



# City of Westminster Cabinet Member Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection
<b>Date:</b>	16 June 2022
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Changes to the Ward Budget Programme 2022 - 2026
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision – as affects all wards
<b>Financial Summary:</b>	No financial implications
<b>Report of:</b>	Janis Best, Committee and Councillor Support Manager
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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Ward Budget Programme was reviewed in 2021 to ensure it was still fit for purpose and meeting the aims of not only the Councillors but also the funding applicants.
- 1.2 Cabinet Members, and members of both the Councillor and applicants' focus groups have been consulted on the proposed changes and are overall supportive.
- 1.3 These changes will ensure the programme continues to be fit for purpose in the coming year, aligns more closely with individual ward aims and streamlines the internal processes.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the following changes with an implementation date as soon as possible.
  - a) Updated guidance for the overall programme.
  - b) Change in delegation for sign off of release of funds over £10,000; from Cabinet Member to the Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison Team.
  - c) Applicants to the Programme will be able to ask for a pre-award of funding, of up to 50% of the total project costs.
  - d) Applicants will be asked to promote their funding award on their social media accounts as part of the funding agreement.

### **3. Reasons for Decision**

- 3.1 The Programme is expected to continue to address local ward priorities. The minor changes to the process will ensure that applicants are better accommodated by the Programme, the process is more efficient, and it is better promoted.

### **4. Background, including Policy Context**

- 4.1 A review of the Programme was conducted in the first quarter of 2021 as the Programme had not been reviewed for a number of years and it was felt it needed a refresh to ensure it was still meeting the aims for which it was set up.
- 4.2 Focus Groups were held with Councillors and applicants and the proposed changes have also been reviewed by both groups who are overall supportive of them.

#### **4.3 Proposed changes**

##### *4.3.1 Updated guidance*

The overall guidance for the Ward Budget Programme has not been revised or fully updated since 2010; however individual Cabinet Members have made small revisions which have been communicated since that time.

As changes, as listed in this report, are being considered, it was felt it was the correct time to review and update the overall guidance to give Members, Officers and other stakeholders a clear steer on the programme.

Attached, as Appendix A, is the updated guidance.

##### *4.3.2 Change in delegation for release of funds over £10,000*

In order to streamline the internal processes, it is recommended that the approval for the release of any funds over £10,000 be delegated to the Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison (GCL) rather than stay with the Cabinet Member, via an Executive Decision.

The Head of GCL role already has budget responsibility for up to £500k and therefore this change will enable applicants to receive formal approval of applications sooner and streamline the internal processes.

##### *4.3.3 Advance part payment of funds*

In the focus groups carried out with recipients of past funding there was an overwhelming ask for part of their award to be paid in advance of the projects starting so that they can manage cash flows better.

It is therefore recommended that for any funding awarded in the new cycle, the terms and conditions for funding are changed and organisations can ask to receive up to 50% of their funding in advance. This pre-award of funding will be dependent on the signing of a Project Agreement which will outline what the project is expected to deliver.

The final amount will be paid, as previously, at the end of the project on receipt of suitable monitoring and evidence of spend for the whole project; in line with what was agreed in the Project Agreement.

##### *4.3.4 Ward priorities*

In order to make the process clearer for applicants, and for Members making the decisions, it is suggested that Members set priorities for their ward each year, that applications can be made against.

If wards have decided on any these will be available to view on the Ward Budget webpages. The Ward Budget team can also provide this information to organisations as and when requested.

#### 4.4.5 *Communication of the Programme*

On award of funding each organisation will be provided with a social media kit and as part of the terms and conditions, for the award, they will be asked to promote that they have been awarded funding from the scheme. The kit will contain images to be used and suggested quotes and press lines.

### 5. **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The awarding of the funding in advance will have no implications to the overall cost of the Programme.

### 6. **Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The awarding of funding in advance will require a minor change to the Project Agreement Terms and Conditions, on a case by case basis.

### 7. **Carbon Impact**

This decision will have no carbon impact. We already advise organisations to consider the carbon impact of their projects as part of the Project Agreement, which is not changing.

### 8. **Consultation**

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with interested Councillors and applicants via focus groups and documents listing the proposed changes.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:**

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07971 920521*

*NB: For individual Cabinet Member reports only*

For completion by the **Cabinet Member** for Communities and Public Protection

**Declaration of Interest**

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

State nature of interest if any .....

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*(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)*

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled Changes to the Ward Budget Programme 2022 – 2026 and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed .....

Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:

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If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, Chief Operating Officer and, if there are resources implications, the Director of People Services (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.