



Report to BEECHES LOCAL AREA FORUM

Title: LOCAL AREA FORUM BUDGETS

To: Beeches Local Area Forum

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Recommendation

1. Beeches Local Area Forum is recommended **to note** the arrangements for its devolved budgets as described in the report.

Introduction

2. This paper describes the arrangements for the allocation of the funding devolved to Local Area Forums (LAFs) in 2009-10.
3. Further devolvement of budgets for 2010-11 and beyond will be advised later this year.
4. A separate report will be presented to this meeting covering the highways/transport delegated budget arrangements for 2010/11

Background

5. A key element of the Getting Closer to Communities (GC2C) Vision is "Genuine and increased influence by residents over local decisions and budgets". LAFs are central to achieving this (although this is not the only mechanism for working at a more local level). This is included as one of the three key roles of LAFs:
 - Shaping service delivery
 - Taking devolved decisions
 - Agreeing priorities for the LAF local area plan
6. To take forward these objectives, discussions have taken place over recent months with Heads of Service and Strategic Directors to identify opportunities for increasing devolved budgets and direct influence over budgets. Proposals for each Portfolio were then signed off by the Cabinet Member.

7. We now have an increased range of decisions, services and budgets that can be influenced within the framework of the 19 community areas and via the LAFs. The table in Appendix 1 illustrates the range of ways in which Local Area Forums can influence investment in their local areas. This paper focuses on the budgets that will be devolved to the LAFs and the proposed arrangements for how decisions are made.

Budgets Devolved to LAFs in 2009-10

8. The devolved budgets for 2009-10 are set out in the table below. N.B. It is anticipated that there will be further budget devolution from a wider range of services in subsequent years.

Service area	County-wide total	Beeches LAF
Transportation local improvements	£500,000	£57,500#
Positive Activities for Young People	£95,000	£5,000
"Early Years" grant	£95,000	£5,000
Local Priorities budget	£152,000	£8,000
Total	£842,000	£75,500

Because LAFs were not in existence in South Bucks District at the time the allocation of the Transportation local improvements budget was discussed, funds were allocated to appropriate schemes across the District by the same process that had been used when working through South Bucks Joint Local Committee in previous years. If this budget had been allocated on the same basis as it has been for LAFs in Wycombe and Aylesbury, the sum devolved would have been £37094#

General Principles for the Management and Decision-Making of Devolved Budgets

9. All funding must be spent in line with the specific criteria associated with the budget (see below).
10. The funding must be spent within the financial year for which it is allocated.
- For 2009-10, in consultation with the LAF Chairman, each Head of Service concerned will take a view in November 2009 on the likelihood of unspent monies being used that year. If there is budget that is unlikely to be spent that year, it will revert back to the service concerned and be allocated to activities that will take place during 2009-10.
 - Whilst it is anticipated that this should not be a problem in future years, the same principle will apply.
11. In July 2008, Buckinghamshire County Council adopted the arrangements that were in place for the County Council's Transportation Local Improvements

budget for Local Committees. Under this arrangement the Local Committee advised the Head of Transportation who then implemented the decision. This is the simplest and most effective model which from past experience works effectively. Therefore in terms of formal decision-making, the LAFs will be advising the relevant Head of Service on how to spend the devolved budget who will then implement that advice.

12. To allow for the occasional unforeseen opportunity that requires a swift decision, funding may be agreed in between LAF meetings subject to the approval of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Positive Activities for Young People

13. This must be used to engage young people (age 13-19) in positive activities (open youth club provision is not acceptable unless there is a structured programme). It can be used for a one-off event, equipment or be given to a voluntary organisation. Young people must be consulted on any planned activity.
14. The LAF can involve its nearest Youth Opportunity Fund panel to get additional money if its wishes. The YOF is young people led so that would also help with consulting young people.
15. The availability of the funding will be promoted via the LAF membership, community newsletters and direct to community organisations over the next couple of months. The Youth Service will evaluate applications and make recommendations to the LAF.
16. Publicity materials including guidance for making bids are available in order that LAFs will have the earliest opportunity to consider funding holiday activities
17. The accountable Officer is the Head of Community and Youth Engagement (from June 2009 the Officer designated to manage the Youth Service).

"Early Years" grant

18. This must be used to fund local nursery provision - specifically ICT improvements, disability access, extended flexible provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.
19. Within each category, there are further detailed criteria which must be satisfied. There are also strict criteria for who can qualify for funding which includes registration with BCC Children's Services.
20. The BCC Early Years & Childcare Service will promote the availability of funding, assess all applications for eligibility and evaluate the merit of the application. In the autumn, the Early Years & Childcare Service will evaluate applications and make recommendations to each LAF.
21. The accountable Officer is the Divisional Director, Commissioning and Business Improvement.

Local Priorities Budget

22. This budget can be used for any purpose which supports local community priorities and the well-being of the area identified by the LAF through its local area planning process. Beeches LAF will have to rely upon common priorities from parish plans, Town/village health check priorities and other forms of consultation until we have established the LAF's own clear priorities for the local area.
23. The Lead Area Officer and Area Co-ordinator will evaluate proposals and make recommendations in due course for how this budget may be spent in 2009-10. LAF members who have particular ideas should raise these directly with the Lead Area Officer or Area Co-ordinator.
24. The accountable officer is the Locality Services Manager.

Transportation Local Improvements Budget

25. This budget is to fund minor transportation improvement schemes. The list of proposed schemes for the Beeches LAF area in 2009-10 has been approved by Jim Stevens. These are listed below:

Scheme	Value
Build more robust width restriction, Ship Hill, Burnham	£5,000
Junction alterations, Hawthorn Lane junction Crown Lane, Burnham	£10,000
Complete footway, Marsh Lane, Dorney	£30,000
Bollards in footway, Harcourt Road, Dorney	£1,000
Slurry treatment for footways, School Lane and Sefton Paddock, Stoke Poges	£10,000
Dropped kerbs and tactile paving, A4 Bath Road, Berry Hill, Taplow	£1,500
Total	£57,500

26. The accountable Officer is the Head of Transportation.

Monitoring and future planning arrangements

27. At the end of the year, officers will prepare a review of the work for Beeches Local Area Forum and put forward proposals for the allocation of the next year's budgets. Projects which have benefited from The Beeches LAF support will be invited to report on progress to the LAF, either as part of the annual review or at some time during the course of the year.