

REPORT TITLE:	GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT - IMPLEMENTING A NEW MODEL FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
REPORT OF:	Director of Governance & Assurance

REPORT SUMMARY

Following agreement at Council on 10 December 2018, endorsing the recommendation by Cabinet on 26 November 2018, to implement a new model of community engagement commencing in the municipal year 2019/2020 this report describes:

1. the distribution of funding across 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 in Appendix A to this report), and allocations in respect of each Ward Member.
2. The governance arrangements for the process of applications for Ward Member budget funding and; annual review and evaluation.
3. Member support arrangements to aid ward councillors.

In accordance with the recommendations approved by Council the deletion of the provisions of the Constitution relating to Constituency Committees determines that this meeting is the final convergence of the Constituency Committee. Members may therefore also wish to consider arrangements for collaborative working outside of formal governance conditions.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

- Elected members note the process and criteria as set out in the appendices attached to this report and the necessary officer delegations to administer the Ward Member budgets.
- Members consider opportunities for working together.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To progress the Council's agreed approach to community engagement and to establish Ward Member budgets as a means of enabling engagement with Wirral's residents.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

A range of options have been considered as part of the development of the new approach and in consultation with Elected Members and other relevant stakeholders.

3.0 BACKGROUND

During 2017/18 a review took place led by the then Portfolio holder for community engagement. Following consideration, and ongoing consultation with Elected Members, a proposal was approved by Cabinet, at its meeting on 26 November 2018, to implement a new approach to community engagement. This approach is intended to enable a more focussed way to 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.

On 10 December 2018 Council agreed the recommendation of Cabinet:

- 1) 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 and allocated in respect of each Ward Member;*
- 2) to delegate authority to the Director for Governance and Assurance to determine applications for Ward Member budget funding;*
- 3) to delegate to the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader, 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;*
- 4) that there be an annual review and evaluation;*
- 5) to recommend to the Council the deletion of the provisions of the Constitution relating to Constituency Committees as part of the Council's executive arrangements; and*
- 6) that the new Ward Member budget model should be implemented in the new Municipal year.*

Wirral Together Getting the basics right – a new model for community engagement, 26 November 2018

To implement these recommendations arrangements have been established to ensure effective delivery and robust governance.

3.1 WARD BUDGET

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.

The amount of funding allocated to local areas has increased to £250,000 across 22 wards. The amount allocated to each ward across Wirral has been determined using a formula based upon 75% per head of population, 15% deprivation, 5% under 5 years population and 5% over 75 years population. The allocation for each ward is included in Appendix A.

3.2 FUNDING APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

It is important that Ward Member budget activity is clearly communicated and transparent. Appendices B and C include the process, criteria and the necessary officer delegations to administer the Ward Member budgets.

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 annually 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.

3.3 MEMBER SUPPORT

Dedicated officer support will continue to be provided to directly support councillors in this approach aligned to the knowledge and existing relationships established as part of the Constituency Committee structure. This will include support to work alongside local communities, the process for considering and allocating ward budgets and developing local projects with local people and stakeholder organisations. Appendix D details the Officer support for each ward area.

3.4 WORKING TOGETHER

This approach enables Members to work in a way that responds to their local community and 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.

Ward councillors therefore 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. Following dissolution of the Constituency Committee Members may wish to agree an approach to working within and across boundaries.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A total annual budget of £250,000 has been allocated to be apportioned at ward level, with a third of each ward budget aligned to each Ward Member 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

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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.

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.

Ward-Member budgets comprise Council funds and must be spent in accordance with the relevant constitutional, financial and procurement rules.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

Officer support will be dedicated to Ward Members to enable the implementation of this new approach. Appendix D outlines how staff will be aligned to ward councillors.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

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.

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.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

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.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An impact assessment relating to this model can be found at the link below:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impactassessments/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.

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.

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.

REPORT AUTHORS:

Constituency Manager by area [to be added]

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ward Member Budget Allocations

Appendix B: Guidance on Ward Member Budgets

Appendix C: Ward Member Budget Application Form

Appendix D: Officer Support by Ward

APPENIX A – WARD MEMBER BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

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	Weighted Allocation ¹	Individual Ward Member budget allocation
Bidston and St James	14,009	4,670
Birkenhead and Tranmere	15,161	5,054
Cloughton	11,667	3,889
Oxton	10,374	3,458
Prenton	10,885	3,628
Rock Ferry	12,772	4,257
TOTAL	74,868	

Ward	Weighted Allocation	Individual Ward Member budget allocation
Leasowe and Moreton East	11,851	3,950
Liscard	12,639	4,213
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	10,420	3,473
New Brighton	11,561	3,854
Seacombe	13,856	4,619
Wallasey	10,671	3,557
TOTAL	70,999	

Ward	Weighted Allocation	Individual Ward Member budget allocation
Bebington	11,301	3,767
Bromborough	12,101	4,034
Clatterbridge	10,195	3,398
Eastham	10,331	3,444
Heswall	9,278	3,093
TOTAL	53,206	

Ward	Weighted Allocation ²	Individual Ward Member budget allocation
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	9,739	3,246

¹75% per capita; 15% deprivation; 5% under 5 years population; 5% over 75 years population

Hoylake and Meols	9,502	3,167
Pensby and Thingwall	9,574	3,191
Upton	13,128	4,376
West Kirby and Thurstaston	8,984	2,995
TOTAL	50,927	

Appendix B: Guidance on Ward Member Budgets

DRAFT Subject to amendment

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.

Appendix C: Ward Member Budget Application Form



Ward Budget Application Form [19/20] submission deadline [?]

Ward (please circle or highlight EACH or ONE ward specifically):-

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 budget fund?
Please round up/down to the nearest whole number

£

Ward Councillor certification I/We the undersigned ward councillor(s) 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 and in some cases disapprove 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.

Criteria:-

Please indicate how this application meets the ward budget criteria. Successful applications must:

- improve the well being of the local community in the Borough, or its environment or economy;
- 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 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
<p>Ward budgets cannot be used for the following purposes:</p> <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 core 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:	

Appendix D: Officer Support by Ward

Ward	Senior Manager	Engagement Officer
Bidston and St James	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan
Birkenhead and Tranmere	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan
Claughton	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan
Oxton	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan
Prenton	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan
Rock Ferry	Jo Burrell	Andy Brannan

Ward	Senior Manager	Engagement Officer
Leasowe and Moreton East	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray
Liscard	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray
New Brighton	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray
Seacombe	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray
Wallasey	Caroline Laing	Michelle Gray

Ward	Senior Manager	Engagement Officer
Bebington	Fergus Adams	Shannon Kennedy
Bromborough	Fergus Adams	Shannon Kennedy
Clatterbridge	Fergus Adams	Shannon Kennedy
Eastham	Fergus Adams	Shannon Kennedy
Heswall	Fergus Adams	Shannon Kennedy

Ward	Senior Manager	Engagement Officer
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	Jo Burrell	Helen Gallagher
Hoylake and Meols	Caroline Laing	Helen Gallagher
Pensby and Thingwall	Fergus Adams	Helen Gallagher
Upton	Fergus Adams	Helen Gallagher
West Kirby and Thurstaston	Fergus Adams	Helen Gallagher

