

AGENDA 13, Enc x) Summer 2026 Community Event — Youth-Led Deliver

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval from the Finance and General Services Committee to empower member youth groups from the Youth Advisory Committee to plan and deliver the town's summer event in 2026, in place of the traditional Fair Day, with a budget allocation of £13,000.

2. Background

Ashington Town Council has historically organised an annual summer Fair Day as a free community event. The event has been led by the Events and Engagement Officer, who is in the process of transitioning to a new Finance and Grants Officer role as part of an approved workforce restructure. Responsibility for events has accordingly been incorporated into the newly created Deputy Town Clerk post.

The Deputy Town Clerk recruitment exercise is currently under way, with the vacancy advertised and a closing date of 10th April 2025. Given the typical timescales for shortlisting, interviews, and notice periods, it is reasonably anticipated that a new postholder will not be in place until May or June 2025. This leaves insufficient time for the new officer to research, plan, and deliver the Fair Day in any revitalised format.

In light of this, the Executive Officer has identified an alternative approach that not only addresses the operational challenge but presents a genuine opportunity to strengthen the Council's relationship with its young residents.

3. The Proposal

It is proposed that the Council invites member youth groups via the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) to take the creative lead on the 2026 summer event. Rather than deliver a Council-directed Fair Day, the summer event would be planned and shaped by young people and youth groups, reflecting their interests and aspirations for the community.

The Council would retain an appropriate oversight role to ensure financial probity and safeguarding compliance, and officers would provide practical support throughout the planning and delivery process. However, the vision, format, theme, and programme of the event would be determined by the youth groups themselves through the existing Youth Advisory Committee structure.

A budget of £13,000 is available within the existing events budget line for this purpose.

4. Rationale and Benefits

The proposal offers a number of significant benefits:

- It addresses an identified operational gap in a positive and constructive manner, rather than simply cancelling or reducing the event.
- It meaningfully engages young people and the youth groups in community decision-making, consistent with the Council's community engagement objectives.
- It provides an opportunity for youth groups to further develop skills in event planning, project management, budgeting, and community leadership.
- It will likely produce a fresh, creative event format with broad appeal, bringing new energy.
- It strengthens the Council's relationship with the Youth Advisory Committee, building trust and demonstrating that young people's voices are genuinely valued.

5. Viability

Prior to this matter being considered by Committee, the Executive Officer sought general support from the Chair of FGS and Youth Advisory Committee and wrote to the groups represented on the Youth Advisory

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Committee to gauge interest in principle and invite initial thoughts. The response to that consultation will be reported to the Committee and will inform the conditions attached to any approval.

It is proposed that approval be granted subject to the condition that sufficient interest is received from youth groups to make a youth-led event viable.

6. Financial Implications

The proposed budget of £13,000 sits within the existing approved events budget for 2026/27. No additional expenditure above the current budget provision is being sought. This sum is available and that appropriate financial controls, including any grant or expenditure authorisation procedures, will be applied throughout the planning and delivery process.

Expenditure decisions will be subject to the Council's Financial Regulations, and all payments will require appropriate authorisation. A simple budget tracking framework will be agreed with the youth groups at the outset of the planning process.

9. Recommendation

That the Council agree:

- Via the Youth Advisory Committee, that its member youth groups plan and deliver the summer 2026 community event, in place of the traditional Fair Day format, subject to sufficient interest being received;
- A budget of £13,000 from the existing events budget be allocated for this purpose;
- In the event that insufficient interest is received from youth groups, that 'Fair Day' have a break in 2026, to return in 2027, and the funding is therefore available to be redirected.