

St. Helens Council

Ward Member Grant Scheme Guidelines

2024-2026

What is the Ward Member Grant Scheme?

The Scheme provides a fund for Councillors to propose and support grant applications on behalf of eligible voluntary or community groups as a contribution towards activities or projects that improve and benefit community wellbeing in line with the Council's Borough Strategy 2021-2030.

An annual allocation of £2000 is made to each ward councillor, with no carry forward. Each councillor in the ward will have their own allocation. Councillors may, at their discretion, choose to pool allocations to jointly fund grant applications that deliver a benefit across the ward (and across ward boundaries) with the agreement of other ward councillors.

The funding must be used to directly benefit the ward providing the funding or where projects are identified which have a wider benefit, contributions can be made to jointly fund schemes in the same ward or across different wards.

Projects must be accessible, safe, and inclusive for the ward's diverse community, and demonstrate that they are to the benefit of ward residents.

What can be funded?

Funds may be used to make financial contributions awarded as grants to eligible voluntary or community groups for specific projects or activities. The application must demonstrate how the group proposes to achieve the Council's objectives by enhancing community wellbeing in the area, for example:

- Support for voluntary and community groups
- Improvements to community facilities
- Contributions to community events
- Contributions to group activities such as outings or day trips
- Contributions to sports club kits

- Support for school initiatives (providing the activity is outside the requirements of the national curriculum)
- Support for festive celebrations (on the condition that those benefiting from the project must not be asked to convert to the faith or required take part in any unwanted acts of worship).

Expenditure must be 'one-off' and there should be no expectation of future funding or revenue implications for ongoing maintenance costs.

What cannot be funded?

- Activities that have already taken place or purchases that have already been made (retrospective funding)
- Annual running costs i.e. insurance costs, utility bills etc
- Political causes or campaigns
- Ongoing Room Hire
- Repairs to buildings
- Alleygates
- Acts of worship or proselytizing by religious or faith organisations (grants can be awarded to religious groups where the funding is for wider faith-based works that benefit and involves the wider community)
- Prizes or presents
- Individuals or private businesses
- Parish Councils
- NHS organisations
- The procuring of equipment or services as a result of reduced or lost Council or other public sector funding
- Support for projects that are the responsibility of another statutory body (e.g. Police or Fire)
- Support for projects that are in conflict with existing Council policy or strategies

Applications for projects or activities must not involve the Council in future revenue commitments or any increased liabilities.

Where a scheme is to be undertaken on private land, this should only be where there is a clear community benefit and access to the land is agreed. There should be a written agreement with the landowner, giving permission for the work to proceed and detailing arrangements for access, liability, insurance, maintenance etc.

What is the application process?

1. Identify proposal to be supported on behalf of an eligible community or voluntary group
2. Refer to this document to check if proposed grant funding meets the criteria
3. Check the community or community group have prerequisites in place i.e. a bank account plus one of the following which has been signed and dated:
 - Constitution
 - Terms of Reference; or
 - Agreed minutes of meetings
4. Consult with other Ward members as appropriate
5. Establish the amount of grant required.
6. Submit grant application via the online application form on the Members' Portal.

Grant applications must be submitted by councillors via the online application form available on the Members' Portal. To enable appraisal of the application, it is important that councillors provide as much detail as possible in the application form about the proposal they wish to support.

The maximum grant award is £2000.00, and the minimum grant award is £250.

Where councillors seek the support of other ward councillors for joint applications, they must ensure that that the relevant councillors have given their full support before submitting the application.

When submitting an application on behalf of a group, councillors should be mindful of the Code of Conduct for Elected & Co-Opted Members. In the grant application, councillors will be required to sign a declaration to confirm the details provided on behalf of the group are correct to the best of their knowledge. Councillors will also be invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interest they have may in relation to the community or voluntary group. Particular care should be exercised in this regard.

Examples of an interest to be declared would include where the councillor, a relative or a close associate is in a position of management or control in the community or voluntary group concerned, such as Treasurer, Secretary, Chair or Vice-Chair. Councillors should declare any interest in the group when

submitting their application. Failure to declare an interest may be a potential breach of the Code of Conduct for Elected & Co-Opted Members.

What is the approval process?

The application will be appraised in the first instance by the Director of Legal & Governance and the Director of Finance or their nominated representatives. Depending on the nature of the application, the application will be shared with the Director of Communities, Director of Strategic Growth and Director of Operations for their oversight and comments.

Approval for Schemes should be obtained before any expenditure is incurred by voluntary or community groups. Members should allow sufficient time for the administration of grant applications when discussing proposals with groups.

All spending must be supported by receipts, which should be sent into the Council and a copy retained as part of your records within 3 months of the spend. If any items are disposed of in the future or are no longer needed for the required purpose the Council will expect to be reimbursed. Applications for a second grant will not be considered until receipts for the previous grant have been provided to the Council. A grant funding agreement form will be issued, and a signed copy returned by the community or voluntary group who must adhere to the conditions set out in that agreement. Any grant funding not spent as approved should be returned to the Council. Any unreturned funds will be pursued by the Council.

It is the responsibility of the community or voluntary group to secure any other permission/authorisation/regulatory approval required from another body, agency or landowner i.e., public liability insurance in place.

An email will be sent to the councillor to confirm approval of the application or any information required. Once final approval has been given, the application will be processed by Finance and the grant payment will be made directly to the voluntary or community group via BACS transfer upon receipt of a signed grant funding agreement. Under no circumstances will payment of funds be made directly to councillors.

Councillors must not place orders with suppliers themselves as the grant is paid directly to the community or voluntary group. The appointment of

reputable contractors and ensuring value for money rests with the community or voluntary group as the employing organisation and not with the Council.

What are the publicity requirements?

The Ward Member Grant Scheme is Council funded and therefore its publicity and promotion are the responsibility of the Council, to be overseen by its Communications Team.

In the publicity of all projects, credit for funding support should be attributed to the St Helens Council Ward Member Grant Scheme, along with any other funders. Contributing wards may be mentioned, but there must be no element of political claim either indicated or inferred for any approved grant funding.

Where can I obtain further information?

Further information and help on all aspects of the Grant Scheme is available on the Members' Portal or can be obtained by emailing democraticservices@sthelens.gov.uk.