

West Suffolk Locality Budget Scheme

Guidance for councillors

1. Scheme purpose

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council has a strong belief that families and communities are the bedrock of West Suffolk. Where they are thriving, we see successful places that are economically buoyant, healthy and cohesive. But where they are struggling, we see a range of issues and challenges emerging that prevent people from achieving their goals.
- 1.2 The locality budget guidance has been amended with in order to enable councillors to support the voluntary and community sector throughout this challenging time.
- 1.3 The objective of the scheme is for the funding to be used in developing and 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.
- 1.4 The Locality Budget spend for 2020/21 is £3,300. Additional funding has been supplied to support groups supporting vulnerable communities through COVID19. Please note those councillors who had a carry forward of up to £500 will retain this in addition.
- 1.5 To support our communities through this challenging period, the following thresholds will apply (this is for the period of COVID19):
 - Spend of up to £200 can be allocated to new groups and paid to an individual in these groups recognising that they are unlikely to have bank accounts or constitutions (which is an existing requirement). This spend is likely to be used as a 'whatever it takes fund', for example funding volunteer phones.
 - Spend between £200 and £500 to support established VCS organisations, parish and town councils who are supporting during this crisis period and likely to have an existing bank account and constitution.
 - Spend over £500 needs to be discussed with a Families and Communities Officer, so we can ensure the budget is allocated effectively and reduce any duplication, as well as identify best practice/opportunities for collaboration between groups.
 - Funds can be paid retrospectively.
- 1.6 For all non-COVID19 support, funding can be used for new or existing community-based projects or activities carried out by community groups working in the councillor's own ward. This centres on encouraging residents to explore

their strengths and assets, an approach which is underpinned by the [West Suffolk Approach](#).

- 1.7 In exceptional 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 collaborate 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 district are not considered suitable for this funding.
- 1.8 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 which should be evidenced within the application form.
- 1.9 The funding must be used by community groups, charities, social enterprises and community interest companies. Community groups are groups which are not public or local authorities (such as county, district, town and parish councils) or businesses operated solely for profit. 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.
- 1.10 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.
- 1.11 It is the councillor's responsibility to engage with the local group to complete the application form with them. Councillors are encouraged to create positive relationships with local groups to be able to suggest changes to a project or activity that does not meet the criteria in its current format. They are encouraged to align projects with the [West Suffolk Approach](#). If this is councillors wish to make appropriate and achievable conditions to the Locality Budget, they can make suggestions to the community group and place conditions on the funding to ensure that the funding is within the scheme. The Families and Communities Officers can support the councillor with setting the conditions.
- 1.12 Care should be taken with funding events – these should demonstrate clearly the residual benefit to the community after the event is completed (developing and building capacity and resilience). This might be the formation of a new community group, stronger links within the community or greater resident involvement after the event.
- 1.13 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. They cannot be used for individuals – regardless of the benefit and also national charities requesting donations

2. Essential criteria

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Councillors are responsible for satisfying themselves that the following essential criteria have been met by using a checklist included in the funding application form.
- 2.3 The funding awarded must be at least £100, unless a newly formed group in light of COVID19.
- 2.4 The funding must go to a community group, a COVID-19 community response to an individual representing others, public body, profit-making organisation or national charity (with the exception of rural parish councils as set out in 1.9 above).
- 2.5 Under exceptional circumstances, monies can be allocated to new groups and paid to an individual in these groups recognising that they are unlikely to have bank accounts or constitutions (which is an existing requirement). Alternatively, where a small group does not hold a bank account, funds can be paid to the holding account of a public sector partner or community organisation on the strict understanding that funds can only be used for the stated purpose. This governance procedure is called 'in trust'.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 To assist communities in changing times, locality budget can be paid retrospectively. All councillors must inform community projects that sufficient time is required for locality budgets to be awarded.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The project or activity does not unfairly discriminate against people from different backgrounds as described in the [West Suffolk Equality Scheme](#).
- 2.10 The funding should be used by the community group during the 12 months following receipt or should be paid back in full. Evidence is required if payment exceeds 12 months.

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 Councillors should satisfy themselves that the organisation does not have existing funds or significant unallocated or 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 Generate conversations with local networks. The Families and Communities Officer can support the councillor to enhance their knowledge of and how best to engage with the groups in their wards if needed.
- 3.3 Community groups make their funding needs known to councillors.
- 3.4 Councillors request supporting information from the community groups about projects which may be eligible for locality budget support.
- 3.5 Councillors consider community groups' funding needs against the purpose of the scheme and essential criteria.
- 3.6 Where projects meet the scheme's purpose and essential criteria, councillors complete 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 are encouraged to discuss this possibility with the Families and Communities Officer.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Councillors to seek advice and provide supporting information, to their Families and Communities Officer. This can be done at any time throughout the year, unless time restrictions are put in place in line with legislation for example pre-election publicity restrictions.
- 3.9 The Families and Communities Officer considers the information provided on the form and checks to sufficient funds are available.
- 3.10 All applications to be sent to families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk for processing, this will prevent any delays if staff are redeployed or unable to work.

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 The community group returns its confirmation form and the Finance Team arranges for payment to be made.
- 3.14 Once the project has been completed, the community group contacts the elected member and Families and Communities Officer, confirming that the money has been spent and providing evidence of expenditure.
- 3.15 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 a district council 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 a council 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](#).

