

ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Grants and Funding Policy

1 Introduction

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council pays out a large amount in discretionary grant funding across a wide variety of organisations and for multiple reasons. This policy is to ensure that the Council has oversight of the processes involved and also how this money is accounted for and reported so that the members of the public are aware of what public funds are being used for.

There is also a tightening of the fiscal governance of the Council, we now have a total turnover approaching half a million pounds per year so we need the proper controls and process in place to support that.

For the 2025/2026 financial year the Council has budgeted for £56,000 (12% of the overall budget) for grant payments. This does not include £120,000 paid in annual grants to Off the Street and BGCBC for 6 detached youth workers. So it is vital that Council is transparent about how this money is spent and ensures there is proper governance around the processes in place.

2 Solar Farm Grants

In addition to the grants that Council give out directly, it also administers an annual grant of £35,000 per annum (this annual amount has been set since 2017) paid as a Community Grant from the Solar Farm Company .

There is a set of criteria and organisations can only apply using the correct Solar Farm grant application form. The Councils administration process has evolved over the years. It agrees a time table for applications to be received, a basic check by the officers that all the required information is there, then a meeting of Council to decided the grant recipients.

The decision is then taken to the Solar Farm Community Fund Company to get their agreement and transfer the funds to the Council who in turn pay the grants to the organisations. What may be lacking is a formal process of checking the results of spending and reporting back to Council.

Recommendation 1: That a specific form is created for Council to document any checks on how the grant money is spent, this could also be used to check on the use of other Council grant funding.

Recommendation 2: During the 12 months following a Solar Farm Grant payment three-monthly checks are made on progress and are reported back to the Finance and Governance committee in the first instance, to then make any recommendations back to Council.

Recommendation 3: The Finance and Governance Committee to review the criteria for the Solar Farm Grants and make any recommendations for changes to Council.

3 Council Grants and Ward Grants

The Council currently has two types of discretionary grants processes (not annual grants or project funding)

The Council agrees a budget pot for Council Grants at the January budget meeting, for 2025/26 this is £17,000. Organisations can apply using an official Council Grants application form. There is a limit of £1,000 per application unless “exceptional circumstances” prevail.

Recommendation 4: The Finance and Governance Committee to look at if a definition of exceptional circumstances can be created.

The Council Grants are discussed and decided upon as part of a regular Council Meeting, where the remaining balance of the current years pot is also reported by the Officers.

Recommendation 5: The process for Council Grants should remain the same.

Ward Grants are an historical legacy. It has been set at £200 per ward seat for over 10 years. (Council has 19 seats so that is $19 \times £200 = £3,800$). It used to be that Councillors would apply for their individual £200 to be given to organisations that they nominated but this is unlawful under the local Government Act 1972 where individual Councillors cannot make financial decisions. A compromise was agreed a few years ago where the Ward Grants were taken before the then Finance and Grants Committee to basically rubber stamp the Ward Grant individual Councillor nominations.

This was superseded by a new process in 2024/25, where the Wards were grouped together and a formal Ward Committee meeting(s) were held to agree the allocation of that wards funding. This is the current system in place. It is still cumbersome to administer, and there is a lack of governance and checks on the funding.

Recommendation 6: The Finance and Governance Committee to review if Ward Grants should be merged into the general Council Grants process, so Council then only has a single Council Grants process and no longer has separate Ward Grants.

4 Annual Grants

The Council has a number of Annual Grants that it pays out to organisations across its area. The Grant amounts are agreed when the Council sets its budget in January. The current list in 2025/26 is

- Ffrindiau Tyleri: £10,000 to help put on events
- Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents: £3,000 for Christmas lighting
- Brynithel Community Centre: £1,500 for Christmas lighting
- Swffryd Community Centre: £1,500 for Christmas lighting
- Bournville Community Centre: £1,500 for Christmas lighting
- Aberbeeg Tenants and Residents: £1,500 for Christmas lighting
- Pentre Tyleri: £1,500 for Christmas lighting

- Friends of Roseheyworth: £1,500 for Christmas lighting
- Zion Miners Chapel: £2,000 for social events
- Six Park Tennis Club: £1,740 for toilet running costs
- Abertillery Rock and Blues: £2,000 towards the running costs for the event
- Aber Rocks: £2,000 towards the running costs for the event.

The relevant Committees or Council release the money which allow Officers to pay the organisations. From 2025/26 the Council will no longer pay a block grant amount to an organisation, it requires the organisations to send in invoices which the Council will pay direct. This gives Council and increased level of transparency and governance and what it is actual spending money on.

Recommendation 7: The Finance and Governance Committee to review if any formal checks on the results of funding should be carried out.

Recommendation: 8: That all events be placed under the Leisure and Tourism Committee

5 Projects/Events

The Council runs or supports a number of different annual projects/events through its various Committees. Budgets for these projects are agreed in the January budget meeting.

Leisure and Tourism: Party in the Park, Central Christmas Lighting Contract, War Memorial Maintenance, Chairs Charity Concerts, Llanhilleth Summer Fete, Viaduct Run, Loneliness Project, Summer Cinema.

PlaCE: Town in Bloom, Car Scheme subsidy, Wales in Bloom, Defibrillators, Wales in Bloom.

Community Empowerment: Funding for detached youth workers, Website, Extra-curricular transport for schools, Councillor surgeries.

Recommendation 9: That the funding governance remains within the Committee structure, but as part of the budgeting process for subsequent years the Committee report back on the previous year's spending.