

West Suffolk Locality Budget Scheme Guidance for councillors

1. Scheme purpose

Locality budgets have been designed to ensure that funding can get right to the heart of local communities, via the ward councillor, to enable projects and activities which communities care about to develop, grow and succeed.

- 1.1 The objective of the scheme is for the funding to be used in building capacity and resilience in local communities, helping residents to take ownership of and make a difference to the issues they care most about locally.
- 1.2 £2,812.50 is allocated per councillor for each financial year (April to March) with the exception of an election year. For information relating to election years, please see paragraph 4.6.
- 1.3 Funding can be used for new or existing small scale, community-based projects or activities carried out by community groups working in the councillor's own ward that support the delivery of the Families and Communities Strategy. This centres on encouraging residents to explore their strengths and assets, an approach which is underpinned by the [West Suffolk Approach](#).
- 1.4 In special cases, as well as using the locality budget to support a project in his or her ward area, it is possible for more than one councillor to club together to support a project that crosses ward boundaries, or for a councillor to work together with a county councillor using funding from his/her county locality budget. However, projects covering the whole borough or district are not considered suitable for this funding.
- 1.5 Councillors should satisfy themselves that the project or activity being funded would improve the community or environment and enhance the quality of life for local residents. The project or activity should also have wider community support.
- 1.6 The funding must be used by community groups. Community groups are groups which are not public or local authorities (such as county, borough, district, town and parish councils) or businesses operated solely for profit. There is an exception for some rural parishes – see

1.7 below. The activities of the community group will be primarily for the benefit of the community. The way in which groups demonstrate community benefit will vary depending on their legal form.

- 1.7 As community activity in many rural areas is often led or supported by the parish council, funding may, in exceptional cases, be granted to support activities which are for the benefit of the community, but which are directly delivered by the rural parish councils. Funding must not be used to supplement services or functions provided by the parish council which are or could normally be provided through its own resources. Members should be satisfied that the request for funding for the rural parish meets all the requirements (as summarised in 1.5 of this guidance).
- 1.8 Councillors are encouraged to suggest changes to a project or activity that does not meet the criteria in its current format but, with some changes, would be a better reflection of the aims identified in the Families and Communities Strategy. If this is the case, councillors, in discussion with the Families and Communities Officer, can make suggestions to the community group and place conditions on the funding to ensure that the funding is within the scheme.
- 1.9 Care should be taken with funding events – these should demonstrate clearly the residual benefit to the community after the event is completed (see 1.1 above). This might be the formation of a new community group, stronger links within the community or greater resident involvement after the event.
- 1.10 Locality budgets may not normally be used to subsidise events that generate their own revenues – for example, through ticket sales, admission fees, sales of goods or services within the event. However, consideration would be given to supporting events which generate revenues for the benefit of the community. In other words, residual community benefit, not commercial benefit, must be the central feature of the event or project.

2. Essential criteria

The scheme is governed by criteria to ensure that the funding has the greatest impact on the quality of life for residents in the district and ensures probity, value for money and accountability.

Councillors are responsible for satisfying themselves that the following essential criteria have been met by using a checklist included in the funding application form.

- 2.1 The funding awarded must be at least £100.

- 2.2 The funding must go to a community group, **not** an individual, public body, profit-making organisation or national charity (with the exception of rural parish councils as set out in 1.7 above).

Under exceptional circumstances, where a small group does not hold a bank account, funds can be paid to the holding account of a public sector partner or like-minded community organisation on the strict understanding that funds can only be used for the stated purpose.

- 2.3 The granting of the funding is a one-off and does not imply an ongoing commitment by the council or have a revenue implication for the council.
- 2.4 The activity being funded has not already taken place.
- 2.5 The project or activity promotes communities working together and results in greater community involvement in a project and/or connecting people and organisations in new or stronger ways.
- 2.6 The project or activity does not unfairly discriminate against people from different backgrounds as described in the [West Suffolk Equalities Scheme](#).
- 2.7 The funding should be used by the community group during the 12 months following receipt or should be paid back in full.
- 2.8 As far as the councillor is aware, making the payment to the community group would not result in fraudulent or illegal activity or any practices which would bring the council into disrepute.
- 2.9 Councillors should satisfy themselves that the organisation does not have existing funds or significant unallocated/uncommitted reserves that could fund the project or activity.

3.0 How the scheme works (see also chart at Annex A)

- 3.1 Councillors publicise the locality budget scheme in their wards to a wide variety of community groups.
- 3.2 Community groups make their funding needs known to councillors.
- 3.3 Councillors request supporting information from community groups about projects which may be eligible for locality budget support.
- 3.4 Councillors consider community groups' funding needs against the purpose of the scheme and essential criteria.

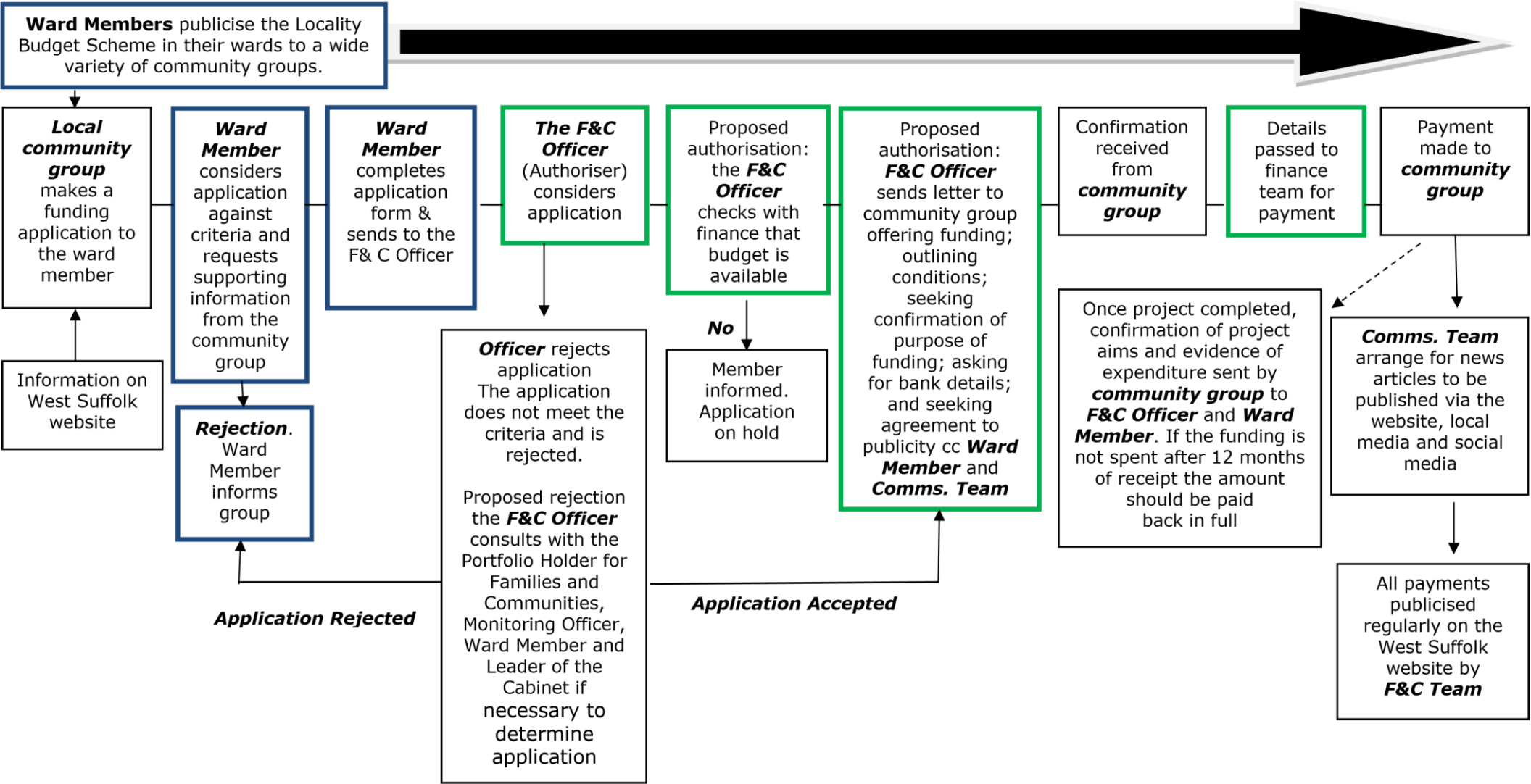
- 3.5 Where projects meet the scheme's purpose and essential criteria, councillors complete a formal assessment on the application form, recommending the funding of a project or activity and providing the necessary supporting information. Councillors may propose changes to a project to meet the scheme's criteria and should discuss this possibility with the Families and Communities Officer.
- 3.6 Where a councillor believes they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in the community group, the approval of the Council Leader or Deputy Leader must also be obtained.
- 3.7 Councillors pass completed application forms, with supporting information, to their Families and Communities Officer. This can be done at any time throughout the year.
- 3.8 The Families and Communities Officer considers the information provided on the form and checks with the Finance Team that sufficient funds are available.
- 3.9 If everything is in order, the Families and Communities Officer authorises the payment and informs the ward councillor, inviting them to let the community group know that the funding has been approved.
- 3.10 The Families and Communities Officer writes to the community group, asking for confirmation that the funding will be spent on the intended purpose, their payment information (BACS transfer or cheque) and agreement regarding publicity.
- 3.11 The community group returns its confirmation form and the Finance Team arranges for payment to be made.
- 3.12 Once the project has been completed, the community group contacts the Families and Communities Officer, confirming that the money has been spent and providing evidence of expenditure.
- 3.13 Councillors liaise with the community group and the Families and Communities Officer to publicise the award and outcome of the funding.

4. Further details

- 4.1 The Families and Communities Officers will ensure that the criteria and purpose of the scheme are met and provide advice to ward councillors should this not be the case.
- 4.2 If Families and Communities Officers are unsure whether the application meets the scheme's purpose and/or criteria, or the councillor who originated the application is unhappy with the decision

of the Families and Communities Officer, the Families and Communities portfolio holder will make a decision.

- 4.3 In the event that the councillor who originated the application is still unhappy with this decision, or the portfolio holder is unable to make a decision, then a decision will be made by the Leader of the Council in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.
- 4.4 Councillors may check the funds available in their locality budget at any time by contacting their Families and Communities Officer.
- 4.5 At the end of a year, up to £500 per councillor of unallocated funds can be carried forward into the next financial year. In an election year, there will be no carry forward. If a by-election is held, the remaining locality budget will be automatically transferred to the newly elected councillor for that ward. If, in the event of a vacancy, there is no by-election, any remaining money in the locality budget for the vacant seat will be determined by the portfolio holder to ensure that the money is not lost to that ward.
- 4.6 Prior to an election, there will be a period during which no announcements or payments can be made, starting from the date of the notice of election until the election itself. During this period, applications received which meet the criteria of the scheme will be acknowledged by the Families and Communities Officer but will not be determined until after the election in the usual way, in consultation with the new ward councillor.
- 4.7 Details of locality budget spending will be published regularly on the West Suffolk website.



RB revision 15.08.16