



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Version	2
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Date approved	26 March 2026

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR COMMUNITY FUNDING

1. BACKGROUND

The aim of community funding is to support community groups and organisations to deliver activities that contribute to achieving the Council's ambition for the Town.

There is £173,000 available in 2026/27, of which £141,300 is available through Community Grants and £32,000 is available through Councillors' Small Schemes Funding (see section 1.1 below).

FUND	BUDGET
Councillors' Schemes	£32,000
Community Support Grants	£141,300
	£173,300

1.1 Councillors' Small Schemes Funding

Included in the overall Community Grant Fund is £32,000 for Councillors' Small Schemes. Each of the 16 Councillors has access to £2,000 for specific schemes or organisations that they wish to support.

Organisations can make requests for funding from both the Community Grant Fund and Councillors' Small Schemes in the same financial year (and may apply to multiple Councillors for Small Schemes).

In the Community Grant application, an organisation can give permission for that application to be considered by Councillors for Small Scheme funding during the Community Grant process.

The application will then be circulated to all Councillors. Councillors not sitting on the Sub-Committee must declare their interest before the start of the meeting. Councillors attending the meeting can additionally declare their interest in the Sub-Committee meeting. No pledges can be received

after the meeting has closed. In practice therefore, a £5000 Community Grant request could receive £4000 of Community Grant funding and £1000 from two Councillors allocating £500 each from their Small Schemes.

See the Small Schemes Policy for further information on that criteria and process.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

2.1 Application Rounds

Applications are considered by the Community Funding Sub-Committee who meet four times per financial year. This is typically in June, September, November and February. Dates of meetings and closing dates for applications are set at the beginning of each new financial year. The closing date for applications is typically three weeks before the meeting. The exact dates of the meetings and the application deadline are published on the Council website through the Council's communication channels.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

An organisation can contact Officers for an initial discussion about eligibility criteria and whether any extenuating circumstances may apply: info@blythtowncouncil.gov.uk

The application for funding must be in line with some or all of the objectives of the Council.

1. To promote the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the town and its community; and to develop an epidemic strategy and policy statement on Climate Change for the Council.
2. To provide high quality core services in the most effective and efficient manner which will deliver the Council's agreed priorities and objectives.
3. To provide leadership and be a voice for the community in all matters which impact on the town and its community.
4. To work in partnership locally and regionally to meet common goals and outcomes.

Any organisation or group seeking funding from Blyth Town Council will be:

- ◆ Originating from within Blyth. Consideration may also be given to applications for funding for organisations originating from outside of the Blyth Town Council area, providing that persons residing within Blyth will benefit from the project and that satisfactory proof of such benefit accompanies any applications.
- ◆ A registered charity or not-for-profit organisation (for example a Community Interest Company) where any surplus income is used to promote the aims and objectives of the organisation.
- ◆ Established by a written Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- ◆ Run by an Executive Committee, group or officers or other such recognisable structure that demonstrates who is responsible for running the organisation.
- ◆ Required to produce an annual statement of accounts, or other such documentation, that shows annual income and expenditure activity and an account balance.
- ◆ One that has a bank/building society account in the name of the organisation (not an individual).
- ◆ The Council will consider the level of unrestricted reserves in the context of the grant request, the organisation's size, future commitments etc. Where reserves are substantial, then detailed information must be provided for any approved projects that have been agreed for implementation in the next two years. It is the aim of the Council to provide funds to those organisations whose balances are not sufficient support a particular project; however, holding reasonable reserves shall not, in itself be grounds for refusal of funding.

The Council may apply proportionate governance and financial requirements for, for example, newly established community groups. Applicants are encouraged to discuss any potential issue fulfilling the criteria with Officers.

Special consideration may be given to an application at the discretion of the Community Development Committee or its Sub-Committee. This may include emergency situation, urgent community need, or exceptional benefit to residents and shall be clearly justified and recorded in the decision minutes.

The maximum single grant payable is set at £5,000, applications above this amount will not be considered.

Multiple applications from the same organisation may be made in a financial year. However, the cumulative value of grants awarded to any one organisation shall not exceed £5,000 in any financial year. For example, an organisation could be granted £3000 in the June round and £2000 in the September round. Unsuccessful applications are not counted in this total. The Council keep a record of successful applications for five years (see Section 5: Data Protection), and organisations are asked to declare any grants received from the Council in the last five years on the application form, though it is understood that changes in personnel etc may mean this is not necessarily known by the applicant.

The request can be for part-funding of a project, activity or equipment. However please note that if the funding request is for part of the overall cost of the project, the Sub-Committee *may* stipulate that funding will not be released until the whole project is funded (see Section 3 on Assessment Process and Outcomes).

Where an organisation is also seeking other avenues of funding for the project included on the application to the Town Council, then these details must be submitted (Section 12 of the Application Form). If an outcome is received before the Sub-Committee meeting, organisations must update their application as this may impact upon the Sub-Committee's decision.

The application should be made with all the required supporting documentation, or a clear explanation of why it cannot be supplied. Required documents:

- ◆ the application form
- ◆ a copy of your organisation's constitution or governing document
- ◆ a copy of your latest annual accounts
- ◆ a copy of your latest bank statement
- ◆ copies of the agenda of the last three governance meetings
- ◆ a copy of estimates and quotations where relevant
- ◆ a safeguarding policy where the grant will be used to support young and/or vulnerable people.

In some cases there may be a significant period between the date of the previous year's accounts and the date of application. Irrespective of this period applicants should inform the Council if the financial position shown

in the accounts is still reflective at the date of application.

Where the organisation has previously successfully applied for funding, then the projects must be listed along with information on its outcomes (Sections 10 and 11 on the Application Form).

No expenditure should be incurred before you have received confirmation of grant allocation. Retrospective applications cannot be considered. All activity and purchases should be in the future.

If an applicant is unsuccessful in a round, they may reapply with a different or updated application in a subsequent round as long as the criteria are met. Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback.

2.3 Exclusions

- ◆ Applications cannot be accepted from commercial organisations or businesses where they wish to use any funding for these particular purposes.
- ◆ Applications cannot be accepted from individuals. However, a club or group can apply for funding to support individuals, for example to allow a member(s) to compete in a competition that wouldn't be possible without financial support.
- ◆ Applications will not be accepted from existing Town/County Councillors or from their families.
- ◆ Application for funding for political activities or events will not be accepted.
- ◆ Applications are not typically accepted from schools. Schools are funded by central government and the Local Authority and there is no specific power given to local councils to fund schools. Applications from schools can be considered when it is for an activity open to the whole community.
- ◆ Applications for the funding of religious worship events, religious instruction, or events for the promotion of religious belief are not accepted.
- ◆ Community Funding is generally not accessible for supporting the core funding/administration of a community group or organisation unless it applies to the initial/short term support of the project or organisation.

There may be occasions where the Council agree to part funding core costs, but this may only be available where the community group or organisation provides various programs and/or facilities for the whole of the community to benefit from.

Applications including core funding should demonstrate they meet the criteria for consideration.

- ◆ Applications for revenue grants to organisations are not accepted.

The Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out by the Equality Act 2020 when making decisions, to consciously consider how decisions affect people with protected characteristics and take reasonable steps to reduce inequality, prevent discrimination, and promote good relations.

2.4 Submitting Applications

Applications must be submitted with all the required supporting documentation before the advertised closing date ahead of the Sub-Committee meeting otherwise they will be ineligible for consideration.

The preference is for applications to be submitted via email to info@blythtowncouncil.gov.uk. However, hard copies are accepted and can be posted or given to Officers at Arms Everytne House, Quayside, NE24 2AS.

Please be aware that completed application forms will be published on the website, with personal and business-sensitive details redacted. The supporting documentation is not made public.

3. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Submissions are received by Officers at Blyth Town Council who undertake an initial review to ensure that the application form is complete, basic criteria are met, and all supporting documents have been attached to the application. They may be in touch with the applicant to resolve any issues (errors, missed paperwork, clarification) to ensure it can progress to review by the Sub-Committee.

If at this stage the application fails to meet the requirements or is excluded on a point of policy, Officers will discuss the reasons with the Sub-Committee and, if in agreement, inform the applicant their application is ineligible.

Applications are circulated after the closing date to Councillors sitting on the Sub-Committee, and those applicants who have given permission for consideration under Small Schemes will have their applications circulated

to all Councillors.

In some instances the Sub-Committee may find it beneficial for the applicant to personally present/clarify their case. The Sub-Committee are mindful that information requested may be confidential and it may be considered in a private part of the meeting (Part II).

The Community Funding Sub-Committee meet to consider the applications. The first part of the meeting is open to the public where the applications are listed and discussed, and a resolution made to support the application or not.

Councillors are encouraged to declare any prior or ongoing involvement with applicant organisations.

In recognition of the fact that some details of applications may be sensitive or confidential, the meeting can progress to private discussion. At this point, it will be declared that pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is in the public interest that the press and public be excluded and discussion of the application therefore takes place amongst the Sub-Committee members only in a private part of the meeting (Part II).

The Sub-Committee will take account of any Small Scheme funding pledged by Councillors (see Section 1.1 Councillors' Small Schemes Funding for clarification on when these pledges may be received).

The Sub-Committee may:

- resolve not to support the application
- OR resolve to support the application, wholly or in part

The outcome is recorded in the minutes of the meeting which are then publicly available on the Council's website.

The decision of the Sub-Committee is final and no appeals can be made or correspondence entered into against any determinations made. Unsuccessful applicants may request brief written feedback to support future applications.

The decision will be communicated to the organisation by Officers following the Sub-Committee meeting.

Grants will be paid by bank transfer to an organisation or group. The payment/s will be made in a timely manner to be in line with the project

delivery.

It may be agreed by the Sub-Committee that items will be purchased by Blyth Town Council and gifted to the organisation. Some grants may be a mixture of the two.

The Sub-Committee may consider whether to pay the award in instalments, subject to a suitable condition regarding the continued existence of the applicant.

If the funding request is for part of the overall cost of the project, the Sub-Committee *may* stipulate that funding will not be released until it has been confirmed by the organisation that either they have secured the full amount required for the project to go ahead, or they would be able to scale back activities to the level of funding received. The Sub-Committee's decision will take into account the nature of the request (i.e. whether the request is for a discrete item/activity that cannot be divided - e.g. piece of equipment or activity for a whole class of children – or if it is a scaleable activity - e.g. run a smaller event). The Town Council will provide a letter of commitment to funding.

4. CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

Grants will be made subject to the following conditions:

- ◆ They can only be used for the purpose of the application.
- ◆ The Council have the right to request repayment of funding should any grant or part of, not be used for the purpose given on the application form and agreed by Sub-Committee.
- ◆ An organisation may put in a written request to change the use of whole or part of a grant. This will be considered by the Sub-Committee at the next meeting.
- ◆ Where a successful applicant satisfies the objectives of the application and there are Council funds that have not been utilised then notification to this effect must be given to the Town Clerk who will advise on the action that will be taken (i.e. repayment or change of use request).
- ◆ No monies should be spent in advance of the application.
- ◆ The recipient must agree to participate in suitable publicity and to acknowledge the Town Council's contribution, e.g. by stating "supported by Blyth Town Council" and by displaying the logo on associated materials as appropriate.
- ◆ The recipient must agree to provide evidence of expenditure to account for the use of the grant.

- ◆ The recipient must agree to provide suitable feedback on the use of the funding if requested e.g. a short report, photos etc, and allow representatives of the Town Council to visit on request to monitor progress. Monitoring methods depend on the purpose of the grant.

5. DATA PROTECTION

Application forms and any information submitted to support an application will be held on file as follows before being destroyed;

- Successful applicants - for five years following the year in which the grant was awarded.
- Unsuccessful applicants - until the approval of the minutes of the meeting which declined the application.

Sub-Committee minutes recording outcomes are published and held for the terms outlined in the Data Retention Policy.

An annual summary report on Community Funding shall be presented to the Community Development Committee including total funding awarded, distribution by ward, theme etc, outcomes achieved and key lessons learned.

6. POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed annually and may result in changes to the application form and related documents.

Please read this policy in conjunction with:

- Small Schemes Policy
- Data Protection policy
- Retention Policy