

Subject:	Review of Ward Budget Scheme		
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2018		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Mark Wall	Tel: 01273 291006
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 At its meeting on the 13th July 2017, the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee, following an amendment to the Provisional Outturn report approved an allocation of 60k for a Ward Budget Scheme for 2017/18. The scheme was to be administered by the Democratic Services Team and was due to be allocated on a first come first serve basis.
- 1.2 At its meeting on the 17th September 2017, the Leaders Group agreed that an initial allocation of £1,000 per Member should be made, although the option to use funds collaboratively was also available to enable wider support to various projects that were identified.
- 1.3 This report provides a breakdown of how the Members' Ward Budget Scheme was co-ordinated and funds used by Ward Members to support local communities (see appendix 1).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the information as detailed in the report and appendix 1 be noted;
- 2.2 That consideration be given to recommending to the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee that a similar ward budget scheme be funded and included in the budget setting process for 2019/20 and future years.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on the 13th July 2017 the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee allocated funds following approval of the Provisional Out-turn report which included £60k for the Members Ward Budget Scheme. This scheme provided each councillor with £1,000 to support different projects and or community organisations within their Wards, totalling £54k. The remaining £6k was set aside to cover administrative costs for co-ordinating the scheme.

- 3.2 Members were encouraged to identify local projects and/or community groups who could be supported and to submit applications for these to the Head of Democratic Services for processing. Appendix 1 to the report outlines the various projects and groups that were supported by Ward Members and the allocations made to them. These ranged from improving areas with the planting of trees, bulbs and planting, to supporting community groups with activities and the installation of safety bollards to control traffic flow.
- 3.3 Local authorities have been experimenting with different ways of devolving control or influence over spending for many years and the drivers have predominantly remained the same. These include the desire to:
- Improve Neighbourhood well-being
 - Enable locally-chosen initiatives or causes to be supported
 - Support and build closer relationship between elected representatives and their constituents
 - Increase relevance and impact of local democracy for residents
 - Empower councillors to support and enable their communities; act as a catalyst for community action and champions of place
 - Improve residents satisfaction of the council
- 3.4 These have all been true and valid drivers for the introduction of Ward Member budgets and in addition have been:
- Complimentary to the council's new modernised Third Sector Investment Programme and recent awards made through the third sector commission and new annual Communities Fund
 - A route to delivery against the council's Communities and Third Sector Development Policy as well as key strategies for example, Health and Well-being Strategy
 - The direct outcome of the LGA Peer Review
- 3.5 The budgets have been used to enable to support, contribute to or provide startup funding for local issues and priorities that matter most to residents.
- 3.6 The scheme was administered by the Democratic Services Team with applications being submitted by Members and where possible supporting documents from recipient organisations were included. This was to ensure that the budgets could be used effectively, avoided duplication and recipients were aware that it was one-off funding. Each application was then reviewed and an approval form signed by the Executive Director for Finance & Resources before payments were arranged.
- 3.7 The scheme was due to be concluded by the end of the financial year. However approval was sought to carry over the available funding to enable councillors to identify projects/organisations to support on the basis that all expenditure would be allocated by the 31st July, 2018. Any unallocated funds at the end of June would be reported to the Leaders of the respective Groups..
- 3.8 In order to enable consideration for a future ward budget scheme, it is intended to contact the various community groups to ascertain how the allocation of funds benefitted their activities/area.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The £60k funding provided was a one-off allocation which was identified as part of the allocation of resources resulting from the 2016/17 out-turn underspend and was set at a reduced level of support to that proposed in the report to the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee.
- 4.2 A similar allocation was not identified in the 2018/19 budget process.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Ward Members have consulted with community organisations and various community groups in determining how they could be supported and to what level of funding should be allocated.
- 5.2 In some cases Ward Members have combined their budgets to provide funds to various groups and projects.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Ward Budget scheme has provided additional support at a local level across a spectrum of projects and has been well received.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 If the Ward Budget Scheme were to be repeated in the future, the funding would need to be taken from any one-off resources identified during the budget setting process. Were it to be made a permanent arrangement then the budget requirement, and therefore any budget gap, would be increased accordingly.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis

Date: 30/05/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The General Power of Competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers local authorities to do anything that a private individual can do where there is no express or implied statutory restriction on the power. This is wide enough to authorise local authorities to adopt schemes like ward budgets. This report is simply updating Members on the outcome of the application of ward budgets and, as such, there are no legal implications arising from the report.

Lawyer Consulted:

Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

Date: 23/05/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Councillors have sought to support a number of local community groups and organisations within their wards and as such allocated the funding available where it was felt it would provide the greatest benefit.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from the report, although some projects that have been supported have meant that improvements to the local environment have been facilitated.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Break down of Ward budget allocations.

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. TBM report to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee on the 13th July, 2017.