



**Haringey Council**

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Signing</b>	<b>Item Number:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Ward Budgets 2015/16</b>		
<b>Report Authorised by:</b>	<b>Tracie Evans, Chief Operating Officer</b>		
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	<b>Erica Ballmann, Head of Policy &amp; Business Management</b>		
<b>Ward(s) affected: All</b>	<b>Report for Key Decision</b>		

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

- 1.1. The vision underpinning the Council's Corporate Plan is to work with communities to make Haringey an even better place to live. Key to that goal is changing the way we engage with residents, developing new approaches to resident engagement, focused on building community capacity. Effective engagement with residents is also essential to ensure that the services we deliver are focused on their needs.
- 1.2. This report recommends that ward budgets are established as a way of enabling this approach and that £10k is allocated to each ward. This report also recommends to the Cabinet Member that she 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 budgets.

## **2. Cabinet Member introduction**

At the last Full Council meeting, Members agreed that the existing Area Forum and Committee arrangements should be brought to an end and that, instead, we should set about exploring in detail how we can find more effective ways of engaging and working with Haringey's residents, businesses and partners – and giving local people a greater stake in community projects.



We understand that the Area Forum sessions were popular with some residents, but in many areas they weren't as well attended as we'd have liked, and that means they were no longer the best way of giving local people a say. If we are to encourage more people to get involved, then it's really important that we find more effective ways of doing so. Ward budgets should be flexible enough to enable different approaches to Community Leadership to take place in different wards. For instance, in some wards Councillors may wish to hold community meetings similar to Area Forums.

We're proud of the huge wealth of talent that we have here in Haringey, and of the significant resources and assets that we have in our communities and in our neighbourhoods, and we want to make sure we make the most of these. Ward budgets will be one tool that will enable us to take this approach. The appendices attached set out guidance on how these budgets will operate.

### **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees:

- 3.1. That a budget of £10k is allocated to each ward;
- 3.2. The process and criteria for allocating ward budgets as set out in appendices to A and B of this report;
- 3.3. To delegate to the Assistant Director of Environmental Services and Community Safety authority to determine applications for ward budget funding;
- 3.4. 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;
- 3.5. That there will be an annual review and evaluation.

### **4. Alternative options considered**

4.1. Alternative options considered include:

- Continuing with Area Forums and Committees;
- Abolishing Area Forums and Committees and not establishing anything in their place.

4.2 There is a clear commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan to work and engage with more of our community in a meaningful way to make Haringey an even better place to live.

4.3 With that in mind, it is not appropriate to abolish existing arrangements without considering alternatives. Nor is it appropriate to continue Area Committees and Forums in the knowledge that this mechanism has only partially achieved its objectives.



## 5. Background information

- 5.1. The future of Area Committees and Forums and possible alternatives has been under discussion with Members since before the 2014 local government elections.
- 5.2. There has been concern for some time that attendance at Area Forums and Committees is variable and often low, they were not the best forum for meaningful engagement with a wider number of residents.
- 5.3. With this in mind, alongside the focus in the Corporate Plan to increase engagement and work with our communities, ward budgets are being proposed as a tool for Councillors to use in their local area.
- 5.4. The key principles of how the ward budgets will operate are:
- **Acting as a catalyst:** to equip Councillors to encourage resident-led activities that become autonomous and self-sustaining.
  - **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 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 budget used exclusively as a seed fund.
  - **A strategic, evidence based approach:** Councillors need to be equipped to use their ward 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 budgets will enable Councillors to commission additional information gathering, surveys and asset mapping where it is required.
  - **Active leadership not passive acceptance of applications for funding:** It is suggested that it would be best to avoid a "passive" approach of simply welcoming applications to a pot of funding. By using the ward 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.
  - **Flexibility:** ward budgets should be flexible enough to enable different approaches to Community Leadership to take place in different wards. For instance, in some wards Councillors may wish to hold community meetings similar to Area Forums.



### **5.5 Communication and transparency:**

It is important that ward budget activity is clearly communicated and transparent. There will be a borough-wide publicity campaign organised through the Communications Unit to publicise ward budgets. At the end of the year, Communications will produce feature articles on ward 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 budgets and will be sourced through the Communications Unit procurement sources.

## **6. Comments of the Section 151 Officer and financial implications**

- 6.1. The recommendation within this report is to create a ward budget of £10k per ward (there are 19 wards), which equates to a total annual budget requirement of £190k. This sum has not been built into the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2015-18 and is therefore additional to the current available budget provision.
- 6.2. It should be noted that budget provision was available to fund special allowances for the area chairs as well as incidental costs associated with running and supporting the Area Forums and Committee arrangements. As these have now ceased, this budget, totalling £66k, can be re-directed to support part of the required £190k leaving a balance of £124k to find from other sources.
- 6.3. Given that this is a new approach to community engagement and that the 2015/16 MTFS has already been approved, it is proposed that the additional £124k budget requirement be funded from unspent inflation contingency as a one-off allocation for this financial year. Ahead of the finalisation of the 2016/17 MTFS, it is recommended that officers undertake a review of the effectiveness of the new arrangements and against this make a funding decision on a more permanent basis.
- 6.4. The Chief Financial Officer has been involved in the preparation of the proposed arrangements for financial governance of the decision making and the administration of the ward budgets and is content that the arrangements should minimise risk of improper use of public funds.

## **7. Comments of the AD Corporate Governance and legal implications**

- 7.1. 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



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benefit of the authority, the Haringey area or persons resident or present in the area.

7.2. Decisions about the allocation of ward budgets cannot be delegated either individually or collectively to ward members of the authority and therefore an officer will need to make decisions on awarding money from ward budgets on recommendations from ward councillors based on the criteria set out in the attached appendices.

7.3. Ward budgets comprise council funds and must be spent in accordance with the relevant constitutional, financial and procurement rules.

## **8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments**

8.1. 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.

8.2 Ward 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.

8.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix C. It found that ward 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.

8.4 The EqIA identified a number of potential risks around the introduction of ward 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.

8.5 The EqIA recommended that an annual review be carried out to monitor the cumulative impact of ward budgets and the effectiveness of any mitigation measures put in place. This is included in the recommendations to the Cabinet Member at paragraph 3.5 of this report.



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## **9. Reason for Decision**

9.1. Area Forums and Committees have been deleted and it is recommended that ward budgets are established as a means of enabling engagement with Haringey's residents.

9.2. This decision will establish the funding and process for ward budgets.

## **10. Use of Appendices**

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

**Appendix A - Guidance on Ward Budgets**

**Appendix B – Ward Budget Application Form**

**Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment**

## **11. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**