

Broadclyst Parish Council: Community Grant Policy

Subject: Amendment to Community Grant Policy and Guidance – Exclusion of Alcohol Purchases

Meeting Date: 6th October 2025

Report Author: Angie Hurren, Proper Officer.

1. Purpose of the Report

To seek Council approval to amend the Discretionary Community Grants Policy (rev. 2025) and the Community Grant Guidance Notes (rev. 2025) to explicitly state that public grant funding cannot be used for the purchase of alcohol.

2. Background

Broadclyst Parish Council allocates discretionary grants each year to support voluntary, not-for-profit community groups for projects and activities that benefit the community.

The current grant policy and guidance are silent on alcohol purchases. A recent application for support towards a community event highlighted the need for greater clarity on this point; previously we have simply stated informally that grant money cannot be used for alcohol.

The Council has a duty to ensure that public money is spent lawfully, prudently, and for community benefit. Alcohol is considered a private good and not an appropriate use of taxpayers' money. Both internal audit guidance and good practice emphasise that alcohol should not be funded through public grants.

3. Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 1972 – Section 137 (as updated by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) permits councils to incur expenditure only if it is “in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, the area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants.” Alcohol is not considered to provide a direct community benefit.
- Local Government Act 1972 – Section 111 requires expenditure to be necessary for the discharge of the council’s functions. Alcohol is not necessary to deliver council objectives.
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Section 15 allows support to voluntary organisations, but again subject to expenditure being reasonable and in the community interest.
- General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011, ss.1–8): While GPC gives eligible councils “the power to do anything that an individual may do,” this is still subject to public law principles and proper use of public money. Statutory guidance, auditors, and case law all make clear that councils must act reasonably, transparently, and in ways demonstrably beneficial to the community. Funding alcohol purchases would be open to challenge as an unreasonable use of taxpayers’ money and contrary to the principles of financial prudence.

Therefore, whether acting under traditional powers (e.g. s.137 LGA 1972) or under GPC as Broadclyst does, the alcohol element must be excluded to comply with the law and proper standards of public finance.

4. Proposal

That the Council inserts the following wording into its grant framework:

4.1. Community Grant Guidance Notes (Section: “What will not be funded?”):

“The purchase of alcohol.”

4.2. Discretionary Community Grants Policy (Section 1 – Rules):

“1.14 Grants cannot be used for the purchase of alcohol.”

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- To ensure transparency and accountability in use of public funds.
- To align Council practice with national good governance and audit expectations.
- To provide clarity and consistency to applicants.
- To ensure Parish Council funding remains focused on costs that benefit the wider community (e.g. venue hire, publicity, decorations, insurance, non-alcoholic refreshments, entertainment).

6. Financial Implications

No direct financial implications, but the amendment provides stronger internal control and reduces the risk of inappropriate or challengeable expenditure.

7. Recommendation

That Broadclyst Parish Council resolves to:

- 7.1. Amend the Discretionary Community Grants Policy (rev. 2025) and Community Grant Guidance Notes (rev. 2025) as set out in Section 4 of this report; and
- 7.2. Apply the amended criteria with immediate effect to all current and future grant applications.

Angie Hurren
Broadclyst Clerk/RFO
29.09.2025