

AGENDA 12, Enc xi) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL GRANT AID FUNDING 2025-26 GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Updated: 18th June 2025

This document provides guidance for community groups and organisations applying for Ashington Town Council's 2025–26 Annual Grant Aid. It sets out the purpose of the fund, eligibility criteria, application process, and expectations for use and reporting of grant funding.

1. Introduction and Aims

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 offers grants to local organisations based in Ashington to help them maintain and develop their services, facilities, and activities.

The Council is committed to supporting local community groups, sports clubs, and charitable organisations that provide direct benefit to Ashington residents.

2. Available Funding

- **Total Annual Fund:** £56,000 for financial year 2025/26
- **Maximum Grant per Application:** £5,000
- **Funding Rounds:** One annual round
- **Application Deadline:** Friday 2nd August 2025
- **Decision Date:** Tuesday 9th September 2025

Please note that the Council operates a separate Small Grant Policy for Grants of £500 or less.

3. Eligibility Criteria

Who Can Apply

- Voluntary, non-profit making organisations
- **Must be based in Ashington** (applications from outside Ashington will not be considered)
- Organisations providing facilities, activities, and services principally for Ashington residents
- Examples include: sports clubs, community associations, youth organisations, arts groups, charitable trusts, organisations supporting disadvantaged/vulnerable groups

3.1 Required Documentation

All applicants must provide:

- Constitution or governing document with written aims and objectives

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- Latest audited accounts or independently examined accounts
- Most recent bank statement
- Evidence of the following policies:
 - Health & Safety
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Safeguarding
 - Data Protection and GDPR
 - Risk Management
 - Complaints Procedure
- Dedicated bank account in the organisation's name

The Council will signpost groups who need to develop the required policies.

3.2 Financial Reserves Policy

The Council will not normally fund organisations holding more than 30% of their average annual running costs in unrestricted general reserves. Organisations with reserves between 20-30% must provide detailed justification for these levels.

All applicants must provide:

- A breakdown of all reserves by type and restriction status
- Explanation of the organisation's reserve policy and specific purposes for reserves held
- Calculation showing reserves as a percentage of average annual running costs over the previous two years
- Demonstration that the requested grant cannot be funded from existing reserves
- Evidence of consideration given to using reserves appropriately before seeking grant funding

Exceptional circumstances may be considered where higher reserves are justified by:

- Regulatory or legal requirements for specific reserve levels
- Major capital equipment replacement cycles requiring planned savings
- Seasonal funding patterns necessitating cash flow management
- Insurance or lease requirements for advance payments

Where reserves are not adequately explained or justified, the Council will assume that the applicant has sufficient funds to cover the expenditure from their own resources and that Town Council support is not necessary. The Council reserves the right to request further explanation of financial information, and applicants should be prepared to submit forecasts or cash flow projections if requested.

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4. What Will NOT Be Funded

- Individuals or commercial businesses
- Organisations based outside Ashington
- National charities
- Schools (though PTAs may apply for non-core items)
- Religious organisations where the funded activity is primarily promoting religious beliefs. However, faith-based groups may apply for funding for community activities that are inclusive and non-religious in nature
- Political Organisations
- Projects that are the statutory responsibility of other public bodies
- Retrospective projects or costs already incurred
- General appeals or fundraising for national/regional charities
- Projects that discriminate or exclude based on religion, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or age
- Projects that cannot be completed within 12 months

5. Funding Priorities and Match Funding

Collaborative applications or partnerships between local organisations are encouraged and will be looked upon favourably where they demonstrate strong community impact.

5.1 Priority Areas

- Projects addressing gaps in current provision
- Initiatives tackling inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion
- Activities promoting community cohesion and networking
- Projects preserving local culture and heritage
- Initiatives developing community skills and capacity
- Activities open and accessible to all residents

5.2 Match Funding Policy

When applications exceed available funds, priority will be given to projects with match funding. This approach:

- Maximises the impact of public funds
- Demonstrates applicant commitment
- Ensures project sustainability

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- Provides better value for council taxpayers

Applications must demonstrate fundraising efforts including:

- Details of other funding sources approached
- Amount of match funding secured or committed
- Plans for ongoing sustainability
- Evidence of community support and engagement

6. Application Process

6.1 How to Apply

- Use only the official Council application form
- Submit by Friday 2nd August 2025
- **No presentations required** - decisions based solely on written applications
- One application per organisation per financial year
- Late applications will not be accepted

6.2 Assessment and Decision-Making Process

- All applications will be **initially reviewed by a small panel of Town Councillors and Officers**.
- Each application will be assessed **on its individual merits** using the **points-based system outlined in Appendix A**.
- The assessment will consider alignment with criteria set out below.
- The panel will make **recommendations for grant awards** to the **Finance and General Services Committee**.
- Final decisions will be made by the Committee at its meeting on **9th September 2025**

6.3 Assessment Criteria

Applications will be scored on:

- Benefit to Ashington residents
- Alignment with Council priorities
- Financial need and value for money
- Evidence of match funding and sustainability planning
- Quality of project planning and realistic timescales
- Organisational capacity and governance

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7. Terms and Conditions

7.1 Grant Usage

- Funding must be used for stated purposes only
- Projects must be completed within 12 months
- Reasonable variations in individual costs acceptable
- Unused funds must be returned
- Council reserves right to award partial amounts

7.2 Monitoring Requirements for funding received

Evaluation Timeline:

- For projects: Evaluation requests will be sent 10 months after receipt of award. Where projects have not been completed, we will agree a new date.
- For ongoing activities: Evaluation requests will be sent 10 months after receipt of award.
- Deadline for submission: 4 weeks from date of evaluation request

7.2.1 Enhanced Monitoring for Grants of £2,500 or More

Additional requirements apply to grants of £2,500 and above, with different approaches for projects versus running costs:

7.2.1.1 For Project-Based Grants of £2,500 or More:

Phased Payment Structure:

- First payment (60%): Released upon grant award confirmation
- Second payment (40%): Released upon satisfactory mid-project report and evidence of first phase expenditure

Mid-Project Reporting:

- Due: 3 months after first payment received
- Required content:
 - Progress update against stated objectives
 - Financial expenditure report with receipts/invoices
 - Evidence of Council publicity credit to date
 - Confirmation of project timeline and completion date

7.2.1.2 For Running Costs Grants of £2,500 or More:

Phased Payment Structure:

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- First payment (60%): Released upon grant award confirmation
- Second payment (40%): Released upon satisfactory interim report and evidence of first phase expenditure

Interim Reporting (due 3 months after first payment):

- Service delivery progress and beneficiary impact to date
- Financial expenditure report with receipts/invoices
- Evidence of Council publicity credit to date

Failure to complete evaluation may result in:

- Rejection of future applications
- Request for grant repayment
- Exclusion from future funding rounds
- Delay or withholding of any future grant payments until evaluation is received

7.3 Previous Grant Compliance

Applications may be rejected where conditions of previous grants have not been met, including non-submission of evaluation forms or misuse of previous funding.

8. Publicity Requirements

All grant recipients must:

- Display Council logo on all promotional materials
- Credit the Council in press releases, websites, and social media
- Provide evidence of publicity credit in evaluation form
- Assist with Council publicity including photo opportunities

Important: Council meeting papers are public documents - avoid including personal sensitive or commercially sensitive information in reports.

9. Equality and Diversity Commitment

The Council actively promotes equality and diversity in grant allocation, in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2022. We:

- Ensure transparent, fair, and accessible application processes
- Encourage applications from underrepresented communities
- Conduct unbiased assessment procedures
- Monitor impact on equality and inclusion

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- Provide support to groups needing assistance with applications

10. Data Protection

Personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR for grant assessment and administration purposes only. Data will not be shared with third parties without consent, except where required by law. Contact the Executive Officer regarding data protection queries.

11. Contact Information

For application forms, guidance, or queries contact: Ashington Town Council admin@ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk or telephone (01670) 624521.

12. Appeals Process

The Council's decision is final, but unsuccessful applicants may request feedback. Appeals will only be considered on the grounds of procedural error.

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APPENDIX A - Application Assessment Scoring Matrix

Each application will be scored out of **100 points**, across six weighted criteria:

Assessment Area	Points Available	Assessment Considerations
1. Benefit to Ashington Residents	20	Who benefits? How many? Are outcomes clearly defined and local in focus?
2. Alignment with Council Priorities	20	How well does the project support Council aims?
3. Financial Need and Value for Money	15	Is the grant essential? Are costs reasonable and proportionate?
4. Match Funding and Sustainability	15	Are other sources of funding secured or pursued? Is there a plan for longer-term viability?
5. Project Planning and Deliverability	15	Are timelines, roles, and milestones clear and realistic?
6. Organisational Capacity and Governance	15	Is the organisation well-managed and compliant? Are key policies and documents in place?

Total: 100 Points

A minimum threshold of **60 points** is recommended for funding consideration, subject to available budget and strategic fit.

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Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Who can apply for a grant from Ashington Town Council?

Local voluntary, community, and not-for-profit organisations based in Ashington, providing activities or services that directly benefit Ashington residents.

2. Can we apply if we are based outside of Ashington?

No. Only organisations based in Ashington and primarily serving Ashington residents are eligible.

3. What is the maximum grant we can apply for?

You can apply for up to **£5,000** per financial year. The Council reserves the right to award partial amounts based on assessment outcomes.

4. Is there a minimum amount we can apply for?

There is no formal minimum, and smaller applications are welcomed — particularly where a modest award can make a significant impact. However, we also have small grants throughout the year of £500 or less.

5. Can we apply for both project and running costs?

Yes. You can apply for project-specific costs, running costs (such as rent, staffing, utilities), or a combination of both, as long as it's clearly explained in your application.

6. Can we apply for core school activities or church-based projects?

No. Schools and religious establishments are not eligible for core funding. However, PTAs or faith-based organisations may apply for non-religious, inclusive community activities.

7. What happens after we submit our application?

A panel of Councillors and Officers will assess all eligible applications using a scoring system (see Appendix A). Recommendations will then be made to the Finance and General Services Committee, which makes the final decision.

8. Can we submit more than one application per year?

No. Only **one application per organisation** will be accepted each financial year.

9. Can we request funding for something we've already paid for?

No. Retrospective funding for projects or items already purchased will not be considered.

10. What if we don't have all the required policies?

Applicants are encouraged to have all listed policies in place. However, the Council can support organisations in developing these policies. Please contact us beforehand.

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11. What is the reserves policy, and how does it affect our application?

The Council will not usually fund organisations with general reserves over **30%** of their average annual running costs. If your reserves are between 20–30%, you must clearly explain why they are held and for what purpose.

12. Will we need to report back if we receive funding?

Yes. All successful applicants are required to complete an evaluation form within 10 months of receiving their grant. For grants of £2,500 or more, interim reporting is required, and payments will be made in two phases.

13. What happens if we don't complete our evaluation report?

Failure to submit required monitoring will result in:

- Exclusion from future funding rounds
- Possible repayment of the grant
- Delay or withholding of any future grant payments


14. Can we appeal a decision if our application is unsuccessful?

There is no formal appeal process, but feedback can be requested. The Council's decisions are final and based on merit, eligibility, and available budget.

15. Can we contact someone for help with our application?

Yes. You are encouraged to contact the Council with any questions or for advice on completing the application form:

 **admin@ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk**

 **(01670) 624521**