

Elected Member Discretionary Grants Guidelines

- ***What are they?***

In October 2017 Cabinet agreed a new approach to community grants as part of the implementation of the Borough's Neighbourhood Engagement Framework. The Neighbourhood Grant Investment Framework allocated a three-year programme of funding which covered Elected Member Discretionary Budgets, this was subsequently extended to February 2022.

The initiative provides a fund for Councillors to propose and support schemes that improve the environment and benefit the community within their Wards.

An annual allocation (currently £1000) is made to each Elected Member, which must be used to directly benefit the Ward providing the funding or where projects are identified which have a wider benefit, contributions can be made to jointly fund schemes.

Each Elected Member in the Ward will have their own allocation, but at their request and agreement, these funds can be combined to work on a Ward basis.

Members were advised that all monies must be spent by the 28th February 2022, thus avoiding any potential conflicts of interest in respect of spend during the election purdah period. If a Member fails to spend their allocated budget the money is returned to the Council.

Oversight of the Member Discretionary Grant Scheme was transferred from the social development team to democratic services team in September 2020.

- ***What can be funded?***

The Discretionary Grant Scheme was designed to be fluid; funds may be used to make financial contributions either directly to schemes undertaken by departments of the Council or can be awarded to voluntary or community groups or constituents.

Ward Councillors are at the heart of local communities and are key to Championing the Council's 'Let's Do It' Strategy within their ward connecting people and groups into activity to deliver the desired outcomes.

The vision is for Councillors in each Ward to:

- Meet on a regular basis to agree local priorities – supported by the Community Hub Manager.
- Encourage community groups to get involved in local democracy.
- Oversee the delivery of public services at neighbourhood and ward level by supporting the development of ward and neighbourhood plans.
- Be consulted on development / local application of policy and services changes, including health & care.

- ***Support for Ward Councillors***

Community Hubs will provide support for Elected Members in their role as Ward Councillors. Community Hubs are a key component in the developing neighbourhood model, alongside health & care integrated teams and public service hubs.

The Community Hub Managers will meet with Ward Councillors within their neighbourhood on a monthly basis and work with them to develop ward level plans reflecting current priorities within the area.

The Community Hubs will become a key part of the central delivery mechanism for the place-based neighbourhood model in the borough as described in 'Let's Do It!'.

- ***Discretionary Grants Scheme***

Ward Councillors will be provided with £1000.00 as a discretionary grant to enable them to sponsor small-scale local needs quickly and responsively.

The grants can be used to contribute to the delivery of Ward Plans and Hub teams will support Councillors with:

- Timely data and soft intelligence to evidence where funds might best be directed to meet local need.
- Recording and reporting of spend which will also be published on the Council's website.

Community Hub Managers will also support the management of other local community discretionary and participatory grants ensuring Ward Councillors are sighted on the opportunities and ensuring they contribute to the delivery of priorities.

For example:-

- Improvements to open spaces, local parks, etc
- Street scene enhancement – subject to necessary Council policies and planning approvals.
- Improvements to community facilities
- Support for voluntary and community groups
- Contributions to community events - i.e. room hire for one off events.
- Support for school initiatives (outside the national curriculum)
- Support for festive celebrations
- Projects to improve community safety
- Support to assist individuals

When submitting a request under the discretionary grant initiative:

Members should be conscious of the Members' Code of Conduct and should not support any proposal in which they have a personal and prejudicial interest or a disclosable pecuniary interest. Particular care should be exercised in this regard.

- ***What cannot be funded?***

- Activities that have already taken place or purchases that have already been made (retrospective funding)
- Works on unadopted land/highways where the landowner cannot be ascertained except in exceptional circumstances.
- Repairs to buildings (unless there is a community benefit)
- Public Liability Insurance, including running costs and utility bills. • Fund projects that are the responsibility of another statutory body (for example the cost of Police motorcycle lights).
- Provide equipment which is required by law
- Support projects that are in conflict with existing Council policy or strategies

- ***What is the procedure for spending my allocation?***

1. Identify proposal
2. Refer to this document to check that expenditure sits within guidelines
3. Consult with other Ward members as appropriate
4. Establish cost of work or amount of grant required. Page 9
5. VAT - If works are ordered by a Member directly from the Council, VAT may be incurred by the Council which is reclaimable by the Council. However, if a grant is allocated to a group/organisation who subsequently order works from the Council, or any other registered for VAT trader, that group must be charged VAT. Therefore, Members may wish to consider VAT implications when they are looking at costs and if necessary, contact Democratic Services, who will then seek advice from the Finance Officers before an award of grant is made.

Funding can be done either via the All pay payment card or directly through democratic services. Democratic services will retain a record of all expenditure, this will be published annually on the Council's website.

Members are required to provide receipts to democratic services for any expenditure incurred, it is important that Members provide as much detail as possible of the proposal they wish to support.

- ***Accessing your payment and balance information.***

If you require information relating to a payment that has been processed or want to request the balance left on your account, please contact Democratic Services who will access the All pay System and send an email to you with the required information.

Courtesy Notes

1. Members are encouraged to spend their allocation each financial year. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Officers will monitor this spend on a regular basis.
2. Reciprocal arrangements should be in place between Wards where one Ward has supported another.

3. On schemes only – where Members seek support of Ward Colleagues, they must ensure that that Member has given full support before submitting the request.

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