



SHENSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Serving Little Aston, Shenstone, Stonnall, Shenstone Wood

End.

Parish Council Office 25C Main Street Shenstone WS14 OLZ

Tel: 01543 481 947 e-mail: [admin@shenstone-](mailto:admin@shenstone-staffs.gov.uk)

staffs.gov.uk

web: www.shenstone-staffs.gov.uk

Shenstone Parish Council Community Grants Policy

1. Introduction and Policy Purpose

1.1 Shenstone Parish Council ("the Council") recognises the valuable contribution made by voluntary, community, and not-for-profit organisations to the wellbeing of the parish.

1.2 This Community Grants Policy sets out the principles, eligibility criteria, and decision-making process by which the Council will consider and award Community Grants.

1.3 The policy is designed to ensure that all grant awards are:

- Made lawfully and transparently.
- Compliant with **Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972**.
- Consistent with **NALC Legal Topic Note 31 (Local Council Grant Giving)**.
- Applied fairly, proportionately, and without discrimination.
- Supported by robust governance and proper financial controls.

1.4 Grants will only be awarded to organisations and not to individuals or profit-making bodies.

2. Legal Framework and Guiding Principles

2.1 The Council's power to award Community Grants is derived primarily from **Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972**, subject to the statutory spending limit in force for the relevant financial year.

2.2 In accordance with NALC guidance, all grant applications must demonstrate a **direct and measurable benefit to the residents of Shenstone Parish**.

2.3 Applications will be assessed on the basis of.

- Demonstrable urgent need.
- Public benefit.
- Inclusivity and accessibility.
- Appropriate governance and financial management by the applicant organisation.

3. Availability of Grant Funding

3.1 The Community Grant scheme will operate on an **annual financial-year basis**, running **1 April to 31 March**.

3.2 At the start of each financial year, the Finance Committee shall review the Council's financial position and recommend to Full Council whether Community Grant funding can be made available.

3.3 For each financial year, Full Council shall approve:

- Whether Community Grants may be awarded.
- The maximum overall budget available for grants;
- Any additional criteria necessary to reflect the Council's financial position.

3.4 The **maximum grant award for 2026/27 shall be £500 per application**.

3.5 Due to the current financial constraints of the Council, Community Grants will be awarded **only in exceptional circumstances**, where an application demonstrates a clear, evidenced, and urgent need.

3.6 The grant cap and eligibility criteria shall be **reviewed annually** as part of the Council's budget-setting process.

3.7 No grant may be awarded without the explicit approval of Full Council.

3.8. Where a grant is awarded, the funds must be used solely for the purposes set out in the approved grant application. Any portion of the grant that is not used in accordance with the application, or remains unspent, must be returned to Shenstone Parish Council. The Parish Clerk will provide recipients with instructions on how any such funds should be repaid.

4. Application Process

4.1 The Community Grant scheme shall operate on a **rolling basis** throughout the financial year.

4.2 There shall be **no fixed application window**. Applications may be submitted at any time where an urgent or exceptional need arises.

4.3 All applications must be submitted to the **Parish Clerk** using the approved Community Grant Application Form and must include:

- Details of the applicant organisation and its governance.
- Evidence of financial need and project costs.
- Confirmation of community benefit to Shenstone Parish.
- Any supporting documentation requested in the application guidance.

4.4 Upon receipt, the Parish Clerk shall:

- Acknowledge the application.
- Validate that all required information has been provided.

- Either register the application as complete or return it for clarification with a request for resubmission by a reasonable date.
- Consideration will be given to the urgency of the application. When appropriate the Parish Clerk may ask the Chair of the Finance Committee to convene an urgent adjudication panel.
- 4.5 Only fully complete applications, as determined by the Parish Clerk shall proceed to adjudication.

4.6. **Formal adjudication of grant applications** will be carried out by the Finance Committee, which will make an appropriate recommendation to Full Council on whether a grant should be awarded. The timescale for reaching a decision will vary depending on when an application is received within the scheduled meeting cycle. The Parish Clerk will calculate and advise applicants of the likely timescales.

5. Grant Adjudication Panel

5.1 The **Finance Committee** shall act as the Grant Adjudication Panel.

5.2 All complete applications shall be circulated by the Parish Clerk to members of the Finance Committee in advance of the relevant meeting.

5.3 Panel members shall:

- Declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other conflicts of interest before scoring begins;
 - Withdraw from scoring and discussion where a conflict exists;
 - Independently review and score each application prior to the meeting to prevent group bias.
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6. Scoring and Assessment of Applications

6.1 Applications shall be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Urgency, Need, and Community Impact**
- **Project Feasibility**
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility**
- **Financial Sustainability**
- **Alignment with Parish Council Priorities**

6.2 Each criterion shall be scored on a scale of **0 to 5**, with defined scoring descriptors, and weightings applied to determine a final score.

6.3 Panel members may identify:

- Areas requiring clarification.
- Missing information.
- Specific concerns (including safeguarding, governance, or financial issues).

6.4 Requests for further information shall be coordinated by the Parish Clerk.

Scoring should be made using the matrix below

| Assessment Criteria | Definition | Weighting | Your Score | Weighted Score |
|---|---|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Urgency, Need & Community Impact Section 2 | Extent to which the project benefits residents, addresses local needs, and promotes cohesion. | 30% | | |
| Project Feasibility Section 2 | Evidence of planning, capacity to deliver, and realistic timelines. | 15% | | |
| Inclusivity & Accessibility Section 2 | Ability of the project to involve diverse groups and reduce barriers to participation. | 15% | | |
| Financial Sustainability Section 3 | Whether the budget is reasonable, funding sources are clear, and the project can be maintained. | 20% | | |
| Alignment with Parish Priorities All Sections | How well the proposal reflects council values such as inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability. | 20% | | |
| Application Total Score | | | | |

The scoring range is 0 to 5 and each assessment criteria should be scored using the following guidance

- **5** – Outstanding: Exceptional evidence and alignment with criteria
- **4** – Strong: Clear, convincing information with minor gaps
- **3** – Acceptable: Meets basic expectations but with noticeable weaknesses
- **2** – Weak: Limited detail or relevance
- **1** – Poor: Minimal relevance or insufficient information
- **0** – Not addressed

Total score out of 25, then apply weightings to determine final score (e.g., Community Impact score = Your Score × 0.3).

7. Finance Committee Consideration and Recommendation

7.1 Other than applications being Grant adjudication will be considered at the **next scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee**.

7.2 At the meeting, individual scores, recorded on the agreed matrix, shall be reviewed and discussed.

7.3 Members awarding scores in the upper or lower quartiles may be invited to explain their rationale.

7.4 The Committee shall seek to reach a **consensus recommendation**, particularly in relation to borderline applications.

7.5 The Finance Committee shall determine whether:

- The application should be recommended for grant funding.
 - The application should be refused.
 - Additional information is required before a determination can be made.
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8. Full Council Approval and Notification

8.1 All recommendations of the Finance Committee shall be submitted to **Full Council** for decision at the next appropriate meeting.

8.2 The Chair of the Finance Committee shall present a summary of each recommendation.

8.3 Each proposed grant award shall be:

- Formally proposed and seconded;
- Determined by majority vote;
- Recorded in the minutes.

8.4 Following the Council's decision, the Parish Clerk shall notify all applicants in writing:

- Unsuccessful applicants shall receive feedback and the reasons for refusal.
- Successful applicants shall be advised of the amount awarded and payment arrangements.

8.5 All payments shall be made in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

8.6 The decision of Full Council is final. **There is no right of appeal.**

8.7 An applicant can make a revised submission.

9. Review of Policy

9.1 This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee and approved by Full Council, or sooner if legislative, financial, or operational changes require.

Document History

| Version | Summary | Date |
|---------|---|------------|
| Draft A | Initial draft for review by the Policy Review Board – Accountability with the Finance Committee | 31 Jul 25. |
| Draft B | Updated to reflect comments from initial Finance Committee | 06 Aug 25. |

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| | Review. | |
| Issue: 1 | Approved by Full Council. | 14 Oct 25. |
| Draft Issue 2 | Updated to reflect new grant limit £500 and move to applications on a rolling basis throughout the year. | 11 Apr 26. |