Protocol. The funding will be available for a two-year period from the date of the Panel decision.</p>

	<p>is a critical piece of infrastructure for the community, with local as well as strategic benefits.</p> <p>The Panel considered the amount of funding which is being requested and discussed how this would impact the funds available within the Rural Rother Infrastructure Fund. The Principal CIL Officer informed the Panel that should they agree to allocate the requested amount of £1.2m this will leave approximately £40,000 within the Fund. The Panel expressed their strong support for the provision but felt that if there was any possibility that an allocation of £1m could be made and the provision still be viable then this would be their preferred option as to maintain a sufficient level of funds for other provision. The Director for Place and Climate Change endorsed this approach and agreed to take forward conversations with the applicant to determine whether an allocation of £1m would be suitable. The Panel agreed that should the requested £1.2m still be required then this amount can be allocated.</p>	
<p>Project: Sustainability items for Sidley Community Hub</p> <p>Submitted by: Rother District Council</p> <p>CIL requested: £74,194.</p> <p>Funding Pot: Climate Emergency Bonus Fund</p>	<p>The Panel heard that the project to develop a new community hub at Sidley Recreation Ground, which received £247k CIL in 2023, is seeking additional funding for sustainability and environmental features of the build. The Panel had noted in their original allocation decision that they felt the project should address these areas.</p> <p>The Principal CIL Officer informed the Panel that the application was requesting funding for: LED lighting, PV Panels, and 6 EV charging points. The Panel also heard that the 3G sports pitch, which was included in the original application in</p>	<p>The Panel RESOLVED not to allocate £74,194 of strategic CIL from the Climate Emergency Bonus Fund, and to invite the applicant to return with an updated application addressing the items raised.</p>

	<p>2023, has been removed from the project due to several issues being identified during feasibility investigations.</p> <p>The Panel discussed in detail the financial aspects of the provision, noting that a large portion of money was being saved due to the removal of the 3G artificial pitch. The Panel questioned whether the significant savings from this aspect could be used to fund the sustainability measures. The Principal CIL Officer informed the Panel that, though discussions with the applicant, it has been established that the savings from the pitch have already been redirected towards other aspects of the build, including for sustainability measures such as an air source heat pump and a timber frame.</p> <p>The Panel discussed the quotation for the works provided and queried aspects of the costings. The Panel questioned whether LED lighting should be considered an additional sustainability extra or whether this is a standard part of the base build and therefore should not be funded from Climate Emergency Bonus Fund.</p> <p>The Panel also discussed the EV charging points. They wished to know more information on the specific types of EV points and whether these could be used by the public as well as users of the Hub. The Director for Place and Climate Change informed the Panel that more information can be provided to them on the specifics, but it was his view that the EV points will be available for all.</p> <p>The Panel queried whether the applicant would be better to apply for funds from the Bexhill Town Council local CIL pot. The Principal</p>	
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	<p>CIL Officer informed the Panel that as the requested funding is specifically for sustainability measures for a piece of infrastructure and not for funding the infrastructure itself then it would not meet the requirements for funding from local CIL.</p> <p>The Panel were supportive of ensuring that the project addresses the climate emergency and that all RDC buildings contain sustainability measures. However, the Panel felt that they required further information on the queries raised before they can provide the additional funding. The Panel requested that the applicant reappplies with these queries addressed. The Principal CIL Officer agreed to take this forward with the applicant and arrange for an updated application to return to the Panel in due course.</p>	
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CLIP44

REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC CIL ALLOCATIONS PANEL GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS.

The Panel considered the review of the strategic CIL allocations Panel governance and funding arrangements which has been undertaken by the Principal CIL Officer. The Panel recommended the review be conducted at their December 2023 meeting to ensure that strategic CIL funding was being effectively allocated to priority infrastructure provision, and to investigate whether the current funding process could be improved.

The Principal CIL Officer introduced the item and informed the Panel that the review has focussed on the following areas: reviewing other authorities’ funding arrangements, reviewing the current funding pots, feedback from town/parish councils, and setting out proposed changes to the governance arrangements for Panel consideration. The Panel were informed that any changes to the funding process will require further investigation and approval from Cabinet/Council before implementation. The Panel heard that the review had been presented to SLT (Senior Leadership Team) who endorsed the proposed changes.

The Principal CIL Officer presented the following key points:

- In researching other CIL charging authorities governance arrangements it was found that the majority of strategic CIL is allocated to large scale strategic items, with the remaining CIL being allocated to smaller scale localised infrastructure.
- The adoption of the expression of interest process for all the RDC funding pots has generated a greater number of bids than inviting applications from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). However, this has also led to only one of the seven pieces of infrastructure funded by the Panel is included on the IDP, meaning that critical pieces of infrastructure may miss out on funding if the funds become to depleted.
- The division of the Infrastructure Funds into Rural and Bexhill currently presents an issue in that some large-scale strategic items, such as a school or medical facility, will benefit both Bexhill and the rural areas, however funding will be allocated based on the provision's location (Bexhill or Rural). This means that currently a piece of provision may miss out on funding if the individual sub-fund does not have sufficient funds even if the provision would benefit the entire district.
- The Matched Infrastructure Fund (for use by the Town/Parish Councils) currently presents issues which require addressing. The most notable is that a Town/Parish can only match-fund against the amount of local CIL they have generated. This means that areas which have had non-CIL generating development (such as social housing or self-builds) do not have the match-funding capability but still have the levels of development which require supporting infrastructure.
- The requirements for allocation from the Climate Emergency Bonus Fund are currently limited to either 'topping up' or fully funding provision which makes significant reduction or offsetting of carbon emissions. The Principal CIL Officer met, as part of the review, with the Environment Strategy Officer, where it was recommended that the remit of the Fund expands to allow for funding of provision which supports the 5 key objectives of the RDC Climate Strategy. The focus of the Fund should remain as carbon reduction, but the Panel heard, that expanding the funding remit will drive more provision to address the priorities of the Climate Strategy.

The Panel welcomed the review and discussed the following areas:

- **Charging Zones:** The Panel discussed the different rates of CIL which are charged depending on the area of development and the imbalance this causes in the CIL generated in the funding pots, which are currently split into Rural/Bexhill. The Director for Place and Climate Change informed the Panel that the proposal to combine

both the Rural and Bexhill funding pots into one overall Rother strategic fund would help address this issue and allow greater flexibility in allocation.

- Rural areas:** The Panel discussed the definition of ‘rural’ with regard to the rural areas for the purposes of CIL. The Principal CIL Officer confirmed to the Panel that all areas outside of Bexhill as classified as rural. The Panel expressed their view that grouping all rural areas together as if they are the same, and therefore have the same infrastructure needs, is not the right approach. This discussion led to further support for the combining of the infrastructure funds to create a single fund, with the Panel noting that the Local Plan is for the whole of Rother and therefore the CIL process should support provision across the district.

The Panel supported the proposed changes to the governance arrangements and funding decision procedure. These are:

Funding Pot	Proposed changes
Rother Infrastructure Fund	Combine the individual sub-funds into one Rother Infrastructure Fund which would be allocated to large scale strategic provision across the district.
Infrastructure Matched Fund	Amend the ‘match funding’ definition to state that if 50% of the funding can be provided, from any source, then the remaining 50% can be allocated. Removal of the Residual Funding Pots.
Climate Emergency Bonus Fund	Expand the funding remit to include potential to fund provision which addresses the five objectives and accompanying outputs of the Climate Strategy, with the primary focus still being carbon reduction and decarbonisation.

The Panel supported the Principal CIL Officer undertaking further work to implement the proposed changes and were informed that they will be updated on the progress at their next Panel meeting.

The meeting closed at 4:10pm.