

**For General Release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CABINET 22 June 2015</b>
<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Community Ward Budgets Programme
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Sarah Ireland – Director of Strategy, Communities and Commissioning
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cllr Tony Newman Leader of the Council Cllr Mark Watson Cabinet Member Communities, Safety & Justice
<b>WARDS:</b>	All
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:</b> This report proposes a new approach to ward members working with their communities and devolving decision making in respect of community ward budgets to the ward level to support local priorities and outcomes.	
<b>AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON &amp; WHY ARE WE DOING THIS:</b> This report sets out the Council approach to developing and implementing community ward budgets further empowering local councillors and communities which lies at the heart of delivering the Ambitious for Croydon outcomes.	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b> The cost of the Community Ward Budget programme is £144,000 in 2015/16. Decision making in respect of each wards' budget allocation is delegated to each ward member (£2k each with £3k each for New Addington and Fieldway ward members).	
<b>KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:</b> N/A	

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Leader is recommended to;

- Endorse the Community Ward Budget programme; and
- Agree the ward members be given delegated authority to exercise executive powers for limited purposes of spending ward budgets.

The Cabinet is recommended

- Encourage all ward members to access the Programme ensuring the budget is spent on community priorities that matter to the residents of their wards;
- Recommend to Full Council that Ward members be given delegated authority to exercise non-executive powers for the limited purposes of spending the ward budget; and
- Agree a full report on the outcomes of the Community Ward Budget programme is made to Full Council in June 2016.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is set out the Community Ward Budget programme (the Programme) which is building on the local democratic process that already exists to provide greater choice in how things happen within each ward. In Croydon there are numerous great success stories of how, when local communities work together in solving problems or improving the places where they live the results and achievement far outweigh the small investments required to achieve these successes. This Programme seeks to harness that success and energy to deliver the things that matter to our residents in the wards that they call their home.
- 2.2 The Council recognises that Croydon is a diverse and vibrant place and within each ward and even the places within those wards there are different local issues, needs and priorities that locally elected representatives with their communities need to support and work together to address.
- 2.3 The programme represents a borough wide pilot to shape how the Council can further devolve decision making and fiscal responsibility enabling all ward members to have greater freedoms to work with their communities on the priorities that matter most to our local residents.

### **3. DETAIL**

- 3.1** The Programme will be Member led with each and every Council Member given the opportunity to access £2,000 to be spent locally in their ward in 2015/16. To ensure that each ward receives equal funding of £6,000, each of the Council Members for New Addington and Fieldway ward will have the opportunity to access £3,000 each.
- 3.2** Council Members will be accountable to their constituents on how they spend the ward budget allocated to them. This includes in terms of what the money is spent on as well as reporting retrospectively to the Council meeting in June 2016 on how the money was used and more importantly what local outcomes were achieved.
- 3.3** The Council will create a dedicated website for each ward. Council Members with their communities can use this website to promote local issues, agree priorities and find out how the money is being spent within their local area. In addition the dedicated website will be developed to be a resource for local residents and ward members to use to communicate and engage about ward issues and facilitate community empowerment at a local level.
- 3.4** Council Members have the opportunity to decide the best way to engage with ward residents using their experience as elected representatives. This could include using for example:
- Social media to engage different elements of the communities
  - ABCD community connectors where applicable
  - Existing links through Congress, third and faith sector
  - Crowd funding for key Ward issue/projects
  - Other external funding options to supplement the Community Budget
  - On-line voting or panel to prioritise ward issues
  - Community Panel approaches.
- 3.5** To support Council Members in this new role and for them to gain access to the Programme the Council has developed an introductory training session for the Programme. This session was launched earlier in June and consists of:
- Exploring new approaches and ideas to community engagement in involving wide range of people in decision making.
  - Evaluating what the data reveals about different wards and communities
  - Showcasing the potential of the new dedicated ward websites.
  - Understanding the governance arrangements and support available for members in delivering the Programme.

- 3.6 To ensure the Programme complies with the principles of ensuring that public money is spent appropriately and in line with expected levels of conduct and probity there is a governance framework requiring Council Members to sign up to a number of key governance principles.
- 3.7. All Council members who access the Programme will report back how the money has been spent and the outcomes by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 ensuring they are accountable to their residents. The success of the Programme, outcomes and how the money has been spent across all Wards will be reported to Council in June 2016.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 This is a cross-party initiative and all Council members have been consulted on the principles of the Programme.

#### **5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 This decision commits the Council to spending up to £144,000 in 2015/16 through this programme. This expenditure will be funded from both revenue and capital depending on the nature of the costs. The Capital budget allocated for this programme is £120k and any revenue costs incurred will be funded from the New Administration Priority Earmarked Reserve.

Council Members will only be able to access funding once they have attended the training session and will be responsible for ensuring that any costs incurred meet the criteria of the programme.

**(Approved by Lisa Taylor, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer)**

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER**

- 6.1 The Council Solicitor comments that decisions made in respect of community budgets will engage both executive and non-executive functions. Section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("The Act") requires that a delegation of executive powers such as this shall be taken only by the executive leader. Likewise, the delegation of non-executive functions is a matter for Full Council.
- 6.2 Clear governance arrangements will need to be agreed by the Leader and Council respectively, as part of the delegation, to ensure that the process meets the relevant legal requirements, including the audit, financial and equalities considerations which Members will be required to take into account in deciding the allocation of their budgets.

- 6.3 To the extent that the decision taken by the individual member in relation to their ward is an executive decision, there is a legal requirement for each such spending decision to be formally recorded and published in accordance with Part 4B of the Constitution, which reflects the requirements of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Further, any decision, whether executive or non-executive, taken as part of a delegation in relation to ward matters is required by s.237 of the Act to be recorded in the manner specified and to be available for public inspection.

(Approved by: Gabriel MacGregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer)

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 7.1 There are no immediate HR consideration that arise from the recommendations of this report for LBC staff. .

(Approved by: Michael Pichamuthu, HRBP on behalf of Heather Daley, Director of Human Resources)

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.1 An Initial equality analysis was undertaken to ascertain the potential impact the community budgets programme could have on residents from equality groups that share a “protected characteristic” compared to those that do not. This concluded that a full equality analysis is not required at this stage.

However, the full report on the outcomes of the Community Ward budget programme that is due to be presented to the Council in June 2016 should provide an overview of the impact of the programme on specific residents / community groups that share a protected characteristic in each ward.

For instance, some wards will have higher representation of residents from specific equality groups and thus higher involvement / engagement with these equality groups. Wards will also have different local equality and inclusion issues, needs and priorities that Ward members may discuss with residents and plan action to address them.

- 8.2 The equality analysis concluded that the main outcomes or benefits of the community budgets programme is to shape an approach that the Council can use to further devolve decision making and fiscal responsibility to ward members and local communities allowing them freedom to focus on addressing local priorities.

In order to achieve this outcome wards members will need to ensure that:

- Residents (including those from hard to involve equality groups) are given the opportunity to have a say on what the budget in their wards will be spent on

- Residents (including those from hard to involve equality groups) are given the opportunity to participate and get involved in how things happen within their ward
- Residents/communities (including those from hard to involve equality groups) are given the opportunity to get involved in decision making for their locality

8.3 The proposed community budgets programme will enable the Council to support work on delivering the following 2 priorities that are set out in the Equality and Inclusion Policy 2014-16:

- Provide strong leadership, partnership and organisational commitment by enabling staff and communities to find solutions to the things that matter most to them
- Foster good community relations and cohesion by getting to know our diverse communities and understand their needs'

8.4 The equality analysis suggests that the community budgets programme can enable ward members to discuss local equality and inclusion issues, needs and priorities that need to be addressed with local residents / communities if groups that may have faced historic disadvantage are proactively encouraged to participate and get involved

8.5 The change is likely to help the Council in advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and in fostering good relations between people who belong to any protected groups and those who do not. The programme will need to ensure that groups that may have faced disadvantage are proactively encouraged to participate and get involved in deciding local ward priorities for the community budget. By doing so, the programme will contribute towards strengthening local democracy and providing greater choice in how things happen within each ward.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

9.1 There is no specific environmental impacts at this stage. This area will be further evaluated in the annual report on how the Community Ward Budgets have been delivered

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

10.1 There is no specific crime and disorder impacts at this stage. This area will be further evaluated in the annual report on how the Community Ward Budgets have been delivered

## **11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION**

11.1 These are contained in section 3 of the report

## **12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

12.1 Not applicable

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Sarah Ireland, Director of Strategy, Commissioning, Procurement & Performance

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

*None*