AREA COMMITTEE BUDGETS – FAQS

These Updated FAQs reflect Member decisions on Area Committee budgets made by the Community Leadership Committee in March 2016.

1   How many area committees are there, what areas do they cover and when do they meet?
2   What do Area Committees do?
3   How much does each Area Committee have to spend?
4   What type of projects can Area Committee budget be spent on?
4   How will Area Committees know how much they have to spend during the year?
5   How do Members submit a Members Item to an Area Committee?
6   Which Members can put forward proposals for Area Committee funding?
7   How are requests made for Area Committee funding?
8   How do Area Committees know how much they have to spend during the year?
9   How does the relationship between ACs and Theme Committees work?
10 Is there a consultative element to the relationship between area committees and theme committees – particularly the environment committee?
11 Can ACs refer issues to theme committees for resolution, if they cannot be resolved by an AC or residents forum?
12 Do referrals need to be coordinated with any external funding cycles?
13 Are AC budgets still allocated via an open public grants process?
14 What are the criteria for funding community-led projects?
15 How will due diligence be taken on community-led projects?
16 Are there other council grant fund open to local groups and residents to bid for?

1. How many area committees are there, what areas do they cover and when do they meet?
- Three. They cover the constituency areas of Chipping Barnet, Finchley & Golders Green, and Hendon. Committees meet four times a year in January, March, June/July, and October.

2. What do Area Committees do?
- The Terms of Reference for the Area Committees include:

  o Considering issues raised at the linked Residents Forums meetings and determining how these matters are to be taken forward.
  o Discharging functions delegated by Theme Committees that the Theme Committees agree are more properly discharged at a local level. These may include, but are not limited to, place-focused services such as environmental improvements; local highways; and safety schemes; and Town Centre management.
  o Dealing with small-scale public works.
  o Administering any local budget delegated by the Policy & Resources Committee.

3. How much does each Area Committee have to spend?

There are two source of funding for Area Committees:

I. £100K PER YEAR TO EACH AC UNTIL 2017/18 FOR SPENDING ON ENVIRONMENTAL OR NON-ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
- In June 2014, Policy & Resources Committee agreed that each AC would receive a budget of £100k for each financial year up to 2017/18.
- Any annual under spends can be rolled forward for spending in the subsequent financial year.
- The £100k can be used to fund environmental and non-environmental projects.
- On the environmental side, an example might be for an AC to fund traffic calming measures in a 'hot spot' area, such as vehicle activated speed limit signs. On the non-environmental side, examples might include initiatives to increase sport and physical activity; activities for young people; or proposals to improve community safety.

II. IN ADDITION, UP TO £150K PER YEAR TO EACH AC FROM COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) RESOURCES, FOR SPENDING ON ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES.
- In July 2015, Policy & Resources Committee agreed that each AC should receive a proportion of CIL funding, in addition to their £100k allocations.
- CIL is a planning charge on new developments to help pay for community infrastructure. Allocating a proportion of CIL income to ACs helps ensure that communities affected by development benefit directly from the income it brings in.
- To ensure the Council does not spend a disproportionate amount of CIL on small-scale, local projects, CIL allocations to ACs are capped at £150,000 per Committee; and CIL funding will be returned to the Council's reserves if not allocated within two years, or spent within five.
- In contrast to the £100k above, CIL is restricted for uses relating to 'the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure'.
- The definition of 'infrastructure' is set out in the Planning Act 2008, including reference to: Roads & other transport facilities; Flood defences; Schools and other educational facilities; Medical facilities; Sporting and recreational facilities; and Open spaces.

4. What type of projects can Area Committee budget be spent on?

Area Committee budgets can be spent on the following types of projects:

FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE / CIL ITEMS (e.g. highways issues)
- Members who wish to bring items relating to environmental infrastructure to an AC are encouraged to discuss it with the Commissioning Director for Environment in advance. Items are brought via a Standard Members Item.
- The AC will consider the item and may use some of its budget to conduct a data collection and feasibility study e.g. if the item relates to fast moving traffic, the AC could instruct Re officers to conduct a speed survey, collision data report and a feasibility study to determine the best way to alleviate the problem, paid for from the AC's budget.
- The results would be compiled into a report back to the AC with options for a solution e.g. installation of vehicle activated speed limit signs. If agreed, the AC would use some of its budget to implement the proposals.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS – CAPPING FUNDING AT £25,000 PER PROPOSAL (NOT INCLUDING FEASIBILITY, CONSULTATION AND DESIGN COSTS)

- ACs will need to have a realistic view of the sort of projects they can implement using their budgets and an idea of the full costs involved, which are likely to include feasibility and design costs, consultation costs (if required), as well as the cost of physical infrastructure.
- Community Leadership Committee and ACs have agreed that – as a general rule – ACs should not fund any project for which the estimated cost of implementing it is greater that £25,000. This £25,000 would not include the cost of feasibility studies, consultation and design costs which would need to take place to determine the final implementation costs.
- Capping expenditure at £25,000 enables each AC to respond to a broader range of local issues rather than spending all their funding on a single project.
- In practice, as set out above, if there is an environmental issue that an AC would like to resolve, they would instruct officers to carry out the necessary investigative work and authorise funding for this. Officers would report back to the AC with proposals and costs for resolving the issue, funded from the AC's budget. If implementation exceeds £25,000, the AC could refer it to Environment Committee for consideration for funding through another route.

FUNDING FOR NON-ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS OR COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

- ACs may wish to fund non-environmental issues such as those to improve community safety, or to support local residents.
- Members who wish to bring items relating to non-environmental or community led schemes to an AC are encouraged discuss it with the relevant commissioner in advance.
- Constituency Members submit their Members Item via the non-CIL, community funding application form to the Governance Team submitted 12 clear working days before the meeting.
- ACs could, in the same way that they might request a feasibility study for an environmental improvement, instruct the relevant commissioning teams to investigate the issue and bring options to address it back to the Committee. If agreed, the AC would use their funding to implement the proposals.

5. **How do Members submit a Members Item to an Area Committee?**
   - Members can request funding for an issue that they are aware of by submitting a Members Items. There are two forms that a Members Item can take; a Standard Members Item or a Non-CIL Community Funding Application.
   - In both instances, Members are encouraged to discuss the Members Items with the relevant officers.

6. **Which Members can put forward proposals for Area Committee funding**?
   - Only Members of an Area Committee can put forward a Standard Members Item. Standard Members Items often relate to issues which Members would like the Council to investigate and take action on. Members submit their Members Item via e-mail to the Governance Team 7 days in advance of the Area Committee date.

- Any Member of the constituency can submit a Non-CIL community funding application as a Members Item. Non-CIL community funding applications are made by a Member on behalf of a community group, organisation or individual. Members submit their application form submitted 12 clear working days before the meeting.

7. **How are requests made for Area Committee funding?**
   - There are a number of routes through which priorities for funding can be determined:

     - **Issues referred from Resident Forums** – Forum Chairs are able to refer items raised by residents to ACs. ACs can determine whether or not they can resolve the issue themselves – and use their budgets – or, if not, refer it to a Theme Committee.
     - **Referrals from Theme Committees** – the Environment Committee, or any Theme Committee, can refer projects or schemes to ACs which they have identified but may have chosen not to fund because they are not borough-wide priorities. ACs would be able to consider such schemes and use their resources to fund them if necessary.
     - **Members items brought to Area Committees** – Members are able to bring items to ACs for consideration. As set out in Question 5 – there are two ways in which Members can submit a Members Item.

8. **How do Area Committees know how much they have to spend during the year?**
   - The finance team keep a record of spending against each ACs annual budget. A financial update report is presented at the beginning of each AC meeting.

9. **How does the relationship between ACs and Theme Committees work?**
   - The Environment Committee approves the highways planned maintenance programme at a borough-wide level. The Committee system avoids delegation of powers to Committee Chairs and there is no equivalent of the executive power which let the previous Sub-Committees put decisions into practice.
   - As a consequence, there is a need to: 1) Ensure that ACs can resolve issues which fall within their remit; and 2) be clear about the routes ACs can use to refer issues to Theme Committees which they cannot resolve and how progress is reported back.
   - AC chairs can refer their budget reports to the Community Leadership Committee or the Environmental Committee.

10. **Is there a consultative element to the relationship between area committees and theme committees – particularly the environment committee?**
    - Yes – strategies, schemes and projects coming to Theme Committees which need local input should be considered by ACs, with feedback to the Theme Committee. Where ACs have provided input, they should receive progress updates from the Theme Committee.

11. **Can ACs refer issues to theme committees for resolution, if they cannot be resolved by an AC or residents forum?**
    - Yes. A Chairman of an Area Committee may refer applications to the Area Committee Budget to the relevant Theme Committee (Environment Committee for environment related schemes or Community Leadership Committee for community related projects). The report to the relevant Committee to which the Area Committee refers the application shall set out the reasons given for the referral.

12. **Do referrals need to be coordinated with any external funding cycles?**
    - Potentially, yes. For example, large-scale highways infrastructure works are usually funded through the Transport for London Local Implementation Plan (LIP)

programmes, with is agreed by Environment Committee. LIP funding applications are submitted in September each year, so if ACs want to refer an item to be considered and implemented in the following financial year, they would need to refer it to Environment Committee at the first AC meeting of the year (June or July).

13. Are AC budgets still allocated via an open public grants process?

- No. It was agreed by the Community Leadership Committee and ACs that the allocation process for the first year would be a pilot which would be reviewed before future allocations were made. The review – which reported to Community Leadership Committee in June 2015 and to ACs in July 2015 – recommended no longer running allocations as an open public grants process. This was agreed, based on the following reasons:

  1. **Size of awards and the organisations that bid** – the size of grants was much higher than anticipated (average grant £6.5k) and most grants were awarded to existing groups. The process did not attract bids for small-scale community activities and from new and emerging groups as had been the intention.
  2. **Duplication of other funds** – the process duplicated the Council's existing Corporate Grants Programme which created confusion and contributed to reduced demand for the Corporate Grants Programme.
  3. **Prioritisation** – the process did not give Members an opportunity to consider how they might want to prioritise funding and ensure they got the most value for their local area.
  4. **Administrative costs** – Administration took more than 200 hours of officer time with around 20 officers involved from across the Council. The process was not sustainable without additional resources being provided, and Members were not keen to divert resources to pay for admin.

14. What are the criteria for funding community-led projects?

1. Area Committee community funding will be for projects or initiatives that meet the priority areas agreed by the Community Leadership Committee in March 2016.
2. Area Committee community funding will be for locally based projects or initiatives that tackle local issues, rather than borough-wide schemes
3. Area Committee community funding may be used for the feasibility, start up, or scaling phase of a local project OR for one off events or purchases which fit the criteria of the Area Committee
4. The maximum value of an award is £9,999

The priority areas are for initiatives which will:
- Improve community safety;
- Improve local mental and physical health, physical activity and independence;
- Support local people to improve their skills or find employment;
- Provide support to local businesses;
- Improve the local environment.

Areas agreed not to be considered for funding include:
- Self interest groups – where there is no evidence of wider community benefit;
- Funding must not be used to meet a budget deficit in a specific area, to meet the debts of an organisation in financial difficulty, or to cover a shortfall in a service which would normally be provided by the Council or another public sector organisation;
- Funding will not be given to assist with the administration and/or research costs of preparing an application;

- Funding will be for one-off projects which do not require on-going support from the Council. They must not require maintenance from the Council, or future expenditure;
- Community-led projects that are successful in securing funding will not be permitted to re-apply for funding for the same project at a future Area Committee.

15. How will due diligence be taken on community-led projects?
- Once an AC approves a community-led proposal, the decision will be subject to due diligence checks carried out by the Governance and Finance Teams.

16. Are there other council grant fund open to local groups and residents to bid for?
- Yes. Each AC contributes £17k (a total of £51k) to the council's Corporate Grants Programme to ensure residents and community groups have access to grant funding.
- Corporate Grants offer help to either set up a new project or activity in Barnet in response to identified needs; or with specific events, purchases and other non-recurring items of expenditure. These grants are only available to the voluntary and community sector.
- Where a proposal complements one or more of the council's corporate priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan, the programme offers grants of:
  - Up to £10k (over a maximum of one year) to help set up a <u>sustainable</u> new project or activity in Barnet in response to identified needs; and
  - Up to £5k in support of community events, purchases or non-recurring items of expenditure.
- If Members receive requests from residents and community groups for funding for Barnet-wide projects, they should be referred to the Corporate Grants Programme. The programme is administered by Ken Argent and further details can be found at www.barnet.gov.uk/grants

FURTHER INFORMATION AND A RECORD OF DECISION MAKING CAN BE FOUND HERE:

Community Leadership Committee – 24 June 2015
http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24009/Area%20Committees%20-%20Community%20Leadership%20Committee%2025%20June%202015%20-%20FINAL.pdf

Area Committees – 2 July 2015
http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24254/Review%20of%20Area%20Committee%20Operations%20and%20Delegated%20Budgets.pdf

http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24244/Review%20of%20Area%20Committee%20Operations%20and%20Delegated%20Budgets.pdf

http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24250/Review%20of%20Area%20Committee%20Operations%20and%20Delegated%20Budgets.pdf

Policy & Resources Committee – 9 July 2015
http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24360/Delegating%20a%20proportion%20of%20Community%20Infrastructure%20Levy%20CIL%20income%20to%20the%20Councils%20Area%20Committe.pdf