Chipping Barnet Area Committee

15 January 2015

Title	**Area Committee Budget Allocations**
Report of	Stephen Evans, Director of Strategy Andrew Charlwood, Head of Governance
Wards	Brunswick Park, Coppetts, East Barnet, High Barnet, Oakley, Totteridge, Underhill
Status	Public
Enclosures	Annex 1 – Area Committee Budgets Guidance Annex 2 – Barnet Safeguarding Checklist Annex 3 – Conditions of Grant Appendix 1 – Applications for funding made to the Chipping Barnet Area Committee
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Summary

On 10 June 2014 Policy and Resources Committee agreed that £100,000 per year over the next four years should be allocated to each of the Council's three Area Committees, subject to agreement of detailed arrangements for the governance, accountability and prioritisation of these budgets by the Community Leadership Committee.

On 11 September 2014 the Community Leadership Committee approved proposals for the Area Committee Budgets scheme, to be returned to the Policy & Resources Committee for final agreement.

On 14 October 2014 the Policy & Resources Committee noted the proposals approved by the Community Leadership Committee and agreed the proposed process for allocating the Area Committee budgets during 2014/15.

The deadline for the receipt of applications to the Area Committee Budgets was 15 December 2014. A total of 48 applications were received across the three areas (Chipping Barnet, Finchley & Golders Green and Hendon). The applications received were reviewed by a panel of officers to confirm that they comply with the Area Committee Budgets Guidance and Conditions of Grant.

Details of the applications to the Chipping Barnet Area Committee are set out in the appendix to this report for Members to consider. Members are requested to consider the applications which comply with the conditions and decide whether or not they wish to fund each project using part of the Area Committee's Budget.

Members are requested, as set out in recommendation 3, to note and review the applications which do not comply with the conditions of funding set out in the Area Committee Budgets Guidance. These are attached at the close of Appendix 1.

Recommendations

1. **That the Committee consider the 20 applications for funding from the Area Committee Budget for Chipping Barnet, as set out in Appendix 1.**

2. **That the Committee decide whether it wishes to fund each of the applications which comply with the Conditions of Grant and the criteria set out in the Area Committee Budgets Guidance.**

3. **That the Committee review the 4 applications to the Chipping Barnet Area Committee which are not compliant with the conditions for funding, and which officers therefore recommend are not allocated funding as they are considered to fall outside the scope of the Area Committee budgets and, in certain cases, the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee relating to the conditions of the scheme.**

4. **That the Committee consider the procedure followed for the first round of Area Committee Budgets and make recommendations on any refinements to the process to the Community Leadership Committee/Policy & Resources Committee.**

1. **WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

1.1 On 11 September 2014, the Community Leadership Committee approved proposals for a process to allocate Area Committee budgets, designed to:

- Be open, transparent, simple and non-bureaucratic; and

- Give Area Committees maximum flexibility and discretion to respond to local need, and assign Members a leading role.

1.2 On 14 October 2014, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed the process for allocating Area Committee Budgets.

1.3 The first round of applications closed on 15 December 2014 and the applications have been assessed by officers. Following the assessment process, the Committee are authorised to approve applications which meet the relevant conditions and which the Committee considers meet local priorities, subject to sufficient budget being available.

1.4 A total of 48 applications have been received across the three Area Committees (Chipping Barnet, Finchley & Golders Green and Hendon). 20 were received for funding from the Chipping Barnet Area Committee and further information on these is set out in sections 1.20-1.25 below. Detailed information on all of the applications received which relate to the Chipping Barnet area is provided in Appendix 1. This appendix presents the information submitted by applicants about their proposed projects, with comments, where relevant, from officers who contributed to the due diligence process.

1.5 As set out in the reports to the Community Leadership and Policy & Resources Committees, applicants will be invited to present their projects at each Area Committee on 15 January 2015 and the Ward Councillor with whom they have discussed their application will also be invited to comment on the project.

Assessment Process

1.6 Whilst the scheme is intended to be as light-touch as possible, a degree of accountability is still required to ensure that public funds are not put to inappropriate use. To ensure that applications meet the conditions agreed by the Community Leadership Committee and Policy & Resources Committee, a panel of officers reviewed the applications to determine which are compliant with the Area Committee Budgets Guidance (Annex A), the Safeguarding Checklist (Annex B), and the Conditions of Grant (Annex C).

1.7 The panels were made up of officers from the Finance, Policy and Governance Services and collectively agreed the officer position on each application. Where appropriate, specialist advice was sought from Delivery Units or the Legal Service.

1.8 In some cases, applicants did not submit sufficient information for officers to be able to fully assess the application against the agreed criteria. In these instances, applicants were contacted and the additional information requested. In most cases additional information was received and has been included in the information in Appendix 1. However, due to the timescales, some requests for additional information are still outstanding. Where additional information is received in advance of the Area Committee meeting, this will be circulated to the Committee as an addendum to the report and the information given in Appendix 1 highlights particular issues where Members may wish to ask for further detail when applicants present their projects to the Area Committee (see 1.11, below).

1.9   It should be noted that during the application process, applicants had the opportunity to contact the officers supporting the process to seek advice and guidance.

1.10   Where applications have met the criteria, they have been put forward for consideration by the Committee.

1.11   Where it is not yet confirmed that applications meet the criteria as additional information is required to establish whether they are compliant, they have been put forward for consideration by the Committee, but the points at which further detail is required have been indicated in the Assessment Forms.

1.12   For a number of projects, safeguarding issues have been identified and information requested from the organisations applying on their relevant policies and procedures. Where safeguarding issues have been identified, funding will be conditional on successful review of these policies and procedures by one of the Council's safeguarding experts.

1.13   Where applications have failed to meet the criteria, officers have recommended these are not allocated funding as they are considered to fall outside the scope of the Area Committee budgets and, in certain cases, the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee relating to the conditions of the scheme. This report therefore does not put these projects forward for consideration by the Committee, but the Assessment Forms with details of the application have been included for Members' information and review. Section 4 of the Area Committee Budgets Guidance indicates which kind of projects will not be funded. These include:

•   projects which require on-going support from the Council, or future expenditure;
•   proposals which would address a budget deficit, meet the debts of an organisation in financial difficulty, or cover a shortfall in a service which would normally be provided by the Council or another public sector organisation;
•   projects which are initiated by another public sector body (e.g. a school or GP surgery)
•   funding to assist with the administration and/or research costs of preparing an application
•   retrospective applications for funding for projects which have already taken place
•   projects which have previously been turned down because they do not meet the above criteria.

1.14   Applicants and, where appropriate, the Councillor sponsoring their application, have been invited to attend the Area Committee meeting to present their projects and answer questions from the Committee. Any additional information provided at the Committee will be minuted and will form part of the audit trail. Any verbal information received can be used by the Committee in making a decision to approve or refuse an application.

1.15 The first round of Area Committee Budget applications will be reviewed by the Governance Services and Policy Unit after the first round of applications to identify refinements and process improvements. The Area Committee Budgets assessment process is scheduled for review by Internal Audit in Quarter 1 2015/16.

Release of Funds

1.16 In situations where full funding has been agreed by the Committee, this will be released following the decision and, where relevant, on the approval of safeguarding policies and procedures as set out in 1.12 above.

1.17 Applications which require additional match funding will receive a letter from the Committee Chairman asking the organisation/individual to advise when the additional funds required for the project to proceed have been secured.

1.18 Funds will be released as soon as possible after the decision. In accordance with the process approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in October 2014, funding should be spent within three months of being received by the organisation.

1.19 Once grants have been approved and payments have been made, the recipient will be sent confirmation which requests copies of invoices to the value of the grant or above to complete the Council's audit trail.

Overview of applications received

1.20 20 applications were received in total for funding from the Chipping Barnet Area Committee. 19 were for Chipping Barnet only, and one applied for funding from more than one Area Committee which included Chipping Barnet.

1.21 Most applications to this Committee aimed to promote family and community wellbeing and community safety and cohesion. The table below shows the number of projects which applicants presented as supporting each of the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. After family and community wellbeing, the largest number related to life chances for children and young people, followed by projects aimed at making the Borough a more attractive place. Only three projects targeted the needs of older people.

Table 1: Applications received against each of the Council's priorities

To maintain a well-designed, attractive and accessible place, with sustainable infrastructure across the borough.	8
To maintain the right environment for a strong and diverse local economy.	4
To create better life chances for children and young people across the borough.	11

To sustain a strong partnership with the local NHS, so that families and individuals can maintain and improve their physical and mental health	3
To promote a healthy, active, independent and informed over 55 population in the borough to encourage and support our residents to age well.	3
To promote family and community well-being and encourage engaged, cohesive and safe communities.	14

1.22 Seven projects dealt with environmental improvements, including improvements to local green spaces, new play equipment and supporting infrastructure in parks, and footpaths and access paths in churches and community buildings. Other funding bids were predominantly to run workshops or activities for local people. Three related to local festivals or events. Two projects were aimed at particular communities; one for at-risk youth and one at Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

Overview of funding applied for

1.23 The total funding applied for, including applications made jointly to another Committee, is £114,003.

1.24 Four applications (one made jointly to another Committee) did not pass the due diligence test. One was for targeted support for a single individual, which meant it did not have the focus on a particularly local issue which these Budgets are intended to support. Another was led by another public sector body and was therefore ineligible, as noted in 1.13 above. The third would have incurred an ongoing maintenance cost and the proposed resource for this was also drawn from a public sector grant. The fourth asked for support to develop applications for future funding, which does not comply with the conditions set out in the Area Committee Budgets Guidance. If the non-compliant and joint applications are excluded the total amount applied for from the Committee is £84,006.

1.25 It should also be noted that one application (from the Friends of Friary Park) is for £10,000, which exceeds the recommended maximum grant of £9,999.

1.26 The Committee has the discretion to support the total project cost (up to the recommended maximum of £9,999), support only some elements of an application, or propose a smaller grant offer where the applicant would then need to seek match funding to allow the project to go ahead. This can be beneficial in creating buy-in from the individual or organisation. Match funding must not come from another Council funding stream. The Council must show that it has paid due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making recommendations or decisions as to the size of awards.

1.27 Area Committees may also decide to give collective support to a larger application providing it is of benefit to the wider community across a number of Wards. The Area Committees have the discretion to decide when this should be the case.

Measuring Impact

1.28   Successful applicants will be asked to submit a brief written update on the result of their project following completion. A short annual report based on these updates, on the audit log, and on feedback from Members will be submitted to the Community Leadership Committee each year.

1.29   Officers will review this information, along with intelligence from other grant funding streams, to identify trends in community need and any other lessons to be learned from the projects funded.

Timeline for Allocations

1.30   During the 2014/15 financial year there will only be a single round of applications and awards as the process for approving the applications was only agreed in October 2014, and to avoid clashes with the purdah period in April 2015.

1.31   In subsequent years, the two funding rounds will take place in June and January, with deadlines for applications one month before. This will leave the October and March meetings to discuss other business, encourage bids, and review the progress of grants.

1.32   This timeline for 2015/16 will be set following a review of the first round of applications and allocations.

Unallocated Funds

1.33   If any funds remain unallocated at the close of the financial year, they can also be rolled over for spending in the next, giving Committees some additional flexibility around how they are deployed. Carried forward funding can either be kept in reserve for use if demand is high or added to the base budget of £100,000 in the next financial year. The former approach is recommended as this allows underspend to be used in response to additional need as this arises, rather than spent to meet a deadline.

2.   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   The process for allocating Area Committee Budgets was approved by the Community Leadership Committee and Policy & Resources Committee. The Area Committee are now required to approve (or refuse) the applications received in order for the funding to be released to the relevant organisations.

3.   ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1   None.

4.   POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1   Following the decision of the Committee, funds will be released in accordance with sections 1.16 to 1.19 of this report and Section 12 of the Area Committee Budgets Guidance (Annex A).

5.   IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1   **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1   The Area Committee Budgets contribute to the Corporate Plan's objective to promote family and community wellbeing and support engaged, cohesive and safe communities, by helping communities access the support they need to become and remain independent and resilient.

5.1.2   The scheme will also improve local people's life opportunities by helping local community groups access resources. This will empower them to take part in a broader range of activities, and increase the choices available to them for how they access services, contributing to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy's priority to increase wellbeing in the community.

5.1.3   Each application must demonstrate that the proposal supports one or more of the Council's priority outcomes, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Currently, these are:
- To maintain a well-designed, attractive and accessible place, with sustainable infrastructure across the borough.
- To maintain the right environment for a strong and diverse local economy.
- To create better life chances for children and young people across the borough.
- To sustain a strong partnership with the local NHS, so that families and individuals can maintain and improve their physical and mental health.
- To promote a healthy, active, independent and informed over 55 population in the borough to encourage and support our residents to age well.

Application forms ask applicants to detail how their applications support the Corporate Priorities set out above.

5.1.4   Area Committees have the flexibility to set their own additional priorities which reflect local need and circumstance, should they wish to do so.

5.2   **Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

5.2.1   The budget allocated to each Area Sub-Committee is £100,000 per annum and is funded from Council reserves for four years.

5.2.2   Officer support for the Area Committee budget allocation is required but has so far been managed within existing workloads.

5.2.3 Support has come from the Governance Service, Policy Unit and Finance, with support from Legal and Delivery Units as appropriate. Some transactional finance support will also be required post-decision to provide audit and due diligence and arrange for funds to be released.

5.2.4 However, support arrangements will be reviewed after the round of applications and we cannot rule out the need for additional administrative support in the future around the time when applications are being processed. If this turns out to be the case, additional administrative resources may need to be made available at these times.

5.2.5 The upper and lower thresholds for awards have been proposed to ensure that Committee time is used effectively, avoiding time being spent administering small sums of money, and so that more complex procurement rules are not required.

5.3 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.3.1 Council Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A – the terms of reference of the Policy and Resources Committee includes "to allocate a budget, as appropriate, for Area Committees, and agree a framework for how that money may be spent."

5.3.2 Council Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A – the terms of reference of the Area Committees includes "Administer any local budget delegated from Policy and Resources Committee for these committees in accordance with the framework set by the Policy and Resources Committee."

5.3.3 The Council has power to make the grant awards under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

5.4 **Risk Management**

5.4.1 If the Council did not carry out due diligence on applications for any funding stream, there would be a risk that resources would not be used effectively or that inappropriate projects could be funded. The process set out for allocation of these budgets is designed to mitigate that risk.

5.4.2 Any applications which do not meet the agreed criteria are recommended for refusal.

5.5 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.5.1 The due diligence carried out for the Area Committee budget allocations and the proposed regular review of the process will allow the Council to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty placed on it under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010; specifically to:
- Check that project proposals are inclusive and consider any equality implications they may raise
- Identify any equality considerations relevant to the broader allocation of

resources more effectively than it can at present

- Gain a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of different groups in the community through the additional insight gained by reviewing the projects proposed.

5.5.2   Overall, applications for Area Committee funding were strongly focused on projects aimed at children and young people (29 projects targeting this Council priority), with limited numbers for older people in comparison (11 projects targeting this priority).

5.5.3   The applications to the Chipping Barnet Area Committee likewise had a strong focus on projects and services aimed at children and young people, with limited numbers of projects for older people or aimed at specific ethnic or faith communities.   In future funding rounds Members may wish to consider encouraging applications aimed at a more diverse range of groups to ensure that provision is matched as effectively as possible to local need.

5.6   Consultation and Engagement

5.6.1   A public consultation was carried out as part of the design of the Area Committee Budgets process. Details are set out in the report to the Policy & Resources Committee on 14 October 2014.

6.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1   [Area Environment Sub-Committees - Draft Funding Arrangements](#) (Policy & Resources Committee, 10 June 2014).

6.2   [Area Sub-Committees - Budget Allocation Draft Framework](#) (Community Leadership Committee, 25 June 2014).

6.3   [Developing a Community Participation Strategy for Barnet](#) (Community Leadership Committee, 25 June 2014).

6.4   [Community Participation Strategy: Area Committee Budget Arrangements and Wider Community Funding](#) (Community Leadership Committee, 11 September 2014).

6.5   [Area Committee Budget Allocations Proposals](#) (Policy & Resources Committee, 14 October 2014)