The Ward Councillor Empowerment Fund (WCEF) 2023-2026 is a funding opportunity aimed at supporting local projects that address the concerns or needs of a specific ward or area. The fund is open from July 1, 2023, to March 31, 2026.

Here are the key points and guidance notes for the fund:

1. **Introduction:**

* The WCEF supports local projects and provides pump priming for initiatives within a ward or across ward boundaries.
* It aims to assist voluntary and community organisations, parish and town councils, and other public sector partners in delivering council core priorities.
* Partnership working and building sustainable communities are encouraged.
* Councillors must demonstrate community support or support from local Parish Councils in their applications.
* Funds can be pooled across the district to address specific issues or projects.

1. **Criteria:**

* Projects must align with at least one of the Council's corporate priorities, which include addressing the climate emergency, delivering for local residents, focusing on prevention, and giving people a bigger say.
* The projects should have support from the local community, village, neighbourhood, parish, or town council (where relevant).
* Match funding or equivalent in-kind support (e.g., volunteer time) should be demonstrated whenever possible.
* The projects should demonstrate the need and how they will address local priorities.
* Community support and consultation should be evident.
* A lead organisation with a valid bank account must be involved.
* When a council service is delivering a project, evidence of agreement from the service area must be provided.
* Planning or licensing consents, if required, should be detailed in the application.

The WCEF will not fund:

* Individuals
* Medical research
* Solely running costs
* Political groups or activities promoting political beliefs
* Projects that have already been completed
* Promotion of any religion, faith, or belief

1. **Project Costs:**

* The application should include details of all project costs, including match funding or in-kind support.
* Projects with significant costs like design or project management must cover those costs within the project budget.
* Internal council departments may charge for their services and ongoing revenue costs.

1. **Funding Allocation:**

* Each Ward Councillor will be allocated a total of £3,000 over three years: £1,000 per year.
* Funding for the first two years can be rolled over, but all funds must be allocated before the end of the third year.
* Ward Councillors can work together and pool funds within the same ward or across wards if the project benefits all included ward areas.

1. **Application Process:**

* Ward Councillors must submit the application(s), and multiple applications are allowed.
* Each application should be a minimum of £200 or more.
* Consent from the recipient organisation or service area must be obtained before submitting the application.
* Relevant Ward Councillors should be notified if the project spans a wide geographical area.
* Additional information can be submitted along with the application.
* The completed application form must be submitted using the [online form](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/form/ward-councillor-empowerment-fund-application-form) or by email to [WCI@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:WCI@bathnes.gov.uk).

1. **Deadline:**

* All application forms must be submitted by March 31, 2026.

1. **Decision Process:**

* Applications will be processed within eight weeks of receipt.
* If approval is not given, the application will be returned with a reasoned explanation.
* Approved applicants will be notified by email, and details will be recorded on the decision register.

1. **Terms and Conditions:**

* A grant agreement document will be sent to successful applicants, which must be completed and returned.
* The funding will be transferred directly to the recipient's bank account (no cheques issued).
* Bath & North East Somerset Council will transfer funds to service areas if they are undertaking the work.
* The recipient organisation must sign a written acceptance of the funding's terms and conditions.
* A written report on the project and valid receipts for funding expenditure must be provided.
* Projects must acknowledge Bath & North East Somerset Council's support.
* All projects must be completed, and funding spent within six months of receiving the funding.
* Proposed changes to funded projects must be notified in writing for approval before implementation.

1. **Contacts:**

* Bath and the environs:
  + Mark Hayward, Community Engagement Officer
  + Email: [mark\_hayward@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:mark_hayward@bathnes.gov.uk)
  + Tel: 01225 396975
* Chew Valley, Keynsham, and Somer Valley:
  + Alison Wells, Community Engagement Officer
  + Email: [alison\_wells@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:alison_wells@bathnes.gov.uk)
  + Tel: 01225 396539