



High Wycombe Town Committee – Local Allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy

Author: John Callaghan

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Recommendation

That Town Committee recommend schemes to be funded from the local allocation of CIL, to be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

Background

Town and Parish Councils usually deal with local functions including cemetery and play areas.

High Wycombe Town is unparished, but of course still has these facilities, provided by Buckinghamshire Council. The role of High Wycombe Town Committee is to consider and advise the Council, the Cabinet or relevant Committee on any issues affecting the High Wycombe Town area.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a fixed charge levied on new development to fund infrastructure to support the development of the area.

Government guidance (at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy#spending-the-levy>) specifies what the CIL can be spent on.

This includes funding a wide range of infrastructure, including transport, flood defences, schools, hospitals, and other health and social care facilities. And including play areas, open spaces, parks and green spaces, cultural and sports facilities, healthcare facilities, academies and free schools, district heating schemes and police stations and other community safety facilities.

The guidance says that

'Local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area, and they will decide what infrastructure is needed.'

The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development.'

The Council also has a duty to pass funds to town or parish councils ('local councils'). This is known as the local allocation and amounts to 15% of CIL funds collected in a given area (or 25% where there is an adopted neighbourhood development plan). The local allocation in the unparished area of High Wycombe, is ring-fenced for use within that area.

The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) June 2020 notes that:

In relation to the unparished area of High Wycombe, the High Wycombe Town Committee recommends schemes to be funded from the local allocation of CIL collected within that area.

In terms of governance the recommendation to Cabinet is via Corporate Capital Investment Board (CCIB), which in turn makes recommendations on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) onto Cabinet and Council.

The Council is setting a budget against a very constrained financial backdrop. Hence it will be necessary to prioritise spending and it is expected that only essential bids will be funded. The recommendation of Town Committee about which schemes are to be funded from CIL will be taken into account in setting the Council's budget.

Main report and options

CIL Local Allocation Expenditure

During 2020/21 CIL local allocation expenditure was £1,139,776 on the new Penn Road cemetery for the unparished area. This is to open in 2022. (A residual sum of £95,560 remains allocated for 2021/22) and is not forecast to be spent.

Funds Presently Available

During the 2020/21 financial year the local allocation collected within the unparished area amounted to £299,133. Almost £102,000 was brought forward so the funds held at 31 March 2021 amounted to £400,908.

Since March 2021 a further £338,086 has been collected (This figure is provisional at this stage. It includes £7207.51 collected within the area covered by the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Plan).

Hence a total of £738,994 is held at present.

Existing commitments

Aside from the cemetery the Town Committee has previously supported several projects. Outstanding commitments and funds available to allocate are shown below Table 1.

	£000's
Bull Lane Service Yard Gates	15
East Wycombe Panoramic Walkway	35
Local Centres and Parking Pressures Project	225
Cemetery	96
Total Commitments	371

Table 2.

	£000's
Total funds held	738.9
Commitments	371
Funds available to allocate	367.9

Anticipated CIL Local Allocation Income - future years

While funds secured vary, based on current information it is anticipated that around £300,000 of local allocation funding will be secured in the unparished area each year.

However the government has consulted on the possibility of a new national CIL. While no final decision has been taken, the implications for this funding stream are unknown.

Existing Commitments Update

Bull Lane Service Yard Gates

In Jan 2019 High Wycombe Town Committee recommended £15,000 towards this project which was then costed at £32,000 with the expectation that the remainder would be found from businesses.

Match funding has been sought from local businesses with limited success and this project has not been able to progress without additional funding. There have been efforts to progress this and the outline of the project has been scoped. It would likely include:

- stopping up or otherwise amending highway rights through a statutory process, including agreeing maintenance responsibilities
- resolving any agreements necessary with legitimate service yard users
- designing containment for the array of waste bins
- agreeing a control system that will work for legitimate service yard users and ensuring that funds are in place to maintain and operate this
- undertaking consultation on any proposals
- seeking planning permission for the gates
- procuring their installation

It is clear that the project is not straightforward to deliver. Progress has unfortunately also been hampered by discontinuities in project officer staffing. The Regeneration team are currently exploring options to progress this project, and to provide a more detailed and robust cost estimate. This will inform the business case and decisions on how to progress. Officers are also exploring the scope to achieve objectives as part of wider improvements to Queen Square and White Hart Street.

The East Wycombe panoramic walkway project is being delivered via the Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Team who are liaising with TfB on scheme delivery. TfB are developing the objectives and setting out how the project is to be implemented. Details will be shared with local members as these become available. It is expected therefore that there will be limited spend this year before the works are carried out in 2022/23.

The local centres project was previously awarded £140,000 in March 2017 following a recommendation of the High Wycombe Town Committee. In January 2019 a further £100,000 was awarded to the project bringing the total budget to £240,000 and its remit was extended to address local parking pressures. Some initial design works and investigations were carried out around the Arnison Avenue and Totteridge Road shopping areas at a cost of £15,000 but these designs were not progressed due to the cost associated with the works.

Due to the limited project resources available local members were asked to explore opportunities for external funding to contribute to low cost local shopping centre improvements and parking problem areas. A proposal for local road safety measures in Greenhill and Kingshill Road was mooted and a quotation for the cost of the work was requested from Transport for Buckinghamshire, however this has not progressed.

Note, while no longer a commitment the Chilterns Conservation Board project for the erection of River Wye interpretation and information boards has been completed.

Options for the use of CIL within the unparished area

A bid has been made through the MTFP for capital funding that includes capital refurbishment of play areas within the unparished area. These are considered important in:

- Developing physically healthy, happier children with improved immunity and lower childhood obesity
- Contributing to cognitive and social/emotional development,
- Improving sensory skills,
- Increasing attention spans

However, in the context of other priorities and available funds, this bid is unlikely to be recommended for funding from core council funding. Therefore, Play Area priorities are included here for Members to take into consideration when recommending the local allocation of CIL to be included in the MTFP.

In High Wycombe the Parks/Community Service have operated a rolling replacement programme with an assumed life of play equipment of 15 years. An element of maintenance is built into the grounds maintenance contract.

If more significant repairs or replacement are needed these are considered by the relevant team within Community Services who consider whether funds can be made available or whether play equipment must be removed or taken out of use. Regular independent inspections are carried out to ensure the play equipment is safe.

The Service aims to minimise play equipment being taken out of use by way of a proactive programme of replacement.

The current independent inspection has just been received and is being considered by the Ground Maintenance contractor and the contract/parks manager for remedial works. Through this process any items that are condemned will be de-commissioned without further consultation to maintain public safety – replacement will then be considered subject to funding being available.

The following play areas have been identified as priorities.

Work are urgently required to Desborough Recreation ground play area estimated at £172,000 cost

Additionally, within the next two years it is expected that the following play areas will require significant work.

Table 3

Play Area	Estimated cost £,000
Shelley Recreation ground play area	£63
Booker Recreation ground play area	£168
Rye U8's play area	£280
Ropes on the Rye	£350
Total	£861

Other Options

A review of waiting restrictions in the unparished area has also been suggested. (Possibly based on four distinct zones that could be reviewed on a four year rota). This would provide an opportunity to address local parking pressures. If this were supported an MTFP bid would have to be prepared with support from the relevant service.

Members could consider other options that they wish to be considered as part of the MTFP. The MTFP funding template is attached as an appendix to indicate what information is typically required. This would need to include support from the Head of Service responsible for delivering any proposal.

Next steps and review

The recommendations of High Wycombe Town Committee will be considered by Cabinet in 2022. Schemes that are supported by Cabinet will be included in the MTFP to be approved by Council.