

WINSFORD TOWN COUNCIL – 21st SEPTEMBER 2026

GRANT APPLICATION: WINSFORD YOUTH & COMMUNITY FORUM

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider an application from Winsford Youth & Community Forum for a grant of **£4,980** towards the delivery of its Friday Night Youth Club and determine whether the Council wishes to:

1. refuse the application as submitted because it exceeds the maximum award permitted by the Council's grants policy; or
2. award a reduced grant of up to **£2,500**, subject to compliance with the policy and the grant conditions set out in this report.

DECISION REQUIRED

Council is asked to consider the following options:

Option A: Award the policy maximum of £2,500

That Winsford Town Council, exercising the General Power of Competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, approves a grant of £2,500 to Winsford Youth & Community Forum towards the delivery of its Friday Night Youth Club, subject to the conditions set out in section 13 of this report. This option would reduce the award to the maximum permitted by the Grants Policy.

Option B: Refuse the application as submitted

That Winsford Town Council declines the application for a grant of £4,980 because the amount requested exceeds the maximum grant of £2,500 permitted under the Council's adopted grants policy. The organisation could be invited to submit a revised application for an amount not exceeding £2,500, accompanied by all supporting information required under the policy.

Option C: Depart from the policy

That Winsford Town Council approves a grant of £4,980 to Winsford Youth & Community Forum, notwithstanding the £2,500 maximum contained in the Council's adopted grants policy, for the exceptional reasons recorded in the minutes and subject to the conditions set out in this report. This option carries a greater governance and consistency risk. If Council is considering this option, it should clearly identify and record the exceptional reasons for departing from its adopted policy.

BACKGROUND

Winsford Youth & Community Forum provides activities, projects and services for children, young people and adults in Winsford and the surrounding area. Its purpose includes encouraging community interaction, involvement and development through partnership working with other organisations and agencies.

The organisation has applied for **£4,980**, which it states represents **25% of the total project cost**. On that basis, the stated total project cost is approximately **£19,920**.

The applicant has confirmed that it has previously received support from the Town Council for youth activities.

The application also states that the organisation does not receive other local authority, National Lottery or other funding. However, the application does not contain a detailed project budget identifying how the remaining 75% of the project cost would be funded.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The grant would support the organisation's Friday Night Youth Club, which provides weekly activities for children aged 8 to 11.

The club is intended to provide a safe, inclusive and structured environment in which children can participate in:

- sports;
- arts and crafts;
- team games; and
- themed workshops.

These activities are intended to encourage creativity, teamwork, positive social interaction and personal development.

The application states that the project works with experienced staff and volunteers who are committed to safeguarding and promoting positive behaviour. The club is intended to be inclusive, including for children who may face barriers to participating in other organised activities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The stated objectives of the project are to:

- provide a safe and welcoming place for children on Friday evenings;
- support children's wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem;
- enable children to try new activities and develop skills;
- encourage positive friendships, communication and teamwork;
- reduce social isolation;
- promote positive behaviour; and
- help children feel connected to their local community.

These objectives are broadly consistent with the purposes of the Council's grant programme, particularly strengthening communities, improving wellbeing, encouraging inclusion and supporting projects that benefit Winsford residents.

BENEFICIARIES

The applicant reports that the youth club directly benefits more than 100 children aged 8 to 11 from across Winsford each week.

As the club operates throughout the year, it is expected to generate a substantial number of attendances. The application does not distinguish between the number of individual children registered with the club and the total number of repeat attendances.

The applicant states that the project takes an inclusive approach and seeks to enable children from different backgrounds and with differing needs to participate.

The project is also intended to benefit local families by providing an accessible and structured activity for children on Friday evenings.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The principal anticipated community benefits are:

1. improving children's wellbeing, confidence and social skills;
2. providing structured and constructive activities on Friday evenings;
3. supporting local families through accessible community provision;
4. reducing social isolation;
5. encouraging positive behaviour and community participation; and
6. strengthening children's connections with the wider community.

The applicant states that there are no other comparable weekly youth clubs in Winsford dedicated specifically to children aged 8 to 11 that offer the same type of structured evening provision. This is the applicant's assessment and has not been independently verified for this report.

The organisation also reports working with schools, voluntary organisations, community groups and Cheshire West and Chester Council services.

Partnership working and shared community benefit are among the objectives identified in the Council's grants policy.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE COUNCIL'S GRANTS POLICY

The Grants Policy provides funding to voluntary and community organisations for activities, services and projects that improve the quality of life of people living in Winsford. Funding decisions must support the objectives of the Winsford Town Council Plan 2025–29.

Strategic fit

The application appears to support the following policy objectives:

- strengthening communities and improving wellbeing;
- supporting an inclusive and accessible project;
- providing benefits to Winsford residents;
- encouraging participation and social connection; and
- promoting partnership working and shared community benefit.]

Eligibility

The policy requires applicants to:

- be a non-profit organisation, community group, charity, community interest company or similar body;
- demonstrate local benefit to Winsford residents; and
- have a bank account in the organisation's name.

The application demonstrates a stated local benefit and identifies the organisation as the intended payee. However, confirmation of the organisation's legal or governance status and evidence that it holds an organisational bank account should be obtained if these have not already been supplied.

Maximum grant

The maximum amount that an organisation may apply for in a single application is **£2,500**.

The application seeks **£4,980** and therefore exceeds the policy maximum by **£2,480**.

The application cannot be approved in full within the ordinary terms of the adopted policy. Council could instead award a reduced amount of up to £2,500, refuse the application as submitted, or expressly decide to depart from the policy for clearly recorded exceptional reasons.

Proportion of project costs

The policy permits the Town Council to fund up to **75% of the total project cost**. Applicants must demonstrate that at least 25% will be funded from other sources and must provide a basic budget showing the total cost, the amount requested and other funding sources, whether secured or pending.

The applicant states that the requested £4,980 represents 25% of the total project cost. This is within the policy's percentage limit. However, the application does not provide a detailed budget or identify the source and status of the remaining project funding.

If the Council awarded £2,500, this would represent approximately **12.6%** of the stated £19,920 project cost and would therefore be within the 75% limit.

Previous funding

The policy states that applicants should not already have received funding through the Winsford Town Council Grants Scheme during the existing financial year or have had an application rejected during that year.

The application confirms previous support from the Council but does not specify the date or financial year. Eligibility should therefore be checked against the Council's grant register before any award is made.

Supporting information

Established organisations should provide their latest audited accounts. New organisations or new projects should provide a simple project budget containing anticipated income and expenditure.

The policy also requires a complete set of accounts, or at least three bank statements, governing documentation and relevant project policies to be provided within seven days of submitting the application.

The material reviewed for this report does not include:

- the latest audited accounts or three bank statements;
- governing documentation;
- a detailed project budget;
- confirmation of other funding sources;
- the organisation's safeguarding policy;

- confirmation of relevant vetting checks; or
- evidence of appropriate insurance.

These documents should be checked against the Council's records before the decision. If they have not been provided within the policy timescale, this should be taken into account when determining the application.

Retrospective expenditure

The policy states that grants generally cannot be awarded retrospectively. Work undertaken before acceptance of the grant funding will not be eligible.

The application describes an existing weekly club but does not specify the precise expenditure period to which the grant would relate. The Council should therefore obtain confirmation that the grant would fund future eligible expenditure and would not reimburse costs incurred before acceptance of the award.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The amount requested is **£4,980**, but the maximum award permitted by the policy is **£2,500**.

If the Council follows its policy, the maximum direct cost would therefore be £2,500, subject to sufficient provision remaining in the Council's approved grants budget.

Before payment, the Council should be satisfied that:

- the project budget is reasonable;
- the proposed expenditure is eligible;
- the remaining project funding has been identified;
- the grant will be applied only to future expenditure;
- the organisation has not received another award during the current financial year; and
- appropriate financial records will be retained.

If the Council approves £2,500 rather than the £4,980 requested, the organisation should confirm that the project remains viable and identify how the resulting funding gap will be addressed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Winsford Town Council has adopted the **General Power of Competence**. Council records confirm that it held the General Power of Competence as at 31 March 2024.

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides that an eligible local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to the statutory restrictions applying to the power. The definition of a local authority for this purpose includes an eligible parish council.

The General Power of Competence may therefore provide the legal basis for awarding a grant to Winsford Youth & Community Forum. The decision and minutes should record reliance upon section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 rather than section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The existence of a statutory power to make the award is distinct from compliance with the Council's adopted grants policy. Although the Council may have the legal power to award £4,980, its policy provides that the maximum grant for a single application is £2,500.

An award above £2,500 would therefore represent a departure from the adopted policy. If the Council chooses that course, it should expressly acknowledge the departure and record clear, relevant and exceptional reasons for treating this application differently.

SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

The project provides activities for children aged 8 to 11.

The grants policy requires groups working with children, young people or vulnerable adults to:

- have appropriate safeguarding policies in place; and
- confirm that staff and volunteers have relevant vetting checks, including DBS checks where applicable.

The application states that the project works with experienced staff and volunteers who are committed to safeguarding. This statement does not, by itself, demonstrate compliance with the documentary requirements of the policy.

Before payment, the Council should receive:

- a current safeguarding policy;
- confirmation of the organisation's safeguarding lead;
- confirmation that appropriate vetting checks are undertaken;
- confirmation of suitable supervision and reporting arrangements; and
- evidence of relevant insurance.

Responsibility for safeguarding, supervision, risk assessment, insurance and lawful delivery would remain with the recipient organisation.

PROPOSED GRANT CONDITIONS

If the Council approves a grant of up to £2,500, the award should be subject to:

1. Receipt of the organisation's latest audited accounts or, where applicable under the policy, at least three bank statements.
2. Receipt of the organisation's governing documentation.
3. Receipt of a detailed project budget showing the total project cost, the amount requested and all other funding sources.
4. Confirmation of whether each source of match funding is secured or pending.
5. Confirmation that the reduced award would allow the project to remain viable.
6. Confirmation that the organisation has not received funding through the grants scheme during the current financial year and has not had an application refused during that year.
7. Written confirmation that the grant will not be used retrospectively or to reimburse expenditure incurred before acceptance of the award.
8. Receipt of the organisation's safeguarding policy and confirmation of relevant vetting checks.
9. Evidence of appropriate insurance.

10. Use of the funding solely for the purpose stated in the application.
11. Retention of invoices, receipts and other evidence of expenditure.
12. Return of any unspent funding at the earliest opportunity.
13. Written notification to the Council if the funded project generates a profit.
14. Submission of an end-of-grant report when the project is completed.
15. Inclusion in that report of the number of beneficiaries, use of the funding and the difference made to the organisation or community.
16. Attendance by a representative of the organisation at the Annual Town Meeting to report on the project.
17. Acknowledgement of Winsford Town Council's support in publicity.
18. Cooperation with the Council in preparing and submitting a media release.
19. Notification to the Council of any material change to the project, funding arrangements or delivery.

These conditions reflect the monitoring, publicity, financial and evaluation requirements in the Grants Policy.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Policy compliance risk

The amount requested exceeds the maximum grant permitted under the policy. This risk can be addressed by limiting the award to £2,500 or refusing the application. Awarding £4,980 would require Council to record an express and properly reasoned departure from the policy.

Financial risk

A detailed project budget and confirmation of other funding sources have not been provided in the material reviewed.

This risk can be reduced by requiring the documents specified in the policy before payment.

Eligibility risk

The applicant has previously received Town Council support, but the information provided does not establish whether that funding was received during the current financial year.

This should be checked against the Council's grant register.

Retrospective funding risk

The club is already operating, and the application does not identify the expenditure period to be funded. Written confirmation should be obtained that the grant will be used only for eligible future expenditure.

Safeguarding risk

The funding would support activities involving children, but the required safeguarding policy and vetting confirmation have not been included in the material reviewed. No payment should be made until the policy requirements have been satisfied.

Monitoring risk

Failure to obtain appropriate expenditure and outcomes information could prevent the Council from demonstrating the benefits achieved through its grant programme.

The end-of-grant report and Annual Town Meeting attendance requirements should be included in the award letter.

EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

The project is intended to provide inclusive and accessible activities for children across Winsford. This aligns with the grants policy priority for projects that encourage participation, social connection, health and wellbeing. The project could support equality of access to structured community activities, subject to appropriate arrangements being in place to support children with differing needs safely.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No significant environmental implications have been identified from the information supplied. Responsibility for the safe and lawful management of premises, equipment, activities and waste would remain with the applicant organisation.

CONCLUSION

The Friday Night Youth Club appears to provide a direct community benefit to Winsford children and broadly supports the priorities of the Council's grants programme. However, the application requests **£4,980**, while the adopted policy limits a single grant application to **£2,500**. The application cannot therefore be approved in full within the normal operation of the policy. In addition, the material reviewed does not contain all the supporting financial, governance, safeguarding and funding information required by the policy. The most policy-compliant approach would be to award a reduced grant of up to £2,500, subject to full compliance with the policy and confirmation that the project remains viable with the lower award. Alternatively, Council may refuse the application as submitted and invite the organisation to provide a compliant revised application.