

25 March 2015

Community Committee

Ward Budgets

Report of: *Ashley Culverwell, Head of Borough Health, Safety and Localism*

Wards Affected: *All Brentwood Borough Wards*

This report is: *Public report*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Ward Budget scheme was launched in April 2012 to enhance the role of Councillors in their communities and engage with organizations in their area to develop projects and schemes. Ward budgets are one way in which the Locality Strategy can be implemented, encouraging the ethos of the Big Society and Localism i.e. encouraging volunteering, local involvement and building skills within the community. In 2014/15 budget £1,000 was allocated to each individual Councillor. It was agreed that the underspend of the Brentwood Community Fund would be added to the Members allocation which meant that each received an additional £385. Members are asked to determine what to do with the underspend of the ward budget allocation.

2. Recommendations

That Members agree to one of the following options in respect of the ward budget allocation:

- 2.1 Option1: Give up the underspend as indicated in Appendix A as a saving**
- 2.2. Option2: To carry forward the underspend as indicated in Appendix A and add to the ward budget allocation for 2015/16**
- 2.3 Option 3: To allocate the underspend as indicated in Appendix A to the Mayor's Charities (Brentwood Talking Newspaper, St Francis Hospice and Brentwood Community Print)**
- 2.4 Option4: To allocate the underspend as indicated in Appendix A to the Community Events budget for the provision of additional free activities for families at the Council's Community Events**

2.4 Option 4: To allocated the underspend as indicated in Appendix A to the development of the Volunteer Centre managed by Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services

3. Introduction and Background

3.1. A report was presented to Policy and Resources Board on 7 March 2012 (min ref. 545) which set out the proposals for 2012/13 budget of £50,000 that was made available to Ward Members, and to agree the allocation for individual members.

3.2. It was agreed at Policy and Strategy Board 5 March 2014 to allocate £37,000 to ward budgets as part of the budget setting process, which meant that individual Councillors had an initial allocation of £1,000. At the 21 October 2014 Community Committee (min. ref. 199) Members agreed to allocate the under spend from the Community Fund to the ward budgets, which meant that from November 2014 Members had an additional £385 each.

3.3. The deadline for submissions for the proposals was 14 March 2015. The summary of submitted proposals and the spend to date in attached in Appendix A (an updated supplementary Appendix A will be presented on the night) .

3.4. Members can utilize the money jointly within their ward if they wish, or the budget can be utilized to support a number of small projects within their ward. The aim of the scheme was to make it as simple as possible whilst ensuring that the key principles are met, and the Council's legal and financial positions are safeguarded. It enables all Councillors to have the ability to make a vital contribution to projects carries out in their local communities by local organizations.

3.5. The scheme is limited to the functions of the Council – either statutory or discretionary (and the power of general competence makes this quite wide with scope for innovation), rather than a function of another body. Schemes should relate to the Council's priorities as they are now, or as they may change during the course of the scheme. Our current priorities are:

3.5.1. Street Scene and environment

- Projects which enable communities to take a more active role in delivering a cleaner and safer environment

- Projects which encourage more people to be involved in the environmental aspects of their community such as community clean ups or recycling initiatives
- Projects which can deliver street scene services which are efficient and improve the Council's effectiveness

Project example: funds to buy equipment for community litter-picking sessions

3.5.2. Localism

- Support people to do more for themselves and rely less on public services such as delivering community events or local initiatives
- Support local communities to run some local services previously undertaken by the Council which meet local needs
- Support the delivery of young people's event to showcase local opportunities including volunteering
- Support the delivery of local community initiatives and projects, especially those that use volunteers or increase volunteering

Project example: Funds to buy a community noticeboard

3.5.3. A Prosperous Borough

- Support initiatives that promote a mixed economic base and maximize opportunities in the centres for retail and a balanced night time economy
- Support initiatives that support job creation in the Borough

Project example: funds to pay for an employment skills workshop

3.5.4. Housing Health and Wellbeing

- Support the creation of a range of housing that meets the needs of our population now and in the future
- Support projects that encourage council tenants (and non council tenants) to be socially responsible and good neighbours
- Support schemes which support the Welfare Reform agenda, whilst protecting the most vulnerable
- Support effective representation of local people's views and needs for improved accessible health services
- Support the development of a skills matching service that will help claimants apply for jobs
- Support the adaption of homes to enable independent living

Project example: funds towards benches for older people

3.5.5 A Safe Borough

- Support projects/schemes which reduce anti-social behavior

- Support projects that work innovatively with young people and families at risk of offending or being involved in anti-social behavior
- Support projects which reduce offending by young people
- Projects which support crime awareness and vigilance across Brentwood residents

Project example: funds towards a diversionary project for young people, such as start up costs for a local youth group

3.6. All proposals are submitted via the Councillor's Proposal Form. Once submitted, proposals are sent to the Leader of the Council for approval in consultation with the Head of Borough Health, Safety and Localism. This process should be completed in approximately 7 days.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1. The options before members is to agree to allocate the underspend (as set out in Appendix A) to one of the following:

- Offer the underspend up as a saving to the Council
- Roll over the underspend to be added to the ward budget allocation for 2015/16
- Allocate the underspend to the Mayor's Charities which are Brentwood Talking Newspaper, St Francis Hospice and Brentwood Community Print
- Allocate the underspend towards the Community Events budget which could provide some additional free activities for families at the Council's Community Events.
- Allocate the underspend to a borough wide project such as setting up of a Brentwood Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre in Brentwood would be managed by Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services and the funding would support a part time coordinator who would promote volunteering and match up prospective volunteers with local opportunities and they have already received some external funding from Essex County Council towards set up costs. Currently Brentwood is the only district in Essex which does not have a Volunteer Centre.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

The report provides options to allow Members to make an informed decision on the options in respect of the ward budgets.

6. References to Council Priorities

Ward budgets sit under the Localism priority enabling communities to do more for themselves and increase volunteering opportunities.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Christopher Leslie

Tel & Email 01277 312542 christopher.leslie@brentwood.gov.uk

The financial implications are set in Appendix A of the report. Projects should not have ongoing revenue costs, and expenses should be incurred in the financial year.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Christopher Potter, Monitoring Officer and Head of Support Services

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The Council needs to ensure that all proposals put forward are legal

Asset Management - Implications need to be considered if the project impacts on land or buildings, which will need to be considered during the project development.

Equality and Diversity implications - The process will be fair and consistent for all members of the community and therefore it is not anticipated that there will be any direct impact on individual community groups or members.

8. Appendices

Appendix A –Summary of ward budget proposals and spend to date (a final version will be circulated on the night to Members)

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