

Bromsgrove District Ward Members Fund Policy

Bromsgrove District Council has agreed that an allocation of funding will be distributed for ward members to work within the District to improve facilities and outcomes for the community.

Each Councillor has £1,155 for 2014/15 which he or she can recommend to allocate to projects and/or services within their ward. These must support the delivery of the Council's strategic purposes:

- Keep my place safe and looking good
- Provide good things for me to see, do and visit
- Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
- Help me be financially independent
- Help me run a successful business

The fund which has been provided for 2014-15 financial year will need to be spent by the end of the financial year.

Principles

The Ward Members Fund will operate in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) Projects should help fulfil the Council's Strategic Purposes
- (b) Projects should improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of an area or otherwise have a clear benefit to the local community.
- (c) There is a minimum threshold of £100 for any application under the scheme. This is to ensure that the cost of administering the scheme does not become overly burdensome and costly for the Council.
- (d) Capital Projects for equipment and one off costs are encouraged. However, any ongoing revenue costs associated with, or arising from, a project will not be funded by the District Council and alternative funding arrangements should be sought.
- (e) Bromsgrove District Council must have the legal power to fund any proposed project.
- (f) All applications for funding must be made in writing on the approved form and be authorised by the Executive Director of Finance and Resources and the Portfolio holder for Finance.. Members will be advised of the reasons for the rejection of any projects.
- (g) Applications must demonstrate the consultation that has been undertaken with ward residents, businesses, Parish or Town Councils, voluntary/community bodies and/or other partners.
- (h) Projects which pool the funds of different members either within a ward, across Ward Boundaries or parishes are encouraged.

(i) Contributions to projects which have District wide benefit are permissible, provided that applications to use the fund in this way are able to demonstrate the value of the project to the particular Ward area.

(j) Any underspend(s) (ie, uncommitted funds) cannot be carried forward. An exception to this is in 2014/15 whereby the policy was not agreed until later in the financial year.

What will not be covered by Ward Funding

The following will not be covered by Ward Members Funding:

- (a) Ongoing revenue or maintenance costs.
- (b) Insurance, planning etc. application costs, solicitors or other fees.
- (c) Donations to individuals.
- (d) Donations to commercial bodies or events.
- (e) Direct staffing costs.

Application Process

Any application to spend funds in the members ward must be made on the form provided and submitted to the Executive Director Finance and Resources. Based on the information provided and following consultation with the Portfolio holder for Finance, a decision will be made on whether the proposal is reasonable and lawful.

Forms can be submitted electronically via the Council's e-mail account only, or in paper with the necessary signature/s.

Applications direct from organisations will not be considered.

Funds will not be paid to Councillors but direct to the project/organisation nominated on the form.

Do not include account details on the submission form. If the payee's details are not contained within the Council's financial system they will be contacted directly in order that they provide us with their account details.

Payment will be made by BACS Transfer as it is a secure method of making payment and is cost effective to the Council.

Be clear about how the money will be spent

A clear statement will be required as to how the money will be spent and how it would support the delivery of the Council's strategic purposes and benefit the members of the community. It is anticipated that there will be evidence that the service/ project is required by the community / residents and that once implemented there is a clear benefit that can also be evidenced.

The application will only be cleared for payment if this is clear and officers can see that it is appropriate and legal.

Once an application has been agreed it will be held for public inspection (on request) at the Council House for 6 years and a summary will be published on the Council's website each April.

A quarterly update will be made available to Councillors on the spend / balance of their fund.

Declarations of Interest

You need to declare that you have no disclosable pecuniary interest in the proposal (this includes the interests of spouse/partner as well as you) – and/or, if another disclosable interest exists, make a clear statement as to the type and nature of the interest.

No organisation will be able to benefit from the funding if you hold a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Being appointed to a particular body by the District Council should not normally create a disclosable interest. However, each case must be considered individually and early advice should be sought on the nature of any potential interest.

Joint Bids /Cross Ward Boundary Bids

Bids can be made by Councillors putting their ward funding together. This could be to generate greater benefits across more than one ward if it is clear that there is a greater need for this project / service to be implemented across ward boundaries.

One form can be submitted by a lead member setting out the joint bid and confirmation will be required (either by email or countersignature) by the other councillors that they:

- agree to the submission;
- confirm their financial contribution and
- confirm the declaration

Payments for joint bids will only be processed when all councillors have responded.

Publicity

Any publicity arising from use of the Fund should not be party political and should refer to the District Council's contribution. The Ward Councillor/s is responsible for ensuring that any publicity complies with this.

Be clear that the payment is from the District Council and not you individually.

The scheme will be suspended during any periods of purdah relating to the District Council elections.

Audit

The Ward Members Fund can be subject to review by the council's Internal Audit service to ensure financial probity and value for money in how public money is spent. Appropriate records should be kept by all applicants in case their application is audited.

Appropriate records will be kept by officers of the funding approved and expenditure incurred by the Council. Every project (both approved and rejected) must have a completed application form and a record of the decision taken.