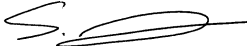


Report for: Cabinet Member Signing

Item number: 4

Title: **Ward Budget Review Recommendations**

Report  
Authorised by: Stephen McDonnell – AD Commercial & Operations



Lead Officer: Anita Hunt – Business Support & Development Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision: Key Decision

### **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 Cabinet Member approval is sought for some changes to the published guidance on the ward budget scheme.

### **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

- 2.1 The scheme has been in operation since April 2015. Many community projects have been supported through this scheme but some minor changes are necessary to minimise the administrative burden on officers and Members and maximise community engagement with the scheme.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Following the first year of the ward budget scheme, officers conducted a review which gave rise to various recommendations. The recommendations were considered and agreed by the Statutory Officers Group. Most of the changes can be made using officer delegated authority powers.
- 3.2 There are two changes that require Member approval:
- 3.3 Alter the requirements on ward Councillors and officers to publish information about the ward budget process and awards as set out in section 4.2 of the report.
- 3.4 Reduce the minimum award from £1000 to £250.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 At present the guidance states that various information about the ward budget process and grants awarded will be published. The report did not make clear who should be responsible for publishing the material. The information has not been published as required. The recommendation is that we modify the publication requirements as they are unnecessarily onerous in light of practical experience operating the scheme, the

levels of interest in the details of the scheme from residents and the limited resources available to maintain the Council's website.

- 4.2 Please see table below. The first column shows what the guidance promises and what is proposed as an alternative:

<b>Existing requirement</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Publication of Ward profiles	The ward profiles are already published – we should include a link to that information from the ward budget page, rather than replicate them on the ward budget pages
Each ward to agree and set out for publication how awards are made, on what timescale, and how they will ensure that the money is disbursed in accordance with the overall aims and objectives of ward budgets	Dispense with this requirement - The criteria and overall guidance is already published. It would be burdensome on ward Councillors to agree and publish an additional level of information. This could cause confusion to residents as to what the criteria are and which take precedence
A full list of applications, and which ones have been recommended by ward councillors for funding	Dispense with this requirement - There is no need to publish those that were not supported by ward Cllrs. Officers will continue to publish details of successful applications. As well as producing a list of all awards approved for the previous financial year, officers will publish details of applications received for the current year each quarter.
Any applications rejected by the named officer (expected to be small in number)	Dispense with this requirement - Officers will continue to publish details of successful applications. There is no need to publish those that were rejected by the named officer
Information at the end of the year about how money has been spent	Dispense with this requirement - Officers publish details of successful applications that have received grants. We do not have end of year information about how the money was spent.
Any declarations of interest from ward members in relation to budget applications	Dispense with this requirement - Any such declarations received to be held on record and made available on request

## **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The publication requirements on Councillors and officers could remain as they are and efforts taken to ensure that both the ward Councillors and officers publish the information.
- 5.2 The alternative is to leave the minimum at £1,000, but this was thought to be unnecessarily restrictive on applicants.

## **6. Background information**

- 6.1 Ward budgets were introduced in 2015 to encourage resident led activities that are autonomous and self sustaining. The idea was that ward Councillors would receive proposals from community groups and decide which to award funds to. For 2015/16 a total of 63 grants were made to the value of £160,098.85.

## **7. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

- 7.1 To qualify, ward budget grant applications must improve the well-being of the local community so all grants further *Priority 4 - Create homes and communities where people choose to live and are able to thrive*. Projects such as play-buses and family activities at Bruce Castle further *Priority 1 - Enable every child and young person to have the best start in life*. Many involve health promotion activities for adults such as dance classes and health awareness which further *Priority 2 - Empower all adults to live healthy, long and fulfilling lives*. Projects such as improving lighting in alleyways and enhancing the public realm with hanging baskets and planting schemes help to further *Priority 4 - A clean and safe borough where people are proud to live*.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities**

### **8.1 Finance and Procurement**

- 8.1.1 There are no financial implications resulting from the recommended changes. Each Ward has access to a grant of up to £10k per year. Previously the minimum grant request was £1000 but the report recommends lowering this to £250 per claim, up to £10k. This will likely require more administration to process the request, but will not change the overall budget value.

### **8.2 Legal**

- 8.2.1 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and confirms that 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 Haringey area or persons resident or present in the area. Decisions on awarding money from ward budgets, based on recommendations from ward councillors will need to be based on criteria that the Council has set for itself, which has been published; so that people are aware of the criteria they need to address when making a grant application.
- 8.2.2 The Transparency Code which came into force on 1 April 2015 requires local authorities to publish online certain information in the manner, form and on the occasions specified in the Code, to increase local accountability. This includes the publication of details of each individual item of expenditure that exceeds £500, consistent with Local Government Association guidance, and includes grant payments. Information must be published each quarter, and not later than one month after the quarter to which the

grant data and information relates. Compliance with the Transparency Code is mandatory. Failure to comply with the Code may result in judicial proceedings.

### 8.3 **Equality**

- 8.3.1 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 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not; and
  - foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not. Ward budgets encourage resident led activities that are autonomous and self sustaining and provide an opportunity to foster good relations between different people and different communities.

## 9 **Use of Appendices**

- 9.1 There are no appendices to this report.

## 10 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

- 10.1 There is no exempt information in this report