

<b>Ward Budget Decision Making</b>
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**Report of the Assistant Director - Neighbourhoods and Housing**

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

- 1.1 This report reviews the current delegated decision-making arrangements for Ward budgets.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Community Manager - Neighbourhoods be authorised to approve all applications under £50,000 for funding from the Ward budgets where there is unanimous support from the relevant Ward Councillors for the relevant application;
- 2.2 that all Ward budget applications for and above £50,000 be considered by the Area Committee;
- 2.3 that where unanimous agreement cannot be reached or a conflict of interest is declared by a relevant Ward Councillor, the application be considered by the Area Committee, and
- 2.4 that a paper be submitted to all Area Committee meetings setting out decisions made under delegated powers and advising members of amounts available to spend.

This is a non-key decision

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The aim is to agree delegated arrangements that minimise delays in implementing local projects and initiatives, providing the Community Manager with the ability to respond swiftly to resident and community concerns.

4. Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees)

- 4.1 There is no impact on other Executive Committees. Following Member approval to commit sums to a particular project,

development of the project will be in line with Procurement Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

## 5. Background

5.1 The current Ward Budget delegated decision-making arrangements were agreed by the Park Area Committee at its meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.

5.2 Minute 13(21/22) from the July, 2021 meeting agreed:

- a) That the Community Manager - Neighbourhoods be authorised to approve all applications under £50,000 for funding from the Ward budgets where there is unanimous support from the relevant Ward Councillors for the relevant application;
- b) that all Ward budget applications in excess of £50,000 to be considered by Area Committee;
- c) that where unanimous agreement cannot be reached or a conflict of interest by the relevant Ward Councillors, the application will be submitted to the Area Committee for consideration, and
- d) that a paper is submitted to all Area Committee meetings setting out decisions made under delegated powers and advising Members of amounts available to spend

5.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the decision of the Area Committee permits decisions of a value up to £50,000 to be delegated to an Officer. All decisions relating to applications with a value of £50,000 and above must be considered by the Area Committee.

## 6. Issues for Consideration

6.1 Each year the Ward budget (revenue and capital) is allocated to wards using the Ward budget allocation formula. The use of Ward budget funding is to support schemes within local neighbourhoods for the betterment of local communities. This contributes to the Council's aims and objectives insofar as projects are consistent with local priorities as may be identified from time to time.

6.2 Under the Constitution any decision made by an Officer that has a financial value in excess of £50,000 must be made by a decision record published on the Council website. Given this, the principle followed by Area Committees is that all delegations made with a value in excess of £50,000 are made through Area Committee, even when there is unanimous support for the decision.

6.3 Where unanimous agreement cannot be reached or a conflict of interest by a relevant Ward Councillor is made, it is recommended

that the application be submitted to the Area Committee for consideration.

6.4 Area Committees can allocate funds received in connection with section 106 Planning agreements for the purposes set out in that agreement (e.g. the provision or enhancement of public open space and/or children’s play space). This function is delegated from the Planning Committee and cannot be delegated further.

6.5 There are also varying arrangements with respect to three housing budgets, Area Based Spend, Enhanced Environmental Works and Estate Management budgets. Some Area Committees have retained decision making powers in relation to these funds and some have delegated all or part of the budgets to the Operations Manager. If required, a review of the delegations in respect of these budgets will be the subject of a separate report by the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods and Housing.

7. Options and Risk Assessment

7.1 The following options have been considered:

Option 1	Agree delegations to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Housing for applications less than £50,000.	Neighbourhood Teams report to the Assistant Director - Neighbourhoods and Housing. The Service Area responsibilities of the post risk a delay in the approval of projects which could impact on project implementation.
Option 2	Require all applications to be submitted to Area Committee.	This option would maximise public scrutiny of decision making on Ward budget applications but would introduce potentially significant delays to the implementation of all projects with meetings taking place every other month.
Option 3	Agree delegations to the Community Manager – Neighbourhoods for applications less than £50,000.	This would enable decisions on all applications, except those where (i) Ward Members were not unanimous, (ii) where there was a conflict of interest, or (iii) where projects affected more than one ward, to be made quickly. The risk that

		decisions would not then be subject to public scrutiny would be addressed by the submission of a regular paper to the Area Committee setting out decisions made under delegated powers.
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7.2 Option three is recommended as this gives the most flexibility, reduces potential delays but provides safeguards to ensure that applications can be considered by Area Committee if members wish as well as enabling public scrutiny of decisions made under delegated powers. All projects will be progressed in line with the Procurement Rules within the Council's Constitution.

8. Consultation

8.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods & Housing who has requested this be considered by Area Committees.

9. Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal Services and Partnerships)

9.1 The Scheme of Delegation allows an Area Committee to delegate the discharge of any of its functions to a sub-committee or an officer of the Council. The recommendations are therefore in accordance with the Scheme and there are no other legal issues arising. (PT)

10. Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)

10.1 The Director of Finance and Transformation notes the recommendations of the report and has no further comment to make. (AG)

11. Comments of Assistant Director of HR & OD and compliance with the Equality Duty

11.1 There are no staffing or equality issues arising from this report. (KH)

12. Comments of Overview and Scrutiny

12.1 This report has not been subject to pre-decision scrutiny. (Ref. Sc6828 (FH))

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Officer Interests: None                      Background Documents: -

## Implications Matrix

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	Yes
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	Yes
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	Yes
The report is approved by the relevant City Manager	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	No
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	No
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	No
Any human rights implications are included within the report	No
I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	Yes
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	No
I have included information about how this report contributes to the City Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes