

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2023

Report Title	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Spending Allocations for 2024/25			
Purpose of Report	Stroud District Council has been collecting CIL payments on planning permissions implemented since 2017. CIL should be used towards providing for any additional demand placed on the local environment and services created by new housing growth. Project bids have been received from infrastructure providers seeking funding support to deliver projects that align with planning policy. This report sets out the officer funding recommendations for projects requesting funding support in 2024/2025 financial year.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RECOMMENDS to Strategy & Resources that funding commitments are agreed according to the report.			
Consultation and Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CIL bids were passed to Council Officers with specialist knowledge in that subject field. Officers have provided comment on the contents of bids and quality of proposed projects. 2. An informal members' information session was conducted through Zoom on 19th October 2023 where representatives from the applicant groups outlined their project proposals. Copies of the bids were also placed on the Members Hub. 			
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Options	<p>Options are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the proposed CIL spending allocations; or 2. Amend the proposed CIL spending allocations, or 3. Delay the proposed CIL spending allocations for further internal discussion 			
Background Papers	<p>The following papers were made available on the Members Hub:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CIL Strategic Funding Guidance Notes for applicant organisations 2024/25 2. Copies of all project bids received in this year's 2023 funding application round 			
Appendices	<p>Appendix A – Summary of Funding Recommendations for 2024/25 Appendix B – List of Identified Future Infrastructure Needs Appendix C – CIL Strategic Projects Progress Information Sheet</p>			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced by government in 2010 as a mechanism to fund the infrastructure required to deliver new development achieved under Local Plan growth strategies. Stroud District Council adopted and implemented the CIL charge from April 2017. CIL only partially replaces the S106 arrangements which continue to be used only for the very large strategic sites identified in the Local Plan.
- 1.2 Since the Council first started collecting CIL, the 'Strategic Infrastructure' budget has received £2,623,427 (April 2017 to March 2023). The Council invites partner delivery organisations to bid for CIL funding through an annual formal bidding process, the first year being 2019. The funding scheme is explained in comprehensive Guidance Notes and accompanied by a bid Proforma. So far £788,789 of strategic CIL has been formally allocated to eligible infrastructure projects; a summary of their progress to date as attached in Appendix C.
- 1.3 Earlier this year, the council opened its 2023 bidding round. The last financial year's income together with amounts purposefully retained from last year, means the Council have a total available Strategic Infrastructure Budget of £1,834,638 to commit to priority infrastructure projects.
- 1.4 Soon after the bid closing date, copies of this year's bids were uploaded onto the Members Hub with a link sent by email. An informal 'Members Information Evening' was then held where representatives from the applicant project groups gave a short presentation outlining their projects followed by an opportunity for members to ask questions. A recording of this session was circulated to members hub and any remaining questions were followed up by officers and reported back to members via the CIL folder on the members hub.
- 1.5 This report covers the results of this year's assessment and sets out a recommended scheme spend for next financial year 2024/25.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The projects that CIL can be spent on are broadly grouped into capital infrastructure items such as education, social infrastructure, transport and strategic flood risk. These are outlined in the Councils Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) and relate to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), copies of which are available on the council webpages. Projects must also strongly align with the strategic planning objectives set out in the Councils adopted Local Plan.
- 2.2 CIL income will not be sufficient to meet all the district's infrastructure needs. Instead, CIL should be viewed as one aspect of a number of infrastructure funding streams available to providers. CIL Strategic funding cannot be used to support current existing funding programmes or deficiencies but instead should mitigate the impact of new development.
- 2.3 Strategic infrastructure providers who deliver these service types are contacted each year with information on the CIL strategic funding opportunity. These providers included GCC (for Education, Highways, and Libraries), the Environment Agency, local colleges, Emergency Services, Environmental organisations, and certain service areas within the District Council known to deliver unique capital infrastructure projects.
- 2.4 The CIL Funding Scheme Guidance Notes provide a comprehensive overview of the scheme's intentions and conditions. They stress the importance of projects being 'strategic' in scope and how they must strongly align with planning policy. Projects are generally

expected to be capital in nature and be well defined and planned for, offering good value for money.

- 2.5** Following the closing date for bids in September 2023, a panel consisting of Planning Managers and CIL Officers then scrutinised the bids according to the assessment matrix previously approved by Council in 2018. The assessment process also involved consultation with other specialist officers within SDC that were able to further assess the merits of individual applications. Where necessary applicant organisations were contacted with requests for further information.
- 2.6** Eight project bids were received in this 2023 funding round and the key considerations for each bid are summarised below. Of the bids received, seven strongly aligned with the scheme's criteria and supporting planning policy and as such are recommended to receive CIL Funding support as set out in Appendix A attached. One bid was not favoured for funding support in this year and the reasons for this are also summarised below.
- 2.7 Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) - Water quality & habitat improvement at Stratford Park Lake** Led by SDC Officers, the project has match funding support from SDC, GCC and the Wildlife Trust. By installing a 'reed bed' filtration system, polluted water from local road surfaces will be treated before entering Stratford Park Lake. The lake currently suffers from significant de-oxygenation, creating a poor environment for wildlife and for visitor enjoyment. Water quality promises to be significantly improved and the full requested amount of £45,852 is recommended.
- 2.8 Stroud Subscription Rooms – New catering kitchen and toilets** The Subscription Rooms is a strategic recreational venue serving a large area of the Stroud district offering a wide variety of events and functions. Customer toilets are old and unable to keep up with modern demand, suffering from regular breakdowns and complaints. The current kitchen also cannot cope with increasing pressures and needs remodelling for greater catering capacity. The new facilities will allow the Subrooms to continue to provide a quality venue for local residents and the full requested amount of £66,759 is recommended.
- 2.9 Berkeley Community Hub** Based around the Town Library, the project proposes the creation of a multi-functional space that can be used by a wider range of health and wellbeing organisations offering outreach services. Alternative suitable accommodation is an identified issue in the Berkeley area, and many socially and economically disadvantaged sectors of society struggle to access important services. The buildings working offer will be based on other successful 'community hub models' (such as GL11). The full requested £170,000 is recommended.
- 2.10 Berkeley Town Improvement Plan – Detailed Design** Phase 1 of the Town Centre designs was supported by CIL funding last year. This years CIL request will create detailed designs which can then be taken forward for construction. Some concerns were raised in relation to the funding of the delivery phases and the future funding expectations on CIL. Berkeley Town Council have confirmed that they are looking for other funding sources for the capital delivery phases. On the understanding that this funding request will enable the project to reach the next phase, and then enable access other sources of inward investment, the full funding request of £216,440 is recommended, of this, a contribution of £16,440 will come from SDC's Walking and Cycling Budget in acknowledgement of the project's focus to encouraging alternatives to car based travel.
- 2.11 Standish Multi-User Path Construction** Constituting part of the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine, this active travel route is strongly supported by a range of important planning policies. Expressed to us as GCC's top priority project, it has secured considerable match investment from the DfT, GCC and local development. Whilst being a large funding request, its ability

to deliver against key CIL criteria is recognised and therefore the full funding request of £457,346 is recommended, of this amount, a contribution of £57,347 will be made from SDC's Walking and Cycling Budget.

2.12 Gastrells New entrance/reception & office area This project aims to relocate a first floor reception and staff offices to the ground floor, making the school more accessible for visitors and also increasing teaching space on the first floor. The re-modelling of school accommodation also opens potential to create an additional classroom, helping to provide for future growth. Providing for Education places is a priority within supporting CIL planning policy and alternative sources of funding. this project is therefore recommended for the full amount CIL funding requested of £228,000.

2.13 Stroud Merrywalks Interchange Hub The Stroud bus station interchange is one of the most important strategic locations for sustainable travel in the county, as such this GCC led project focusses on modernising facilities, and making the whole area much more user-friendly, comfortable, safe and inviting. The area will benefit from new high quality shelters with CCTV and 'Real Time Passenger Information' along with wider public realm improvements, such as lighting, signage and street furniture. Measures that support and promote attractive sustainable travel options in the district are a key part of planning policy documents, as such the full funding request of £98,000 is recommended for CIL funding.

2.14 Development of Woodchester Park for access to nature – Tinkley Gate Car Park & Shuttle bus. The Tinkley Gate area adjoins Woodchester Park and is a new land acquisition for the National Trust (NT). The bid requests £350,000 to construct a 123 space car park and help trial a community shuttle bus. Assessment considerations include;

- the project is not identified within the underlying planning policy that support CIL
- the project is not a direct result of needs arising from local housing growth
- the chargeable car park would not relieve recreational pressure from other areas
- final car park designs are not confirmed and planning permission has not been granted
- funding a large car park could encourage greater private car access to this relatively remote location; counter to SDC's net zero objectives
- the subsidised bus service proposal has the potential to accord with wider Council Plan objectives, however this project aspect is not sufficiently developed at present

CIL funding must be used to fund the infrastructure required to deliver new development achieved under Local Plan growth strategies. After careful consideration, the SDC's officer assessment group felt that in its current form, the Tinley gate bid does not sufficiently accord with CIL strategic fund criteria to justify this level of requested expenditure.

2.15 Expressions of Interest (EOI) The following project areas have also shown an interest for CIL Strategic funding in future years. Whilst these are not formally assessed in the 2023 funding round, their interest is noted within the CIL process and further working engagement with SDC officers will follow. As noted in item 2.2 above, CIL income will not be sufficient to meet all the district's infrastructure needs, and CIL funding expectations relative to the projects ability to directly address the needs created by housing growth will be discussed with the applicant groups.

- Cam Everlands Primary School (est. £350,000 to £750,000)
- Slimbridge Primary School (est. £800,000 to £1,200,000)
- Stroud Fire Station (est. £285,000 to £500,000)
- Berkeley Town Improvement Plan Capital delivery (est. £1,900,000)

- Berkeley Community Hub Capital delivery phase 2 (est. £295,635)

- 2.16** Members are asked to note the considerable level of funding interest expressed by GCC Education for increased school provision for future years funding. Education places for the Cam area is identified within the IDP and is therefore likely to be strongly eligible for CIL funding. The emergency services are also supported in the IDP, therefore the bid expected for Stroud Fire Station improvements could score well in any future assessment round.
- 2.17** GCC have also indicated a significant need for highways improvements and sustainable travel provision. The IDP also expresses a need to further provide for strategic waste treatment sites, flood risk management infrastructure, social infrastructure, the canal and health and wellbeing services and facilities. A list of known future project investment areas is given in Appendix B.
- 2.18** The ability for CIL to accommodate forthcoming priority infrastructure projects will be an important consideration in deciding CIL funding allocations and previous funding rounds have shown support for the retention of some funds to be rolled over for allocation in future CIL funding years.
- 2.19** Whilst these future infrastructure needs are supported in principle through the Councils Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) and Planning Policies, the level of financial requests is likely to be more than can be collected by SDC's CIL funding scheme alone. Organisations must understand the limitations and Government intentions of CIL income and the need for them to seek additional funding from other sources.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1** It is proposed that payments are made to infrastructure providers in accordance with the recommendations made at Appendix A. The suggested CIL project investment for 2024/25 is £1,208,611, which will come from the secured CIL strategic budget of £1.8 million.
- 3.2** The match funding from the walking and cycling budget which is managed separate to and outside of the CIL funding remit.
- 3.3** Not all of the available funding is proposed to be spent this year; instead, it is considered prudent to retain £626,024 in recognition of the strategically important capital infrastructure projects that have expressed an interest in CIL funding, but are not yet in a position to deliver. SDC CIL Officers welcome the opportunity to work with infrastructure organisations on the development of infrastructure projects and advise on the potential for CIL funding support.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report as the CIL budget is already secured. Any additional match funding by SDC would have to be considered as part of a separate report.

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4.2 Legal Implications

CIL contributions may only be spent on infrastructure projects in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). The levy can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure, including transport, flood defences, schools hospitals and other health and social care facilities pursuant to Section 216(2) of the Planning Act 2008 and Regulation 59 of the Regulations.

The levy can, therefore, be used to fund a very broad range of facilities such as play areas, open spaces, parks and green spaces, cultural and sports facilities, healthcare facilities, academies and free schools, district heating schemes and police stations and other community safety facilities. This flexibility gives the Council the ability to choose what infrastructure it needs to deliver the Local Plan.

Charging authorities may not use the levy to fund affordable housing.

The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development.

Local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area, and they will decide what infrastructure is needed in line with adopted policy.

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4.3 Equality Implications

CIL funding is based on growth and infrastructure requirements set out in the Local Plan, which has been subject to EIA. Consequently, there are no actions in or as a result of this report that will have a negative impact on Equalities or any groups recognised in an EIA.

Members of Environment Committee have previously requested that the very positive equality aspects of CIL investment are acknowledged. Many of this year's recommended CIL projects will significantly improve access to services and facilities for residents that may be experiencing special needs, isolation or would otherwise be economically or socially excluded.

4.4 Environmental Implications

The recommended projects invest in infrastructure that promise to bring significant positive benefits to the Environment. Bids include facilities that reduce the need for motorised travel, supporting public transport and promoting clean active travel (walking and cycling) and water quality improvement schemes which will also help to address nature recovery.

There are no perceived negative environmental implications that would directly result from supporting any of the projects. Projects that make a positive contribution towards Climate Change adaption and/or mitigation and other environmental considerations are strongly promoted throughout the CIL funding scheme.