

Service Support Budget Background

At its meeting on 18.12.25 the Council agreed the following :

‘to allocate £30,000 from the Service Transformation Earmarked Reserve to allow for the possible provision of either time-limited support to key charitable organisations, or financial support for the local delivery of statutory services that are at risk, excluding sporting, leisure or recreational organisations’

(Minute ref 136/25-29)

The Purposes of this report are:

1. To explore the advantages and disadvantages of creating a specific Service Support budget to enable targeted, time-limited financial support for key local services.
2. To consider moving the larger contributions budget, historically used to support the work of the Millennium Green, Youth Club, and Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery, into the Service Support Budget line.

Potential Advantages

Greater Flexibility for the Council	A Service Support budget would enable the Council to respond to emerging risks to vital local services rather than being tied to a single organisation or funding model.
Targeted and Time-Limited Support	Funding could be provided on a short-term or transitional basis, helping organisations adapt, restructure, or secure alternative funding.
Fairness and Transparency	A single budget line with clear criteria reduces the perception of preferential treatment and supports equitable decision-making.
Encourages Innovation and Inclusion	The approach could enable support for organisations that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with harder-to-reach groups • Deliver preventative or early-intervention services • Use innovative delivery models
Reduced Dependency Risk	Moving away from open-ended funding reduces the risk of long-term reliance on Town Council support.

Potential Disadvantages and Risks

Impact on Existing Funded Organisations	Organisations, which have become reliant on ongoing support, may find this approach challenging and may view it as a reduction in certainty.
Increased Demand and Competition	Opening the budget to multiple organisations may result in higher demand than available funding.
Expectation Management	Clear communication will be required to organisations who may have historically received support to ensure they understand that ongoing support is not guaranteed or permanent.

Implications for Current Recipients of Larger Contributions

If adopted, this approach would mean that any future funding for these organisations would be considered alongside other eligible organisations and assessed against agreed criteria.

While this may reduce funding certainty for these organisations, it would:

- Encourage clearer articulation of community benefit
- Reduce long-term dependency
- Align Town Council funding with wider Council priorities outlined in the action plan.

Conclusion

The establishment of a Service Support budget line would provide the Town Council with a more flexible, transparent, and strategic mechanism for supporting essential local services.

While this approach may be less popular with organisations currently receiving ongoing funding, it has the potential to:

- Broaden access to support
- Encourage innovation
- Ensure public funds are targeted where they deliver the greatest community benefit

Decisions Required

Members are asked to consider and decide:

- 1. Whether to establish the proposed budget line and if so to agree to incorporate the 2026/27 contribution allocations made under agenda item 4a and 4b within it.**
- 2. If a budget line is established, as it will have ear marked reserves attached to it to outline what it may be used to fund, ensuring this aligns with the Council's financial constraints, governance responsibilities, and community priorities.**