

Ward Budget Initiative

Protocol for ward councillors

2017 onwards



Putting our residents first



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Introduction

This Protocol provides useful guidance for ward councillors on how the Ward Budget Initiative operates. It aims to be as flexible as possible with little red-tape so that ward councillors can be very responsive to local priorities and needs. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have some rules governing the operation of the Initiative in order to ensure probity in public spending.

Ward Budget funding is used to make a difference in a local area and give residents a chance to influence how their local priorities are met.

The Protocol sets out what ward councillors can expect from the initiative and a flow-chart summarising the process is on page 7.

Overview

1. Ward budgets will enable ward councillors to put forward proposals for expenditure against a specific earmarked budget for their Ward, to promote the wellbeing of the community and to respond to local priorities.
2. The scheme is intended to be flexible, responsive and quick to deliver, enabling councillors to determine how their Ward budgets are spent, but processes are transparent and accountable.
3. Proposals must be consistent with the council's objectives of: *Our People; Our Natural Environment; Our Built Environment; Our Heritage and Civic Pride* and contribute to the aim of putting residents first. They should meet an identified need from within the Ward and deliver value for money.
4. Rather than inviting general applications, which may result in disappointment for some, ward councillors should use their local knowledge and insight to identify proposals.
5. Borough wide publicity will be managed by the council. Publicity at ward level is the responsibility of the ward councillors, as ambassadors for the scheme. Councillors are advised that they should only publicise proposals that have Cabinet Member approval.
6. Recommendations for projects will go to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration for approval on a monthly basis, with a presumption of approval.
7. Officers will provide assistance and advice so that projects gain approval quickly.
8. Retrospective applications cannot be considered and the costs of these projects cannot be funded from a ward budget.



Glebe Allotments - Ickenham Ward

The allotments group received a grant of £430 to purchase a new mower to maintain the allotment site which would be easy to operate for their older members.

How ward budgets can be used

1. Ward budgets are primarily intended for one-off spends on material works, events or activities that have a positive impact within the ward. For example:
 - supporting a local scout group for a specific activity
 - repairs or refurbishment of community facilities
 - purchase of street signs or furniture
 - renovating a village/community landmark
 - toys or equipment for a play group or nursery
 - installing a toilet for people with disabilities
 - older people's coach outing
 - a new park bench or memorial
 - specialist books or equipment for schools
 - supporting a community event, e.g. summer fete

For examples of previous projects please refer to the website, www.hillingdon.gov.uk/wardbudgets, for more details.

2. Ward budgets do not have to be spent all at once or on one proposal.
3. Ward budgets should be used for proposals where it can be demonstrated that residents from within the ward(s) can participate in and will benefit from that proposal.
4. Ward budgets can fund projects already covered by mainstream budgets or identified in future programmes if councillors wish to accelerate delivery. However, councillors should bear in mind that proposals might sometimes be more easily funded by other means, e.g. alley gates from the Chrysalis fund.

5. Ward budgets may be used to provide 'match' funding to enable projects to go ahead that are partly funded from other sources.
6. General grants or donations to voluntary organisations, whether in receipt of council funding or not, are not permitted. However, grants for a specific purpose or activity to assist such organisations are allowed. These organisations must have a bank account and agree to the required terms and conditions before funding can be released.
7. Ward budgets can be used for capital or revenue expenditure but projects should not give rise to new revenue expenditure pressures for the council.
8. Councillors must ensure that provision for maintenance costs is made within the agreed budget for a project, and in particular watering costs for trees or flowers. With external organisations, agreement is needed so that ongoing costs are met e.g. maintenance of IT equipment.
9. Consideration should be given to the sustainability of projects and the effects locally when funding is exhausted. An exit strategy may be required to identify how a project can continue once funding ceases.
10. Funding can be allocated to projects in individual wards, or if an agreement can be reached it is possible for neighbouring wards to pool budgets to fund a project that benefits residents across the wards in this single project proposal.
11. Where projects involve works on land not owned by the council, written consent from the landowner is required, as part of the initial funding application before a decision can be made.

Yeading Infant School - Barnhill Ward

The school received a grant of £6,000 to install a bespoke, purpose built climbing wall and activity frame in the playground for the children.



How ward budgets should NOT be used:

1. Ward budgets should not directly benefit an individual or a very small group of people. They are aimed at the wider community, or community organisations.
2. Ward budgets should not be made available to support the mainstream activities of commercial or voluntary sector organisations, such as meeting room hire, the running costs of a building or other overheads.
3. Ward budgets should not be used for party political purposes, including events organised by political parties or affiliated organisations.
4. Publicity at ward level will be delivered by councillors and ward budgets are not to be used for this purpose. General publicity on the scheme will be delivered by the council.
5. Ward budgets should not be used for proposals put forward by council officers acting in an official capacity. Funding is intended for projects identified by ward councillors from local residents and organisations in their ward.
6. Expenditure cannot be used that conflicts with any council policy.
7. Retrospective applications for expenditure cannot be considered.
8. Projects for which the council normally would have no clear legal mandate to incur expenditure cannot be considered.
9. Projects where the Borough Solicitor has advised that the proposal is unlawful or improper cannot be considered.
10. Proposals that could adversely affect the environment or community cannot be considered.

11. Appropriate exceptions to some funding criteria may be made under certain circumstances and the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration, or the Leader of the Council may exercise discretion when considering any proposal.

Budget information

1. In September 2011, each of the borough's 22 wards were given a budget of £15,000 (£330,000 in total) to spend on local projects and initiatives to benefit the local community.
2. An additional £220,000 was agreed at Cabinet on 19 June 2014 and a further £440,000 was approved at Cabinet on 12 February 2015, giving £30,000 extra per ward to spend on local projects.
3. Balances are held within a specific reserve. At the end of each financial year, any unspent balances can be carried forward to future financial years.
4. The Community Engagement Officer records the grants to be allocated from the reserve as they are approved and reports on uncommitted balances available for distribution. Actual expenditure from the reserve is also monitored in line with the proposed drawdowns from the reserve. Any adjustments are formally recorded within the regular Ward Budget Cabinet Member Reports.
5. All grants to external organisations should be spent within six months from the date of issue. Proofs of purchase or receipts must be supplied by the recipient to the Community Engagement Project Officer for audit purposes. This is to



Hillingdon Musketeers Fencing Club - Brunel Ward

The fencing club were awarded a grant of £2,000 to purchase new protective clothing and equipment for their junior members.

ensure that that funding is used in accordance with the original approval, in a timely manner.

6. Grant terms and conditions will be agreed before payment is released, to ensure that recipients fully understand what is expected of them.
7. To achieve value for money for the council and to ensure groups/organisations receive their funding as quickly as possible, all ward budget grants will be made via BACs transfer only.

Identifying and agreeing a proposal

1. To identify proposals for the scheme, ward councillors are encouraged to use local resident networks and contacts through any membership of outside bodies, residents associations, local clubs, and ward surgeries.
2. Ward councillors should discuss proposals with their fellow ward councillors before progressing. Agreement to progress a proposal should ideally be reached by all relevant ward councillors, even if they represent different parties, although the agreement of two ward councillors is sufficient to proceed. In Harefield ward, the agreement of both ward councillors is required.
3. Any disputes will be referred to the Leader of the Council for determination, in consultation with other party group leaders, where appropriate.

Conflicts of Interest

1. Ward councillors should abide by the Members Code of Conduct when submitting a proposal. It is possible that some councillors may have a non-pecuniary interest in a proposal, as they, along with many other residents, may use, visit or support a particular organisation or activity that may benefit from the initiative. It will be up to the councillor concerned as to whether they determine this as non-pecuniary interest (in which they may still submit a proposal) or a pecuniary interest - see below.
2. Individual ward councillors should not submit any proposal in their ward where they have an actual or perceived pecuniary interest.
3. Where a councillor has a pecuniary interest, the remaining councillors (single councillor in the case of Harefield Ward) should submit the proposal for approval to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration.
4. Further advice on interests can be sought from the Head of Democratic Services, if required.
5. All proposals in the Manor ward will be approved by the remaining councillors and the Leader of the Council will authorise final approval of all proposals in that Ward.
6. The Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration reserves the right to exercise his discretion to resolve all matters that occur outside this protocol.

Yiewsley & West Drayton Town Centre Action Group - Yiewsley Ward

A grant of £2,000 was awarded towards the set up of the May Fair event on The Green for the local community.



Submitting a proposal

1. The Community Engagement Project Officer will work with ward councillors on submissions, provide advice and ensure that proposals are approved and completed on time, within budget and to councillors' satisfaction. Administrative support will also be provided from within the group office.

Ward councillors should submit a standard proposal form, which includes:

- how the proposal was identified
 - whether all ward councillors are in agreement with the proposal
 - anticipated benefits or beneficiaries of the proposal
 - financial implications of the proposal
 - any personal interests they may have in the proposal
 - address and contact details of the organisation/group
2. The Community Engagement Project Officer can assist with initial enquiries with any council departments that might need to be involved, as well as obtaining costs and keeping ward councillors up to date with timescales. Proposals will then be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration for formal approval. Once approved, any work will be procured and commissioned using a fast-track procedure in the relevant service department.



Northwood & Northwood Hills Residents Associations - Northwood and Northwood Hills Wards

A grant of £4,500 in total contributed to the running of a musical event to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday for all local residents.



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OUR STANDARDS

What can ward councillors expect?

- A dedicated officer as the contact point. See below.
- Advice on proposals and completing application forms.
- Information on the full cost of the proposal and a target date for delivery/action.
- A swift decision-making process and notification of the Cabinet Member decision on your proposal.
- A promise to deliver/action your proposal quickly and effectively.
- Regular updates on the status of your proposal after formal decision
- Regular updates on the level of any remaining ward budget (actual ward budget remaining as well as uncommitted budget available for distribution).
- Assurance that allocations are spent in accordance with guidelines and that value for money is achieved.
- General publicity on how you have spent your ward budget. Detailed information pertaining to individual proposals will be posted on the council's website.

Community Engagement Project Officer, Residents Services

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Group Offices

Conservative

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 ConservativeGroupSecretariat@hillington.gov.uk

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 LabourGroupSecretariat@hillington.gov.uk

Ward Budget Initiative process summary

Councillor activities

- Ward surgeries
- Residents' associations
- Local clubs
- Outside bodies
- Ward walks

Ward Insight

Ward councillors use their local knowledge and insight to identify proposals that will benefit their ward.

Ward Agreement

Ward councillors meet and agree together the proposal(s).

Ward Proposal

Ward councillors complete application form and submit it to the Group Office. Advice will be given on completing the form.

Ward Decision

The Community Engagement Project Officer will establish the full cost of the proposal(s) and make initial enquiries. A report will be sent every month to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration detailing proposals that are ready for his approval. Ward councillors will be notified of the decision.

Ward Delivery

Once approved, your proposal(s) will be built, delivered and completed, and you will be kept up to date with the timescales.

Ward Benefit

You will want to ensure those who can benefit from ward budgets know about it. The use of your ward budget will be publicised in Hillingdon People and on the council's website. You may also wish to undertake your own local publicity in the ward itself.