

Member Briefing

Number: 1309

Title: Member Budgets Grants Scheme 2019 - 2020

Summary: This briefing provides members with details of the Member Budgets Scheme for the 2019/20 financial year.

Member budgets were introduced to enhance the ability of councillors to act as democratically elected representatives and to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of their local communities.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal has confirmed that these arrangements will continue for the 2019/20 financial year with £5,000 allocated to each ward councillor. The Members Budget Grant Scheme is now open.

In promoting or endorsing funding requests, members are reminded of the following key elements underpinning the scheme.

- The project or supported activity should contribute to one of the Councils priority outcomes
- The minimum award is £250, the maximum is £5000
- Budgets may be pooled on a ward basis
- The award can be used for revenue or capital spend
- The project or supported activity should make a positive change in the local area and/ or benefit the wider community. Examples of eligible expenditure include:
 - ✓ equipment hire or purchase
 - ✓ community events or activities – these may take place on an annual basis
 - ✓ improvements or additions to community facilities
 - ✓ materials and equipment for a local project
 - ✓ seasonal or project workers (those who work only as and when required), or an element of salary costs incurred as part of a wider scheme
 - ✓ start-up costs for groups or activities
 - ✓ team clothing or kit
 - ✓ environmental improvements to the local area
 - ✓ training or capacity building events
 - ✓ revenue costs such as transport costs, venue hire, volunteer expenses
 - ✓ capital works or expenditure

Budgets can be used to contribute to wider council projects such as local transport improvement, road safety projects (subject to the next point below)

The project or service must be located with the member's own ward or be of significant benefit to those living within the member's own ward.

The award must not be used for:

- any costs incurred when putting together an application
- loans or interest payments
- anything party political, including supporting political organisations
- anything solely for religious purposes
- lobbying against council policy
- anything that will bring the Council into disrepute
- anything contrary to the Council's financial regulations or council policies
- anything illegal
- individual salary costs
- anything that does not directly have a wide community benefit, this includes trips for individuals
- anything that doesn't contribute towards the Councils corporate priorities
- anything which is met by a Schools Pupil Premium Strategy
- any retrospective bids (a bid for anything which has already happened)
- applications from organisations who have previously failed to adhere to the Members Budget guidance and/or monitoring guidelines.

Further advice and guidance on the eligibility of projects and potential funding recipients can be obtained from the relevant Locality team.

When making an award there are a number of issues that members and applicants should consider. These include:

1. *Compliance with financial regulations* - The Council has a set of financial and contract procedure rules that explain how all goods, works and services must be procured. When considering making an award all members must adhere to the basic principles of these rules, which include:

- a. ensuring compliance with all legal requirements
- b. achieving best value
- c. ensuring transparency, openness, non-discrimination and fair competition
- d. demonstrating probity, consistency, accountability and integrity
- e. supporting the council's corporate and departmental aims.

2. *Freedom of Information Act* - All Member Budget awards are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Therefore any information regarding the award of member budgets maybe provided to any individuals or organisations requesting information under the requirements of this act.

3. *Audit* - All councils are required to make all spend above £500 publicly available. Under these arrangements details of all financial transactions above this amount are made available on the Council website. In the case of Member Budgets and in the interests of transparency, all spend regardless of amount, is published on the council website annually.

4. *Data Protection* – All Member Budget awards are subject to the Data Protection Act 2018. Therefore a privacy statement outlining the Council's obligations to any data provided is included on every application form.

Member's Budgets must be spent within any given financial year. The last date, therefore, for the receipt of a fully complete award request form is 31 January annually. In election years, Member's Budgets will not be allocated for spend until after the local election. In a pre-election year Member's Budgets must be allocated by the end of November prior to the election. In a pre-election year there will be no carry forward.

Please see link to guidance and application form on the Cheshire West website:

- cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/memberbudgets

This information will also shortly be available on the member's portal.

For further information contact:

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