

Report title: Councillor’s Devolved Ward Budgets – Updated Criteria and Decision-Making Process

Meeting	Cabinet
Date	8 October 2024
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Graham Turner
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes – Affects all wards Yes
Purpose of Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report seeks a decision on a revised set of criteria and decision-making process for Councillor’s Devolved Ward Budgets. 	
Recommendations Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and approve the Councillors (Cllrs) Devolved Ward Budgets criteria and decision-making process set out at Appendix A Delegate future changes to the criteria and decision-making process for Cllrs Devolved Ward Budgets to the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder. Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At Budget Council meeting in March 2024 the ward budget was reduced from £20k to £10k per ward to deliver budget savings of £230k. The revised criteria will enable Cllrs to ensure their ward budget is used effectively, delivers value for money, responds to local priorities, maximises resources through external grants and donations and that decision making is transparent. 	
Resource Implication: Staff resources are already in place to support Cllrs and delivery of the £230k budgeted saving.	
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources 18.09.24
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Kevin Mulvaney, Service Director Finance (S151 Officer) 17.09.24
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Samantha Lawton, Service Director Legal & Commissioning (Monitoring Officer) 17.09.24

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: None

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes, no personal data involved.

1. Executive Summary

A Council meeting held on 6 March 2024 approved a total budget of £230,000 per year (£10,000 per ward) for the Cllrs Devolved Ward Budget (ward budget)

The Cllrs Devolved Ward Budget was first established by Cabinet in 2017 and provides Cllrs with a dedicated ward budget so they can respond to ward priorities.

The aim of the ward budget is to: -

- increase ward Cllr responsibility in terms of devolved resources.
- recognise the role of ward Cllrs, with their local knowledge and insight being increasingly vital in maximising the use of local community skills, assets and resources so that people can do something positive to improve lives and make their community thrive.
- raise the profile of the ward Cllr in a positive way with local citizens, which aligns with the Council Plan which recognises the importance of promoting the Cllr role.

Given the financial challenges faced by the Council it is timely to update the criteria for spend to ensure the ward budget is used effectively, delivers greater value for money and decision making is transparent.

The ward budgets will ensure Cllrs continue to: -

- play a vital role in their communities by encouraging greater collaboration with partners, voluntary organisations, residents and businesses to maximise all resources and assets in a place to achieve our ambitions.
- empower local people to develop and deliver projects that are shaped by local people.
- encourage groups to maximise ward budgets by raising other funding for example through external grants and donations.

To proposed criteria and decision-making process in respect of the Cllrs Devolved Ward Budgets is set out at **Appendix A**.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 A Council meeting held on 6 March 2024 approved a total budget of £230,000 per year for the Members Devolved Ward Budget (ward budget), with each ward allocated £10,000.

2.2 The proposed criteria and decision-making process is attached at **Appendix A**.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

3.1.1 Working with People

Cllrs regularly engage with local people to build strong relationships based on trust, work together to problem solve and listen to community priorities and ideas to improve local places and lives. This helps inform how the ward budget is spent.

3.1.2 Working with Partners

Cllrs bring citizens, partners and third sector organisations together, for example through ward-based partnership meetings, forums and themed meetings, to share information and coordinate how they can make use of all resources to help improve the quality of life of citizens and make local places better.

3.1.3 Place Based Working

A fundamental role of a Cllr is to work with and alongside communities to build community capacity within their wards and with the council and partners to coordinate how resources are used to deliver place-based priorities. The ward budget helps to ensure that solutions are not 'one size fits all' but tailored to meet local requirements and developed through working with and alongside our citizens.

3.1.4 Shared Outcomes

Cllrs ward budgets are invested in a range of projects and initiatives that deliver against our shared outcomes. Based on total spend across all wards in 2023-24, Cllrs ward budgets helped to deliver against our shared outcomes as follows: -

Shared Outcomes	Amount Awarded
Best Start	£318,998.50
Shaped by People	£197,715.21
Safe & Cohesive	£161,776.41
Clean & Green	£104,839.79
Sustainable Economy	£100,175.15
Well	£56,106.65
Independent	£49,996.96
Total Spend	£989,608.67

3.2 Financial Implications

A total budget of £230,000 was approved by Council in March 2024 for the Members Devolved Ward Budget, with each ward allocated £10,000. This is a permanent reduction of £230,000 from the previous approved budget.

3.3 Legal Implications

None.

3.4 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

3.4.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

An integrated impact assessment has been carried out in relation to elected members devolved budgets and can be viewed [here](#).

4. Consultation

4.1 The Finance and Regeneration Portfolio Holder has been consulted and their views are reflected in the draft criteria and decision-making process attached at Appendix A.

5. Engagement

5.1 Cabinet Members have been consulted on the proposed criteria and decision-making process.

5.2 Engagement with ward Cllrs will take place on how they wish to allocate their ward budget.

6. Options

6.1 Options Considered

- 6.1.1 To make no changes to the current criteria and decision-making process.
- 6.1.2 To approve the revised criteria and decision-making process for Cllrs ward budgets at **Appendix A**.
- 6.1.3 To delegate future changes to the criteria and decision-making process for Cllrs ward budgets to the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

6.2 Reasons for recommended Option

- 6.2.1 The revised criteria will enable Cllrs to ensure their ward budget is used effectively, delivers value for money, responds to local priorities, maximises resources through external grants and donations and that decision making is transparent.

7. Next steps and timelines

- 7.1 Subject to Cabinet approval the revised criteria and decision-making process they will be implemented with immediate effect. Ward Cllrs will be briefed on the changes and supported by the democracy and place-based working team.

8. Contact officer

Vina Randhawa
Democracy Manager
Vina.randhawa@kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

[Ward Budgets 2017/18](#) Criteria approved by Cabinet 30 May 2017

10. Appendices

Appendix A - Members Ward Budgets Criteria and Decision-Making Process

11. Service Director responsible

Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources Rachel.spencer-henshall@kirklees.gov.uk

Samantha Lawton, Service Director Legal & Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)
Samantha.Lawton@Kirklees.gov.uk

Appendix A

Members Ward Budgets Criteria and Decision-Making Process

The Members Ward Fund has been allocated to provide Councillors (Cllrs) with a dedicated devolved budget to support ward activities.

The primary use of this funding will be to: -

- support projects which make our local places even better – things that are good for local people and help our communities to grow stronger.
- Support projects that contribute to one or more of the shared outcomes in [Our Council Plan](#)
- Provide seed funding to stimulate community led activity.
- Provide flexible and timely support and respond to place-based priorities.

Allocation of Ward Budget

- £10,000 per ward will be allocated each year to support ward activities.
- Ward budgets will be allocated on an individual basis per ward member i.e. one third of the total budget each. Cllrs can work together if they choose.
- Cllrs can contribute funding to multi ward projects that can demonstrate how their project will benefit the residents of each ward.

Funding and Scheduling

- Members Ward Fund will be open for requests each year, except during pre-election period.
- Money not committed by 31st March each year cannot be carried forward and will be surrendered to corporate funds.

Decision Making

- Decisions are made only by those Cllrs in the ward (or wards) contributing funding to the project.
- Cllrs have a responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any funding proposal. If that interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, then they cannot take part in any discussion or decision-making. Where the interest amounts to an Other Interest, it is for Cllrs to decide if it is reasonable for them to participate. [Section 5.1 Part 13 of the Code of Conduct](#) sets out when interests arise.
- Where an interest does arise that excludes the Cllr the decision will be (i) referred to the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio holder or (ii) advice will be sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- Details of how the ward budget has been spent will be published on the Council and Democracy website, under the relevant ward Cllr.

General

- In addition to the criteria and guidance set out in Appendix A, all ward spending will be subject to the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules.
- Regard should be given to value for money and two written quotes should be obtained for any item costing more than £1k, and three for anything costing more than £3k.
- Cllrs should discuss allocation of funding with the Democracy and Place Based Working team who will keep a record and audit trail of all decisions made.

How the ward budget can be spent

Cllrs can decide locally how to spend their ward budgets, and in doing so are encouraged to maximise their funding, for example through the following, or a combination of the following ways: -

- Civic Crowdfunding

Civic crowdfunding has huge potential for citizen participation and collaboration and can help maximise ward budgets by raising other funds through donations.

- Cllrs can allocate all or part of their budget to civic crowdfunding through [Growing Great Places](#) (GGP) the Council's civic crowdfunding programme (delivered in partnership with Spacehive)
- Criteria for spend and decision-making process will be developed in discussion with Cllrs.
- Distribution of ward funding through GGP will help bring more money through donations and contributions, reduce reliance solely on the ward fund and ensure ward funding goes further to help deliver community led, locally based projects in the ward.

- Leverage and Match Funding

- Cllrs can use their budget as leverage to encourage voluntary or community organisation to apply for match funding, other grants, sponsorship or donations.
- Cllrs can signpost voluntary or community organisation looking for funding to search our free funding web portal: <https://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/kirkleescommunity/>

- Grant Funding

- Cllrs can use their ward budget to offer a community grants scheme to fund third sector groups.
- Local criteria and process can be developed with Cllrs if they want to award grants to third sector organisations.
- The maximum grant that a Cllr can award to a group per financial year is £1k; if all three ward Cllrs support the project the maximum award is £3k (i.e. £1k each). Unless in exceptional circumstances discussed and agreed by the Cabinet portfolio holder.
- Grants to multiple wards can be considered if the applicant can demonstrate to Cllrs how the project will benefit residents in their ward. If the applicant cannot demonstrate the benefits, they will be signposted to the third sector team for advice on alternative and more sustainable funding opportunities.
- Groups applying for grant funding will be required to
 - adhere to the [Kirklees Council Grant Aid Policy for investment in Voluntary and Community organisations](#).
 - register with the [Grants Access Point](#) if they wish to apply for over £1,000.
 - Submit an application form via email or online.
 - Provide monitoring and evaluation on the outcomes achieved before another grant application will be considered.

- Participatory Budgeting

- Cllrs can allocate some of their budget to participatory budgeting (PB)
- PB gives local people an opportunity to pitch their ideas and have a say in how funding is spent in their wards.
- Some wards already do this through You and Your Community, our local PB approach.
- Advice and support on PB can be provided by the Democracy and Place Based Working team.

- Commissioning Council services

- Cllrs can commission Council services, for example by topping up service budgets to enhance a project or scheme, or for a one-off activity that will not incur on-going costs to Council services.

- Commissioning external services

- Cllrs can commission goods, works or services from external providers to meet a particular need. The procurement process set out in the Council's contract procedure rules must be followed.

Feedback, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Groups receiving grant funding are required to provide evidence and feedback of how their grant was spent and the difference it made.
- Cllrs will be expected to hold at least one meeting in public annually e.g. through a Ward Forum, or other community meeting, to report how they have allocated their budgets and the outcomes they have achieved.

Support for Ward Members

The democracy and place-based working team will: -

- be responsible for making payments in accordance with Cllrs decisions, subject to available budget.
- deal with the administration of the ward members budget for example keep records of all decision made, payments, budget balances available, issue grant award agreements, request evaluation and monitoring information etc.
- provide Cllrs with information on local priorities and needs identified through citizen engagement, data and intelligence to support members to maximise the impact of their budgets.
- provide information on other local funding available and signpost organisations to the third sector team for advice on other funding where appropriate.
- support Cllrs to use their budget as match funding and where possible help to lever in other funding e.g. through partnership bids, external grants and civic crowd funding (Growing Great Places)
- brief Cllrs on the benefits of civic crowdfunding and opportunities to attract donations / raise funds for projects in the public domain or with a social common goal.
- support commissioning of larger projects and provide project management support.
- provided advice and support on establishing criteria, process and promotion of a community grant scheme.
- providing a summary of schemes funded in each year for Cllrs to report on their spend.
- support Cllrs annually to report how they have allocated their budgets and the outcomes they have achieved.
- ensure a summary of schemes funded and details of spend is published on the Councils website annually.
- signpost groups to the third sector team for support and guidance about registering with the [Grants Access Point](#).
- produce an annual report highlighting the impact of the Cllrs ward budgets.