

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Special Full Council

Date of Meeting – 26 March 2026

Community Funding Policy Decision Report

Recommendation

- **The Committee consider whether they wish to exercise powers of The Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Act 2015 within the Community funding policy.**
- **The Committee RESOLVE to approve the revised Community Funding Policy**

Ward

All

Risk Management

The community funding policy involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks—such as misuse of funds or reputational damage—to ensure public money is used effectively while having regard to the powers and duties of Blyth Town Council and other legislation.

Crime Prevention

None.

Objective

To promote the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its' community

Report

The Community Funding Policy has undergone a review led by officers with the Chair/Vice Chair of the Community Development Committee and the Vice Chair of Community Funding Committee.

Key amendments include:

- Offering enhanced officer support to applying organisations
- Strengthening the initial review undertaken by Officers to ensure that the application criteria is fully met before the application goes to Committee
- Ensuring that applying organisations have the opportunity to consent for their application for funding via small schemes.
- Strengthening the criteria on what is permitted or excluded from funding in line with legislation e.g. not supporting political promotion/activity, and not funding schools.

Members have indicated a preference for introducing an assessment framework for scoring applications. Any emerging framework would need to be transparent to the applicant and this is under development for potential introduction in the future.

Current policy states that 'applications are excluded from religious organisations where they wish to use any funding for these particular purposes'. The Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Act 2015 does however give the council power to support or facilitate, or make arrangements to be represented at, any of the following—

- (a) a religious event,
- (b) an event with a religious element,
- (c) an event connected with a religious or philosophical belief, or
- (d) an event with an element connected with such a belief.

Council should therefore consider whether they wish to exercise this power in relation to the community funding policy.

Members have indicated a preference to exclude funding that supports 'ideologies', however guidance would need to be provided to define this to ensure that any exclusions were lawful.

This policy adoption is time critical for the launch of the 2026-27 funding rounds.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

18 March 2026