

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Executive Summary

This report covers the provision of grants and subsidies by Ashington Town Council, and how the Council can improve how it offers and awards funding.

The report will briefly highlight the advantages and disadvantages of the current system and make recommendations for funding in the next financial year, beginning April 2022.

Larger grants are currently given in the form of annual subsidies and sponsorship and there is little change year to year. A significant percentage (87% in 2021/22) of the funding awarded is given in this way, with other smaller grants (13% in 2021/22) given throughout the year.

Recipients of annual subsidies and sponsorship may welcome the semi-guaranteed nature of their funding and the absence of a lengthy application process. For the Council, this reduces a needs-based determination and the opportunity for other groups to apply. Having an open invitation to apply for funding will create more opportunities for new and emerging groups and will allow the Council to direct funding where it feels it would be most beneficial.

The speculative way that smaller grants are awarded throughout the year has the benefit of not tying up all the Council's funds early on, but there is an increased administrative burden to process requests. Because the decision meeting receives single applications, there is no chance to benchmark and compare.

It is recommended that the Council continue to provide annual and small grants, and that the process for each is clear and scheduled, enabling groups to plan, but also allowing flexibility.

It is recommended that the Council agree a prescriptive set of funding criteria that will ensure the Council is directing funding appropriately, with due diligence. The process should also allow the Council to agree funding based on merit, the Council's priorities, and with recognisable outcomes for the community of Ashington.

Aims of Funding

Ashington Town Council aims to promote and protect the quality of life and well-being of those who live in, work in, or visit the local area. To this end, the Council offer grants to local organisations based in, or providing services to the locality, to help them maintain and develop their services, facilities, and activities.

The Council has a long history of funding sports clubs and local charities with annual subsidies, and of making funding available to provide smaller grants throughout the year.

The Council must maintain links with funded groups throughout the year as a means of mutually sharing decisions, activities, and events, but also to ensure good governance. Recipients of significant grants should provide updates throughout the year, with particular emphasis on how funding has been spent.

The Council should endeavour to seek public recognition of awards by recipients and should be proud to publicise the awards made.

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Annual Grant Aid Funding

The Annual Grant Aid Funding process should commence early in the financial year. Organisations in receipt of large grants would be expected to provide the Council with quarterly updates; funding could be paid each quarter.

Based on the budget agreed for 2022/23, Ashington Town Council has £59,000 available for this purpose. A recommended Grant Aid Process/Guidelines, and Application Form are detailed at Appendix One.

The Council could launch the Annual Grant Aid Funding process anytime between January and April. The Application Form and Guidelines could be sent out to previous recipients of funding and subsidies, and the opportunity to apply would be publicised on the Council's website and social media. This should be an open process.

It is important that the application process ensures and supports applicants to provide all the information required for the Council to take a decision. Those who do not meet the funding criteria set would not be permitted to apply. Those organisations that are eligible to apply will make the case for funding in the application, the Council will agree funding based on the merits of this, the Council's priorities, and the needs of the community.

It would be good to agree a small group of Cllrs and Officers to review the applications received, with a view to making a recommendation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Awards would be agreed in April/May, and paid following agreement, or quarterly if over a certain threshold.

Small Grants

Small Grants should be invited and awarded three times a year, maintaining an element of flexibility, whilst reducing administration.

Based on the budget agreed for 2022/23, Ashington Town Council has £8,000 available for this purpose. Organisations will be invited to apply for small grants of less than £500 (suggested figure), in June, October and February (for example). The Council should be mindful of the overall budget available and not over fund in any period.

The Council may wish to reassess this fund in the future, as the impact of £500 could be viewed as limited. The funding could then be included in the overall Annual Grant Funding budget.

A recommended Small Grant Process/Guidelines, and Application Form are detailed at Appendix Two. Even with a small grant, it is important that the application process ensures applicants provide all the information required for the Council to take a decision.

Historically, the information provided has been a concern for members; the Council need to ask in the first instance. Those who do not meet the minimum funding criteria set would not be permitted to apply.

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Funding Criteria that must be met

Grant Aid is for voluntary, non-profit making organisations who provide facilities, activities, and services principally for residents served by Ashington Town Council.

Typically, these organisations include sports, play and art clubs, community associations, youth organisations, organisations that assist disadvantaged/vulnerable groups and charitable trusts.

To be eligible to apply for funding from Ashington Town Council, you must be able to provide the following:

- ✓ A constitution or governing document, or written aims and objectives.
- ✓ Up-to-date financial information, including latest accounts and bank statement.
- ✓ A set a basic core policies:
 - Health & Safety
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Safeguarding
 - Data Protection and GDPR
 - Risk Management
 - Complaints Procedure
 - Personnel, including volunteers and employees

In addition, if you are applying for a **Small Grant** from Ashington Town Council, your unrestricted reserves must not be more than 30% of your running costs.

For what can grants be used?

Grant Aid and Small Grants can be used for capital (e.g. purchasing tools and equipment) or revenue expenditure (e.g. running costs) and/or as 'start-up' funding for new bodies.

Organisations that will not be funded

- X Individuals
- X Business organisations whose aim is profit
- X National charities (unless specific direct services are provided within the local area)
- X Other organisations operating from outside Ashington (unless specific direct services are provided within the local area, or these organisations contribute to the wellbeing of the Town and its residents)

Priorities

When allocating Grant Aid, the Council will consider each case on its merits and may give priority to those groups providing services and facilities and/or fulfilling a role where there are currently 'gaps' in provision.

Conclusion

The process will result in a more strategic approach to funding and will open the door to more grant aid applications being received.

It is important to note that the Council may have to say 'no' and may not be able to fund all applicants to the level of funding requested. There is flexibility in the level of funding awarded; money awarded in one year is not a guarantee of award every year.

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The criteria and application process may appear restrictive at first; however, it is important for the Council to demonstrate good governance and set high standards. If the criteria set concerns those groups previously funded, the Council could consider supporting groups to achieve this, but minimum standards must be met.

Recommendations

- ❖ Cease small grant funding of a speculative nature in favour of three times a year funding cycles for grants of £500 (or less) via an application process.
- ❖ Cease annual grants and subsidies without an annual application process in favour of an open annual grant aid funding process.
- ❖ Use the grant funding process for both small grants and annual grants to support the priorities of the Council, and outcomes that would benefit the community.
- ❖ Initiate quarterly reporting by grant aid recipients where appropriate.
- ❖ Convey funding criteria that applicants of all grants must meet to ensure good governance and appropriate use of public funds.
- ❖ Introduce an application form that supports applicants sharing information that is important to the Council's decision-making process.
- ❖ Agree a small group of Cllrs and Officers to review applications received in detail, to make recommendations to the Finance and General Services Committee of the Council.
- ❖ Include formal recognition of the Council in funding conditions and ensure adequate publicity of spending for this purpose.

The Council is asked to consider the following PROPOSALS:

To adopt the revised Annual Grant Aid and Small Grant Funding procedures, as recommended in the Clerk's Report.

To agree the timescales detailed and to launch the Annual Grant Aid Funding opportunity immediately.

To agree the timescales detailed and to publicise the timetable for Small Grants and launch according to the schedule throughout the year.

To agree members of a small group of Cllrs and Officers to review Annual Grant and Small Grant applications in detail.

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APPENIDX ONE – ANNUAL GRANT AID FUNDING

Annual Grant Aid Funding Guidelines and Process *(Most of what is written below is included in the report but would be sent out with the application form as presented)*

Ashington Town Council aims to promote and protect the quality of life and well-being of those who live in, work in, or visit the local area. To this end, the Council offer grants to local organisations based in, or providing services to the locality, to help them maintain and develop their services, facilities, and activities.

Please read these guidelines and criteria carefully before completing your application. If you have any questions, please contact the office on (01670) 624520, or email clerk@ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk.

Funding Criteria that must be met

Grant Aid is for voluntary, non-profit making organisations who provide facilities, activities, and services principally for residents served by Ashington Town Council.

Typically, these organisations include sports, play and art clubs, community associations, youth organisations, organisations that assist disadvantaged/vulnerable groups and charitable trusts.

To be eligible to apply for funding from Ashington Town Council, you must be able to provide the following:

- ✓ A constitution or governing document.
- ✓ Up-to-date financial information, including latest accounts and bank statement.
- ✓ A set a basic core policies:
 - Health & Safety
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Safeguarding
 - Data Protection and GDPR
 - Risk Management
 - Complaints Procedure

For what can grants be used?

Grant Aid and Small Grants can be used for capital (e.g. purchasing tools and equipment) or revenue expenditure (e.g. running costs) and/or as 'start-up' funding for new bodies.

Organisations that will not be funded

- X Individuals
- X Business organisations whose aim is profit
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- X Other organisations operating from outside Ashington (unless specific direct services are provided within the local area, or these organisations contribute to the wellbeing of the Town and its residents)

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Priorities

When allocating Grant Aid, Ashington Town Council will consider each case on its merits and may give priority to those groups providing services and facilities and/or fulfilling a role where there are currently 'gaps' in provision.

Process *(The dates given would be brought forward in future years as Grant Aid could be launched immediately after agreeing the budget)*

All applications received before the closing date of **13th May 2022 (tba)** will be reviewed initially by a small group of councillors and officers who will then make a recommendation to the Finance and General Services (FGS) Committee of the Council.

Grant Aid awards will be agreed at a meeting of the FGS Committee on **Tuesday 7th June 2022 (tba)**. Although recommendations will be made to the FGS Committee, the final decision of each individual Grant Aid award is taken by the Council as a corporate body.

Grant Aid awards are publicised via the Town Council's website and social media channels. Any applicant receiving a grant is encouraged to publicly acknowledge Ashington Town Council.

Grant Aid awards will be paid following agreement and notification. Where funding is over £5,000, the Council will pay awards in quarterly instalments, following the receipt of an update report from the organisation.

Applicants **MUST** meet all eligibility criteria contained in the application form.

Applicants **MUST** complete the application form in full.

Applicants **MUST** provide all documents required with the application.

Applications **MUST** be received by the closing date.

Canvassing councillors or officers directly or indirectly for funding from the Council shall disqualify the applicant.

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Grant Aid Application Form

Name of Organisation		Contact Name	
		Position	
Address for correspondence:		Preferred contact for Grant Aid correspondence	
		Letter () Telephone () Email ()	
Tel:		Bank Details:	
Email:			
What is the status of your organisation? (Please tick)			
Registered Charity ()	Voluntary Organisation ()	Company ()	
Community Group ()	Tenants' Association ()	Other, please specify	
If applying for the first time, please give a brief description of your group/organisation:			
<p>Please include the following with your application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Your constitution or governing document. ✓ Up-to-date financial information, including latest accounts and bank statement. ✓ A set a basic core policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Health & Safety ✓ Equality and Diversity ✓ Safeguarding ✓ Data Protection and GDPR ✓ Risk Management ✓ Complaints Procedure 			
Does your organisation work in partnership with any other organisations? Yes/No (please circle)			
If yes, please give details below:			
Please provide details of membership/users:			
Number of Members/Users?	Do members/users pay a subscription fee? Yes/No (please circle)	Subscription Fee?	

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Number of paid employees (if any)?	Number of volunteers?
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What percentage of members/users RESIDE in the Ashington Town Council area?

If the above is difficult to quantify, please use this space to tell us how your organisation serves the residents of Ashington or contributes towards the wellbeing of the town and residents.

Amount of Grant Aid requested £

Grant Aid can be awarded for specific projects, 'start-up' costs or maintenance/running costs (see Grant Aid Guidelines). **Please give full details of the purpose of your Grant Aid application (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):**

Funding should be spent in the financial year for which it is allocated (unless it is for a long-term project). **Please confirm that this will be achieved or provide an explanation why this may not be the case:**

PLEASE COMPLETE THE REQUIRED INFORMATION BELOW:

Funding currently in hand:		Planned fundraising in 2022/23 with estimate of income:		Anticipated Income/Expenditure in 2022/23
	£		£	Income
	£		£	£
	£		£	Expenditure
	£		£	£

Grants are normally paid in May and may also, at the Council's discretion, be paid in instalments.

Grants can also be off-set against purchases and as a result save any VAT as the Council can reclaim VAT if we directly purchase the vatable item and the cost is within the award agreed. If you think this would be applicable, please speak to us directly.

Please attach a copy of your latest financial statement together with a copy of your most recent bank statement for each bank account your organisation maintains.

UNRESTRICTED BALANCES MAY BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN AGREEING AWARDS

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

DECLARATION

- ✓ I confirm that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information in this application is true and correct.
- ✓ I agree to any disclosure or exchange of information about this application which Ashington Town Council deem appropriate for the administration, evaluation, monitoring and publicising of Grant Aid.
- ✓ I understand that acceptance of this application by Ashington Town Council does not in any way signify that the organisation is eligible to, or will receive Grant Aid, or that if successful Grant Aid will be automatically renewed each year.
- ✓ I have included the documents and policies required.
- ✓ I have included an up-to-date Financial Statement and copies of bank statements.
- ✓ I understand that the Council will *freeze* or *withdraw* funding or *reject* future applications if Grant Aid conditions are not met and/or there is evidence of unlawful activity, malpractice, or other behaviour that the Council deems improper.
- ✓ I agree to verify that Grant Aid has been spent for the intended purpose, in advance of the Grant Aid cycle for 2023/24 (beginning January/February 2023).
- ✓ I agree to inform the council of any significant changes to the membership or running of the organisation.

Signed	Print name	Date
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ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

APPENDIX TWO – SMALL GRANTS

Small Grants Funding Guidelines and Process

Ashington Town Council aims to promote and protect the quality of life and well-being of those who live in, work in, or visit the local area. To this end, the Council offer small grants throughout the year to local organisations based in or providing services to the locality.

Please read these guidelines and criteria carefully before completing your application. If you have any questions, please contact the office on (01670) 624520, or email clerk@ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk.

Funding Criteria that must be met

Grant Aid is for voluntary, non-profit making organisations who provide facilities, activities, and services principally for residents served by Ashington Town Council.

Typically, these organisations include sports, play and art clubs, community associations, youth organisations, organisations that assist disadvantaged/vulnerable groups and charitable trusts.

To be eligible to apply for funding from Ashington Town Council, you must be able to provide the following (fewer than for Annual Grants):

- ✓ A constitution or governing document, or written aims and objectives.
- ✓ Up-to-date financial information, including latest accounts and bank statement.
- ✓ A set a basic core policies:
 - Health & Safety
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Safeguarding
 - Data Protection and GDPR

In addition, as you are applying for a **Small Grant** from Ashington Town Council, your unrestricted reserves must not be more than 30% of your running costs.

For what can grants be used?

Small Grants can be used for capital (e.g. purchasing tools and equipment) or revenue expenditure (e.g. running costs) and/or as 'start-up' funding for new bodies.

Organisations that will not be funded

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- X Business organisations whose aim is profit
- X National charities (unless specific direct services are provided within the local area)
- X Other organisations operating from outside Ashington (unless specific direct services are provided within the local area, or these organisations contribute to the wellbeing of the Town and its residents)

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Process (*The dates given could be changed in future years*)

June 2022	October 2022	February 2023
Apps Invited 2 nd May Closing Date 27 th May Decisions 14 th June	Apps Invited 5 th Sep Closing Date 30 th Sep Decisions 11 th October	Apps Invited 3 rd January Closing Date 27 th January Decisions 14 th February

All applications received before the closing date will be reviewed initially by a small group of councillors and officers who will then make a recommendation to the Finance and General Services (FGS) Committee of the Council.

The Council will not agree funding of more than £2,500 (maximum of five £500 awards) in any period. The Council will not consider funding for groups who have already received awards in the same financial year.

Small Grant awards are publicised via the Town Council’s website and social media channels. Any organisation receiving a grant is encouraged to publicly acknowledge Ashington Town Council.

Grant Aid awards will be paid following agreement and notification.

Applicants **MUST** meet all eligibility criteria contained in the application form.

Applicants **MUST** complete the application form in full.

Applicants **MUST** provide all documents required with the application.

Applications **MUST** be received by the closing date.

Canvassing councillors or officers directly or indirectly for funding from the Council shall disqualify the applicant.

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION



Grant Aid Application Form

Name of Organisation	Contact Name
	Position
Address for correspondence:	Preferred contact for Grant Aid correspondence Letter () Telephone () Email ()
Tel:	Bank Details:
Email:	
What is the status of your organisation? (Please tick)	
Registered Charity () Voluntary Organisation () Company () Community Group () Tenants' Association () Other, please specify	
If applying for the first time, please give a brief description of your group/organisation:	
Please include the following with your application:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Your constitution or governing document, or written aims and objectives. ✓ Up-to-date financial information, including latest accounts and bank statement. ✓ A set a basic core policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Health & Safety ✓ Equality and Diversity ✓ Safeguarding ✓ Data Protection and GDPR 	
Does your organisation work in partnership with any other organisations? Yes/No (please circle)	
If yes, please give details below:	
Please provide details of membership/users:	
Number of Members/Users?	Do members/users pay a subscription fee? Yes/No (please circle)
	Subscription Fee?
Number of paid employees (if any)?	Number of volunteers?

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

<p>What percentage of members/users RESIDE in the Ashington Town Council area?</p>	
<p>If the above is difficult to quantify, please use this space to tell us how your organisation serves the residents of Ashington or contributes towards the wellbeing of the town and residents.</p>	

Amount of Grant Aid requested	£	
<p>Grant Aid can be awarded for specific projects, 'start-up' costs or maintenance/running costs (see Grant Aid Guidelines) and must be spent in the financial year awarded, for the purpose given. Please give full details of the purpose of your Small Grant application (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):</p>		

PLEASE COMPLETE THE REQUIRED INFORMATION BELOW:

Funding currently in hand:		Planned fundraising in 2022/23 with estimate of income:		Anticipated Income/Expenditure in 2022/23
	£		£	Income
	£		£	£
	£		£	Expenditure
	£		£	£

Please attach a copy of your latest financial statement together with a copy of your most recent bank statement for each bank account your organisation maintains.

UNRESTRICTED BALANCES WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN AGREEING AWARDS

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID FUNDING 2022-23: RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR CONSIDERATION
DECLARATION**

- ✓ I confirm that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information in this application is true and correct.
- ✓ I agree to any disclosure or exchange of information about this application which Ashington Town Council deem appropriate for the administration, evaluation, monitoring and publicising of Small Grants.
- ✓ I understand that acceptance of this application by Ashington Town Council does not in any way signify that the organisation is eligible to or will receive a Small Grant.
- ✓ I have included the documents and policies required.
- ✓ I have included an up-to-date Financial Statement and copies of bank statements.
- ✓ I understand that the Council will *freeze* or *withdraw* funding or *reject* future applications if certain conditions are not met and/or there is evidence of unlawful activity, malpractice, or other behaviour that the Council deems improper.
- ✓ I agree to verify that Grant Aid has been spent for the intended purpose.
- ✓ I agree to inform the council of any significant changes to the membership or running of the organisation.

Signed	Print name	Date
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