

AGENDA 10, Enc vi) ANNUAL GRANTS 2026/27 – APPLICATIONS OMITTED FROM CONSIDERATION: Hirst Welfare; Ashington Community FC

1. Purpose of the report

To advise Council of an administrative oversight in the processing of the 2026/27 Annual Grants, to present two grant applications that were received before the closing date but not considered, to set out the financial position and options for funding should Council wish to approve the applications, and to formally record the corrective measures put in place to prevent a recurrence.

2. Background

The Grants Working Group met on 9th June 2026 to consider applications received under the Annual Grants Scheme, and the FGS Committee made its funding decisions on 23rd June 2026. The decisions are summarised in the minutes as follows:

“The Clerk confirmed that following funding requests of £88,847, the Council had agreed funding awards of £76,547, with £46,847 from Annual Grants and £29,700 from Youth Funding. It was also agreed to move the balance in Annual Grants of £8,153 to Youth Funding.”

The FGS Committee subsequently agreed to fund the establishment of a junior parkrun from the Youth Budget at a net cost of £3,500, leaving the moved surplus (Annual Grants) of £4,653 within Youth Funding.

3. Omission

It has since been identified that two applications, submitted on behalf of Hirst Welfare and Ashington Community FC, were received via the Google online application form before the closing date but were not included in the Grants Summary of applications received. As a result, they were not considered by the Grants Working Group on 9th June or by Council on 23rd June.

Because the applications were made through the online form, the submission timestamps confirm definitively that both were received ahead of the deadline. This was not a case of late submission; the omission arose because the online form responses were checked ahead of the closing date and not rechecked afterwards, so applications received in the final period before the deadline were missed.

The Clerk apologises for the oversight and has taken immediate steps, set out at section 6, to ensure it cannot recur.

4. The Applications

Each application seeks £5,000, a combined total of £10,000:

- Hirst Welfare – contribution towards a Building Management System to improve energy efficiency and monitoring.
- Ashington Community FC – contribution towards a tractor for pitch maintenance.

Full accounts have been provided by both organisations, alongside quotes which are available for your consideration so that they can be assessed on the same basis as those considered in June.

5. Financial position and options

The financial position is summarised below:

Item	Amount
Total funding requests considered (23 June 2026)	£88,847

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Item	Amount
Total funding awards agreed	£76,547
— of which Annual Grants	£46,847
— of which Youth Funding	£29,700
Balance in Annual Grants moved to Youth Funding	£8,153
Junior parkrun establishment (net, from Youth Budget)	£3,500
Remaining surplus within Youth Funding	£4,653
Value of the two omitted applications (£5,000 each)	£10,000
Further funding required if both approved	£5,347

Should Council choose to approve both applications, the £4,653 surplus previously moved into Youth Funding could be returned to Annual Grants and applied to the awards, with a further £5,347 required. This balance could be met from any surplus in the Small Grants budget and/or from Contingency.

Council may also wish to consider the Climate Initiatives budget as a funding source for the Hirst Welfare application. The Building Management System is designed to monitor energy use, and funding it from Climate Initiatives would therefore be consistent with the purpose of that budget. If the £5,000 Hirst Welfare award were met from Climate Initiatives, only the £5,000 Ashington Community FC award would fall to the grant's budgets; this could be met almost entirely from the returned £4,653 surplus, with a balance of just £347 from the Small Grants budget.

The decision on whether to fund the applications, in whole or in part, and on the source of funding, rests entirely with Council. The Clerk's advice is to utilise the previously moved surplus by returning it to Annual Grants, the budget from which it was originally transferred, and to meet any balance from the Small Grants budget in the first instance, keeping that budget under review during the year, with Contingency available as a fallback if required. The Climate Initiatives option set out above would reduce the call on the grants budgets and is offered to Council for consideration alongside this advice.

6. Measures to prevent a recurrence

The following measures have been put in place with immediate effect and are reported for formal noting:

- Online form responses will be checked again on the day after the closing date of any grants round, in addition to any checks made beforehand, so that all applications received up to the deadline are captured.
- An automatic receipt will be issued to every applicant on submission of an online application.
- Future scheme guidelines will be updated to advise applicants: "If you do not receive an automatic receipt in respect of your application, please contact the office."

Together these measures provide both an internal control and an applicant-side safeguard and should prevent any repeat of this issue.

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7. Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- Note the report and the circumstances of the oversight.
- Consider the two attached applications from Hirst Welfare and Ashington Community FC and determine whether to make awards.
- If awards totalling £10,000 are approved, return the £4,653 surplus in Youth Funding to Annual Grants and apply it to the awards, with the balance met from the Small Grants budget in the first instance, and from Contingency if required.
- Consider whether the Hirst Welfare award, given the Building Management System's energy-monitoring purpose, should be funded in whole or in part from the Climate Initiatives budget, which would reduce the call on the grants budgets accordingly.
- Note and endorse the corrective measures set out at section 6.