



COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES

CABINET

26 NOVEMBER 2018

WIRRAL TOGETHER:

GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT - A NEW

MODEL FOR COMMUNITY

ENGAGEMENT

Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of the Council, said:

“Working alongside communities to jointly tackle issues, solve problems and improve facilities leads to a better quality of life for residents.

“Almost every time, the people who know how to best improve a community, how to solve a local problem, are the people who live there. Our job, as a Council and as local Councillors, is to make sure they get the support to make that happen.

“The proposals we’re putting forward are about making this easier. This is about removing bureaucracy and red tape, and about taking community funding and bringing it closer to the community.

“If we are to achieve our priorities then it is vital we are able to work effectively with local citizens as well as establishing an ongoing relationship which promotes co-production, mutuality and informed decision making. We call this approach Wirral Together. Wirral is fortunate in that it is home to many vibrant, engaged communities who work together to get things done.

“This report provides Cabinet with a proposed new approach to working with citizens which is intended to strengthen the relationship between public services and citizens, enabling our communities to deliver their part and support each other, in an ongoing partnership between residents and public services. It will also support us in getting the basics right as promised in our Council Plan for 2018/19.”

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends that the existing constituency budgets are designated as the Wirral Together Fund, and that it is distributed on a Ward Member basis. It is

also recommending that the current funding is increased by £50,000 and the amount allocated to each Ward Member is weighted for population, deprivation and age (populations aged 0-4 and 75 and over). Staff resources are recommended to be re-directed to directly supporting councillors in this approach instead of the current focus on constituency committees.

This report also recommends that Cabinet agrees the process and criteria as set out in the appendices attached to this report and agrees the necessary officer delegations to administer the Ward Member budgets.

This matter affects all wards within the borough and is therefore a Key Decision.

A review took place during 2017/18 led by the then Portfolio holder for community engagement. As part of that review the effectiveness of existing Constituency Committees was raised as an issue. After consideration of this the proposal in this report is that those arrangements should be brought to an end and, instead, a more focussed approach should be in place to directly support Members in effective ways of engaging and working with Wirral's residents, businesses and partners – and giving local people a greater stake in community projects.

Ward Member budgets should be flexible enough to enable different approaches to community leadership to take place in different wards. The budgets will be just one tool that will enable councillors to take this approach. The appendices attached set out guidance on how these budgets will operate.

Alongside this, greater focus is placed on Member support arrangements to aid ward councillors directly with casework and local projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees:

- a) That a budget of £250,000 be distributed across the 22 wards, according to a weighting based upon 75% per head of population, 15% deprivation, 5% under 5 years population and 5% over 75 years population (as set out at Appendix A), and allocated in respect of each Ward Member;
- b) To delegate to the Director for Governance and Assurance authority to determine applications for Ward Member budget funding;
- c) To delegate to the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, authority to make any necessary changes to the process for awarding money from ward budgets, including changes to the officer responsible for determining applications for ward budget funding;
- d) That there will be an annual review and evaluation.
- e) To delete the provisions of the Constitution relating to Constituency Committees as part of the Council's executive arrangements.
- f) That the new Ward Member budget model should be implemented in the new Municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1. That Constituency Committees are deleted so that those resources are then applied to more flexible arrangements that can be focussed on supporting individual ward councillors, who may choose to engage with their community singly, on a ward or area basis or through shared meetings on the continuing boundaries as they wish.
- 1.2. To establish Ward Member budgets as a means of enabling engagement with Wirral's residents, in place of the current Constituency Committee delegations, and to establish the funding and process for Ward Member budgets.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1. Alternative options considered include:
 - Continuing with Constituency Committees;
 - Abolishing Constituency Committees and area forums and not establishing any equivalent grant funding or resources in their place.
- 2.2. This was not recommended because
 - There is a clear commitment in the Council's Plan to work and engage with more of our community in a meaningful way to make Wirral an even better place to live; and
 - With that in mind, it is not appropriate to abolish existing arrangements without considering alternatives, nor is it appropriate to continue Constituency (area) Committees in the knowledge that this mechanism has only partially achieved its objectives.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1. The future of Constituency (area) Committees and possible alternatives has been under discussion with Members, led by former Cllr Patrick as the then relevant Cabinet member.
- 3.2. There has been concern for some time that attendance at some Constituency Committees is variable and often low, and they were not the best forum for meaningful engagement with a wider number of residents.
- 3.3. With this in mind, alongside the focus in the Plan to increase engagement and work with our communities, Ward Member budgets are being proposed as a tool for Councillors to use in their local area. Ward members will be able to determine whether they
- 3.4. The key principles of how the Ward Member budgets will operate are:
 - (a) Acting as a catalyst: to equip Councillors to encourage resident-led activities that become autonomous and self-sustaining.

- (b) Community leadership as a process not a transaction: while it will sometimes be beneficial to help resident-led initiatives get off the ground through seed funding, the Ward Member budgets are not exclusively a seed fund. The intention is that they are also used to support the process of community leadership, a process that involves bringing residents together, identifying priorities and developing resident-led solutions. The process of community leadership can potentially reach a wider range of community groups and inspire a greater number of autonomous community initiatives, than could be supported through the Ward Member budget used exclusively as a seed fund.
- (c) A strategic, evidence based approach: Councillors need to be equipped to use their Ward Member budgets in a strategic way and focus on the most important issues in their wards. Councillors will have access to ward profiles and other sources of information about the pattern of need in their wards. They also need to have as much information as possible about the community assets within their wards – the community groups, networks of support and community champions that Councillors may look to lead, bring together and invite to develop new initiatives. The Ward Member budgets will enable Councillors to commission additional information gathering, surveys and asset mapping where it is required.
- (d) By using the Ward Member budget to support a strategic process of community leadership, Councillors can seek and draw out initiatives where funding would be most valuable and then help to deliver a successful application. Those initiatives should be clearly linked to the Wirral 2020 plans to protect the most vulnerable, drive economic growth and improve the environment.
- (e) Flexibility: Ward Member budgets should be flexible enough to enable different approaches to community leadership to take place in different wards. Members will be able to determine whether they work together within wards, across wards, and within, or across constituency boundaries.

3.5 Communication and transparency:

It is important that Ward Member budget activity is clearly communicated and transparent. There will be a borough-wide publicity campaign organised to publicise Ward-Member budgets. During the year, Communications may produce feature articles on Ward Member budget projects using the Council's normal channels. Communications support to engage individual communities will be available through the use of local social media and website channels. The costs of any locally requested materials (posters or leaflets) would need to be paid for out of Ward Member budgets and will be sourced through the Council's procurement sources.

The impact and outcomes of the work and investments carried out at ward level through this funding will be reported through Council. Each elected

member will be required to produce a report detailing where the money has been spent, and the impact it has made. These reports can be aggregated where Members have chosen to work together as a Ward or bigger footprint.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The recommendation within this report is to create a total annual budget requirement of £250,000. This will be allocated at a ward level, with a third of each ward budget aligned to each Ward Member. The allocation will be weighted by population in each ward, deprivation and those communities that are most vulnerable and which have the greatest contact with Council services. Safeguards against inappropriate expenditure will be put in place, with officers authorising expenditure against the guidance provided in Appendix B and the form at Appendix C.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Constituency Committees currently control expenditure and any other functions delegated to them by the Leader of the Council by virtue of being 'area committees' as defined by under s.9E of the Local Government Act 2000, being a committee or sub-committee of the local authority established to discharge functions in respect of part of the area of the authority, whose members are members of the authority elected for wards which fall wholly or partly within that part.
- 5.2 The Council has a discretionary power of general competence under s1 of the Localism Act 2011 which allows it to do anything that an individual can do, including the power to do anything for the benefit of the authority, the Wirral Borough area or persons resident or present in the area.
- 5.3. Decisions about the allocation of Ward Member budgets cannot be delegated either individually or collectively to Members per ward of the authority and therefore an officer will need to make decisions on awarding money these budgets on recommendations from ward councillors, based on the criteria set out in the attached appendices.
- 5.4. Ward-Member budgets comprise Council funds and must be spent in accordance with the relevant constitutional, financial and procurement rules.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The current staffing and resources will be re-focussed to provide a dedicated resource will be established as part of Member Services to aid Ward Members in their enhanced role.
- 6.2 The Member Support team will be co-located for part of the working week to ensure effective sharing of good practice and to support workloads.
- 6.3 The team will have key Member relationships to ensure continuity of local engagement and understanding and working with Members to support their

neighbourhoods, engaging and connecting with residents to jointly deliver the Wirral Plan.

- 6.4 The team will also support driving complex case work forward, developing local plans for Wards and commissioning new services and works.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Funding is used inappropriately and not in line with the guidance. This risk will be mitigated by ensuring there is officer sign-off of any planned expenditure. Additionally, an annual report will be produced each year, and published detailing how the investment has been used and the impact it has made.

- 7.2 Communities are not engaged. Ward Members will be supported by the Member Support Team to support effective engagement with communities. This can take whatever appropriate form is relevant to local areas. Communications support will also be provided to ensure local communities are aware of events and opportunities in their areas.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The recommendations included within this report have been informed by extensive engagement with a range of partners, led by Cllr Patrick, to explore how the Council and partners work with local people to deliver the Wirral Plan.

Commencing in Spring 2017, insight was gathered from stakeholders, including local residents, ward Members, community, voluntary and faith sector organisations, public service partner organisations and Council staff.

Surveys, interviews, focus groups and workshops were used to gather information which explored the challenges and opportunities for the Council and partners to work effectively with communities. The findings from this work were presented to all four Constituency Committees across Wirral in March 2018.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act (2010) to have due regard to:
- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
 - foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

- 9.2 Ward Member budgets provide an opportunity for Councillors to help foster community cohesion in local areas by encouraging different communities to work together to identify priorities and develop resident-led solutions to local issues.
- 9.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2017/business>

It found that Ward Member budgets provide an opportunity for Councillors to help foster community cohesion in local areas by encouraging different communities to work together to identify priorities and develop resident-led solutions to local issues.

- 9.4 The EqIA identified a number of potential risks around the introduction of Ward Member budgets but also found that there is adequate mitigation in place to address these risks, such as equalities training for Councillors, support from the Council Communications team, a transparent process for distributing funds, and control in the form of senior officer confirmation of spending.
- 9.5 The EqIA recommended that an annual review be carried out to monitor the cumulative impact of Ward Member budgets and the effectiveness of any mitigation measures put in place. This is included in the recommendations to the Cabinet at paragraph 3.5 of this report.

10. APPENDICES

The appendices attached to this report set out guidance on how Ward Member budgets will operate and the EQIA

- Appendix A – Ward Member budget allocations
- Appendix B – Draft Guidance on Ward Member Budgets (subject to amendment as required)
- Appendix C – Draft Ward Member Budget Application Form (subject to amendment as required)
- Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Outcome reports from the consultation in 2017/18

APPENDIX A – ALLOCATION OF WARD MEMBER BUDGETS

Note: these allocations have been calculated on the basis of data available at November 2018 and are therefore indicative. They will be re-calculated for each new Municipal year from 2019/20 onwards to ensure none of the underlying weighting figures have changed and to agree the final allocation within the Council's budget.

Ward	Constituency	Weighted Allocation 75% per capita; 15% deprivation; 5% under 5 years population; 5% over 75 years population	Individual Ward Member budget allocation
Bidston and St James	Birkenhead	14,009	4,670
Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	15,161	5,054
Cloughton	Birkenhead	11,667	3,889
Oxton	Birkenhead	10,374	3,458
Prenton	Birkenhead	10,885	3,628
Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	12,772	4,257
	Total	74,868	
Leasowe and Moreton East	Wallasey	11,851	3,950
Liscard	Wallasey	12,639	4,213
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	Wallasey	10,420	3,473
New Brighton	Wallasey	11,561	3,854
Seacombe	Wallasey	13,856	4,619
Wallasey	Wallasey	10,671	3,557
	Total	70,999	
Bebington	Wirral South	11,301	3,767
Bromborough	Wirral South	12,101	4,034
Clatterbridge	Wirral South	10,195	3,398
Eastham	Wirral South	10,331	3,444
Heswall	Wirral South	9,278	3,093
	Total	53,206	
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	Wirral West	9,739	3,246
Hoylake and Meols	Wirral West	9,502	3,167
Pensby and Thingwall	Wirral West	9,574	3,191
Upton	Wirral West	13,128	4,376
West Kirby and Thurstaston	Wirral West	8,984	2,995
	Total	50,927	

Total budget £250,000

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Guidance on use of Ward Member Budgets

Ward Member budgets are designed to act as a catalyst to encourage resident led activities that are autonomous and self-sustaining.

Who should receive funds from Ward Member budgets?

Local community organisations, charities, statutory bodies (e.g. the police), businesses and sole traders can receive funds, either separately or in partnership. Ward Member budgets cannot be used to support any kind of political activity.

How will funds be awarded?

Ward Councillors, working together, will be responsible for agreeing proposals to be put forward for approval for the award of funding. Ward Members may wish to do this in different ways and will have the flexibility to do this in the way that best suits their ward. Some suggestions are:

- Ward Councillors may wish to agree priorities, perhaps in consultation with the local community, at the start of the year and invite applications that will further that agenda (for instance, a focus on enhancing local high streets, or tackling social isolation).
- Ward Councillors may wish to maintain more flexibility and adopt a combination of seeking community groups to take forward specific initiatives, or to maintain complete flexibility to allow anyone to come forward with a proposition in line with the general aims of the ward budget.
- The frequency with which decisions are made on spending of the budget is for Ward Councillors to determine – and could be annual, quarterly or monthly, for instance. If awards are to be made at specific periods during the year, Councillors will wish to weigh up the benefits of speediness of decision making versus ensuring that the budget is not all spent within the first few months of the year.

What are the criteria for awarding funds from Ward Member budgets?

In order to ensure that there is transparency and clarity, it is suggested that a standard template is used across wards, and this will be provided. Successful applications must:

- improve the well being of the local community in Wirral Borough, or its environment or economy, and be linked to the themes of the Wirral Plan (protecting the most vulnerable, driving economic growth, and improving the environment)
- be one off expenditure with no expectation of future funding
- be a minimum of £250, for applications from external organisations. (Applications from Ward Members, such as for room hire and printing, will not be subject to a minimum) and
- be for revenue or capital expenditure.

Examples of applications that are likely to meet the criteria are:

- providing access to tools for a community garden or impacting positively on resident engagement
- providing seed or match funding for a larger scale project. For example to help fund the painting of shop frontages in a particular street.
- funding to be used to engage a particular part of the community on a specific issue.
- funding to support ongoing and regular ward or community engagement and development

Ward Member budgets can be used to fund joint projects between two or more wards providing each Member has identified the project as something that would benefit residents in all the participating wards.

Ward Member budgets cannot be used for the following purposes:

- Projects that would adversely impact the local community or environment
- Projects that would undermine Council approved priorities
- To fund existing, changing or decommissioned Council services
- To fund the mainstream activities of a commercial [or voluntary sector?] organisation.
- To fund retrospective applications (e.g., equipment etc., cannot be purchased and then an application submitted)
- Projects that are political in nature or campaign against the Council or its agreed priorities or funding for lobbying
- Must not have on-going revenue or capital implications
- Projects or proposals that would be unlawful for the Council to support

How will decisions about applications be made and when?

A named officer will have the delegated decision making authority to approve applications for money from Ward Member budgets. Members will make their recommendations on the spending of the Ward Member budgets to the named officer. Members are expected to make recommendations that meet all of the above

criteria for awarding Ward Member budget spending. The named officer should then be able to agree spending without further information. The decision of the named officer will be final and is not subject to appeal.

Unspent Ward Member budgets will not be rolled forward to the following financial year without Cabinet consent

The decision making process

- Councillors, residents and organisations make applications
- Ward Member(s) determine which applications they recommend to be funded
- A final formal decision on spend is made by the named officer
- The Ward Member(s) is (are) notified of decisions
- Applicants are notified of decisions
- Funding is released and projects commence
- A list of all projects and spend will be published on a web-page

What rules apply to spending Ward Member budget funds?

Ward Member budget funds are public money and so the same rules apply as would apply to any other council spending. All spending is subject to the Council's Constitution, Contract Standing Orders and Financial regulations, as well as the appropriate scrutiny and accountability.

The Council will not be putting resources into checking that projects supported by a Ward Member budget have been delivered. There is an element of trust between the Ward Members and the applicant to ensure that the money is spent in accordance with the application. If Members believe at any point that the funds awarded have been used for different purposes than those applied for, they should notify the named officer who will make a decision on the most appropriate course of action.

Ward Councillors must consider and identify any potential conflicts of interest in relation to proposals they are supporting.

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Ward Member Budget Application Form [2019/20]

Ward (please circle or highlight ONE ward only):-

Bidston & St James	Leasowe and Moreton East	Bebington	Greasby, Frankby & Irby
Birkenhead and Tranmere	Liscard	Bromborough	Hoylake and Meols
Claughton	Moreton West and Saughall Massie	Clatterbridge	Pensby and Thingwall
Oxton	New Brighton	Eastham	Upton
Prenton	Seacombe	Heswall	West Kirby and Thurstaston
Rock Ferry	Wallasey		

Applicant Please tick one that applies:-

local community organisation		constituted local organisation	
charity		individual	
statutory bodies (e.g. the police)		Other, please state:	
business / sole trader			

Organisation	
Contact Name	
Address	

Email	
Telephone No.	

Note: Applications must come through recognised or constituted groups, but if excellent ideas are proposed, 'ownership' by a constituted group could be considered.

How much are you requesting from the Ward Member budget fund? <i>Please round up/down to the nearest whole number</i>	£ .
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Ward Councillors' certification

I/We the undersigned ward councillors support this proposal

signature/e-sign	signature/e-sign	signature/e-sign
date:	date:	date:

Approval / Declined		date:
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Please complete the following pages clearly and completely. Any omission may delay the application.

Proposal:

Please explain what you are proposing to do, how much you are requesting and detail how the money will be spent. A full breakdown of proposed spending is necessary, including any VAT.

(continue on separate sheet if required)

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Criteria:

Please indicate how this application meets the Ward Member budget criteria.

Successful applications must:

- Contribute to protecting the most vulnerable, driving economic growth or improving the environment in line with Wirral Plan 2020;
- be one off expenditure with no expectation of future funding;
- be for a minimum of £250 for applications from external organisations (Applications from Ward Members, such as for room hire and printing, will not be subject to a minimum).

If your application for Ward Member budget funding is part of a larger project please explain how much will come from other sources and what those other sources are.

List any attached documents you are supplying in support of your project:

Certification by applicant (please ensure all fields are filled in):-

All necessary consents/insurance or permissions are in place	Yes	No
If not, please provide reasons and when it will be in place		
Please confirm that none of the prohibitions below applies	Yes	No
Ward Member budgets cannot be used for the following purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Projects that would adversely impact the local community or environment like for example funding a parade for a socially excluded body■ Projects that would undermine council approved priorities■ To fund existing, changing or decommissioned council services■ To fund the mainstream activities of a commercial or voluntary sector organisation.■ To fund retrospective applications (e.g. equipment etc cannot be purchased and then an application submitted)■ Projects that are political in nature or campaign against the council or its agreed priorities or funding for lobbying■ Must not have on going revenue or capital implications■ Projects/proposals that would be unlawful for the council to support		

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the entries on this application form are true, accurate and complete.

I confirm that I am authorised to sign this application form on behalf of the organisation or group named within this application form.

signature/e-sign	
date:	