BRIEFING NOTE

TO: All Councillors

FROM: Communities Team

SUBJECT: Launch of Community/ Warm Hub Grant Scheme 26/27

DATE:29.09.26

Summary

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is launching a Community/ Warm Hub Grant Scheme from 1st October to support Community/ Warm Hubs in the district following closure of Warwickshire Rural Community Council who facilitated funding to hubs through Cadent.

1. Key points for Councillors

- The scheme provides small grants of £250–£1,000 to support community/warm hub activity across the district.
- The total funding available is £25,000, with awards made on a rolling basis until the funds are exhausted or 31 March 2027, whichever is earlier.
- The scheme has a particular focus on vulnerable residents while bringing together the wider community.
- The scheme is intended to respond, in part, to the impact identified following the closure of WRCC and is linked in the guidance to Growing Opportunities Plan Objectives 7.22/7.23.
- Applications must meet the mandatory eligibility requirements before being scored.
- Councillors may wish to encourage eligible community organisations in their wards to consider applying early, particularly given the rolling nature of the programme and finite funding.
- Details of the scheme are available on SDC's website: Community/Warm Hub Grant Support Scheme 2026 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council
- Online application is preferred but hard copies of the application form are available for any groups without digital access.

2. Background and purpose

Following the closure of Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC) and an assessment of the impact of that closure, Stratford-on-Avon District Council is launching a grant scheme to support existing community/warm hubs, encourage the creation of new hubs and ensure that hubs are fully prepared for the coming winter.

The scheme is intended to support, prolong and enhance community wellbeing activity through community/warm hub events which bring together members of the whole community, with a particular focus on more vulnerable residents.

The scheme is linked in the guidance to Objectives 7.22/7.23 of the Growing Opportunities Plan 2026–29. These objectives concern improving transport/accessibility to local services for rurally isolated residents or those without access to a car or public transport, reducing isolation and improving access to health, education and community life. The stated action includes establishing the adverse impacts of the WRCC closure, evaluating them and determining an appropriate response from the Council and wider partners.

3. What the grant can support

- Venue hire or similar costs to improve the sustainability of community/warm hubs.
- Activities and enhancements intended to improve the experience of people attending a hub.
- Administrative and compliance costs, including insurance, compliance costs, DBS checks and energy bills.
- Other costs associated with the development and delivery of community/warm hubs.

4. Funding available

Item	Details
Total scheme funding	£25,000
Individual grant	£250 to £1,000
Application window	Rolling from October 2026
Closing point	31 March 2027 or when funds are exhausted, whichever is sooner
Delivery period	Mid-October 2026 to the end of March 2027

5. Who can apply

The scheme is aimed at non-profit organisations delivering a community/warm hub for residents within the Stratford-on-Avon district. Examples given in the application guidance include parish or town councils, registered charities, voluntary or community groups, residents' associations and similar organisations.

Applicants must meet all four mandatory eligibility requirements:

- The organisation will deliver a project for residents in a community within Stratford-on-Avon district.
- The organisation has a bank account capable of receiving the grant; payments cannot be made to an individual's account.
- The organisation is non-profit making.
- The project will support, prolong and enhance community wellbeing activity through community/warm hub events, bringing together the wider community with a focus on more vulnerable residents.

National organisations and individuals are not eligible unless working in partnership with a local organisation already delivering activity to communities in the district. Party political groups and for-profit organisations are also excluded.

6. Application and assessment process

Applications will be assessed individually on their merits on a rolling basis. The Council intends that a two-officer assessment panel will review applications and notify applicants of the outcome within four weeks of receipt. The guidance encourages early applications because the programme will close when the available funding is exhausted.

Applications must first pass the mandatory eligibility questions. Applications that pass then receive scored assessment against questions covering the project, health and safety, improvement to the hub and attendee experience, delivery timeframe and funding/contributions.

7. Governance and assurance

- Successful applicants may be asked to provide their constitution, standing orders or other governing document.
- The Council will check who has authority to sign the grant agreement; trustees or other authorised representatives may need to be signatories.
- Applicants must have a bank account; funds cannot be paid into a personal account.
- Successful organisations may be asked to provide evidence of appropriate insurance, including public liability and employer's liability where applicable.
- Relevant policies and procedures may be requested, including health and safety, equality and diversity, data protection/GDPR, safeguarding and, where appropriate, food hygiene documentation.
- Where a group does not have its own policies and procedures, the guidance allows it to explore working formally with an organisation that has appropriate policies and procedures.

8. Delivery timetable

- 1 October 2026: application assessment opens.
- From mid-October 2026: grant agreements and award announcements.
- Mid-October 2026 to end-March 2027: funded activity delivered.
- 31 March to 30 April 2027: Council compilation of evaluation and learning.

9. Further information and contact

The scheme guidance states that application queries can be directed to socialinclusion@stratford-dc.gov.uk. The application guidance also identifies John Wilde (01789 260933) and Emma Gurdag (01789 260937) as contacts for discussion of applications.