

Appendix 1

Area Sub-Committees - Budget Allocation

Draft Framework

The Policy and Resources Committee, on 10 June 2014, approved the allocation of a budget of £100,000 p.a. to each of the Area Sub-Committees for each of the next four years.

The decision was taken to help give communities and residents the power to shape their local place and services and strengthen local democracy. Amongst some of the key benefits of devolving decision making for aspects of local spending to the Area Sub-Committee will be (i) helping bring a diverse group of people together and therefore supporting community cohesion, and (ii) residents will gain a better understanding of the complexities of public budget setting and deciding between competing priorities. By empowering residents and devolving decisions on spending public budgets, services can be better tailored to local circumstances, which has the potential to result in improved resident satisfaction.

The purpose of the funding is to promote the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the local area for each Area Sub-Committee, and to allow local groups, organisations or individuals to apply to the Area Sub-Committee for funding for projects, schemes, or the purchase of goods and services which seek to improve the quality of life for people who live or work in that local area.

This funding, along with other funding streams which allocate money to communities, is an important lever in helping the Council achieve its goals to increase community involvement and participation in the Borough.

The Council is therefore proposing this framework to ensure that funding is allocated in a way which helps it to achieve these ambitions and in doing so, involves local residents and communities as fully as possible throughout, in a light-touch process which enables appropriate accountability for public money while not being overly bureaucratic.

1. PROCESS FOR ALLOCATING BUDGETS

- 1.1 Each Area Sub-Committee will establish a steering group whose membership is agreed by the Area Sub-Committee. Each steering group will be supported by a senior Council officer.
- 1.2 The steering group will consider evidence about the local area for which it is responsible and use this to agree priorities for the area.
- 1.3 Annually, each Area Sub-Committee will ask its local community to put forward proposals for projects that could be funded through the Area Sub-Committee budgets.
- 1.4 The steering group for each area will meet prior to the meeting of the full Area Sub-Committee to review the project proposals and recommend which should be funded, based on the priorities for that area.

- 1.5 At their next meeting, the Area Sub-Committees will decide whether or not to agree each of these recommendations. The projects which receive funding will be incorporated into the Area Sub-Committee's forward plan.
- 1.6 The Area Forward plan will show the priorities that have been identified through consultation with residents and Ward Councillors and will be agreed by the Area Sub-Committee. The plan will include locally determined priorities where there is evidence of need or where engagement has demonstrated strong local demand. Ward Councillors will be crucial to the development of Area Forward Plans.
- 1.7 Measures of the success in delivering the Area Plan will be reviewed regularly by the Area Sub-Committees with an annual report submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee and Community Leadership Committee.
- 1.8 Each Area Forward Plan will contain details of the resources allocated to achieving the local priorities identified.
- 1.9 The plan should incorporate short term priorities that will contribute to the long term outcomes.
- 1.10 Projects will be evaluated as part of the Annual Report, and the lessons learned from this used, where relevant, to inform decisions about future provision of other services. The Area Sub-Committees and Residents' Forums, and the delivery of the projects, will also be a source of ad hoc insight into local priorities and residents' concerns.
- 1.11 This cycle will be repeated each year with one of the four annual Residents' Forums/Area Sub-Committees being dedicated to discussing local priorities and projects.

2. INVOLVING RESIDENTS AND OTHER LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

- 2.1 The Council's Community Participation Strategy notes the benefits to both Council and community from involving a broad range of local stakeholders, including residents, in identifying local need, setting priorities, allocating funding, and delivering against outcomes. This framework therefore involves residents and other local stakeholders throughout the budget-setting process as set out below.
- 2.2 Local residents and voluntary and community groups will be involved during the identification of local need, through a broad community consultation for each of the Area Sub-Committee local areas and by being asked to submit appropriate project proposals for funding.
- 2.3 Residents and other local stakeholders will then also be involved in the process of setting priorities and allocating funding, by ensuring that each steering group has representatives from the following groups:
 - Ward Councillors, ideally existing members of the Area Sub-Committees
 - Local residents
 - Local voluntary and community groups
 - Representatives from other statutory partners

- 2.4 Finally, the community will be involved in activities which support local priorities through delivery of the projects which are funded, building their capacity to deliver more activities in the future.
- 2.5 The steering group will be given support from Council officers to develop their understanding of budgets, priority setting and consultation processes, ensuring that the group understands:
- how to use evidence and prioritise effectively
 - how to ensure the views of a range of local stakeholders are represented
 - how to evaluate projects and assess their benefits and sustainability
 - how to identify and manage any risks involved
 - how to monitor the performance and delivery of projects.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 Certain principles will need to be followed to ensure good governance and accountability for the budgets.
- 3.2 The purpose of the funding is to promote the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of each Area Sub-Committee's local area.
- 3.3 Local groups, organisations or individuals can apply to the Area Sub-Committee for funding for projects, schemes, or the purchase of goods and services which seek to improve the quality of life for people who live or work in that local area.
- 3.4 Funding for projects, schemes or services should either link directly to the Council's corporate priorities or the priorities of the particular locality, or should promote community involvement.
- 3.5 Funding must not be used to cover or meet a budget deficit in a specific area, meet the debts of an organisation in financial difficulty, or to cover a shortfall in service.
- 3.6 The funding will be provided for a period of 12 months from the date of approval.
- 3.7 Projects should:
- be non-party political
 - not require ongoing funding
 - not be initiated by a public sector body i.e. a school or GP surgery
- 3.8 If any other application for funding has been sought or awarded for the projects this should be disclosed.
- 3.9 The rules in place to ensure that the funds are not mismanaged or used for fraudulent purposes will be consistent with the conditions set out in the Council's Corporate Grants Programme.

- 3.10 Accountability will be ensured through an annual report to both the Policy & Resources Committee and the Community Leadership Committee on the projects funded and the money spent.
- 3.11 The Area Sub-Committees will be accountable to the Policy and Resources Committee for the spending of the money in line with appropriate priorities and following good governance.
- 3.12 A log of the decisions taken by the Area Sub-Committee on particular projects will be maintained and presented annually in a report to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.13 If the Policy and Resources Committee so wishes they may invite the Chairman of the Area Sub-Committee to give account of certain decisions taken.
- 3.14 The Community Leadership Committee will scrutinise the report as the projects and priorities identified by the Area Sub-Committees will be of value in determining local need and community activity.
- 3.15 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that adequate safeguards exist to protect from harm children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in the running of a project or taking part in the activities provided and will ensure that all projects funded conform to the principles of safeguarding established by the Council.