

Response to the Scrutiny Review into Local Community Budgets

**Date Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Select Committee:**

Community Select Committee, Thursday 31 March 2016 (circulated 5 April 2016)

**Date responses should be made by:**

Executive responses should be received by 31 May 2016

**Recommendations:**

**Executive Member Response:**

1. That Members be reminded annually of the LCB scheme rules and responsibilities of both Members and Officers and that there also is an annual seminar for Members to share best practice and ideas for Members to work together with their LCB funding. At this seminar, Officers should issue updated guidelines as to how LCB monies could be spent.

- That a revised Member Guidance ‘scheme rules’ will be circulated to Councillors prior to the 2016/17 round of LCB’s.
- A revised LCB annual cycle process map will be circulated with Member Guidance.
- The implementation of an LCB quarterly email update to Members and an E-bulletin will be established.
- A Members seminar highlighting best practice (date to be agreed) is to be included within the LCB annual cycle process map.

**Action: Maureen Nicholson, Mandy Williams and**

<b>Fiona Rolfe</b>	
<p>2. That an online LCB application process be included in a training session to all Members.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That training sessions are offered to all new Members of the Council.</li> <li>• Refresher sessions also offered to existing Members and included within the MMP.</li> </ul>
<p>3. That consideration is given to a minimum level of bids of £100 per Member to reduce scheme overheads.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder is in favour of the move to the introduction of a minimum £100 grant per Member.</li> </ul>
<p>4. That communications between the applicant and Members is established prior to any bid being made, and that consideration is given to making pre bid communications a mandatory requirement.</p> <p><b>Action: IT, All Members</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That a new mandatory field is added into the online application with the suggested wording:  Have you discussed your application with a Ward Councillor? Yes/No If no a list of Ward Councillor contact information is made available from a drop down box. The applicant will not be able to proceed until contact is confirmed.</li> </ul>
<p>5. That more detailed questions should be included in the application process as this would assist Councillors in deciding whether to fund a project, especially when applicants fail to contact the Member before bidding to provide some information about their bid.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder is in favour of the introduction of more detailed question/s for bids in excess of £500.</li> <li>• In no more than 100 words please explain who will benefit from this grant and what you hope your proposal will achieve.</li> <li>• Please provide a breakdown of the proposal costs.</li> </ul>
<p>6. That applicants be required to declare their own interests in the bid to promote transparency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is agreed that there should be the addition of a declaration of interest for applicants (as per Councillor Declaration of interest).</li> <li>• Do you have a declaration of interest? Yes or No if yes please declare</li> </ul>

<p><b>Action: IT, Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<p>the interest</p>
<p>7. That a mechanism for improved liaison between Members (including HCC Members) to determine whether bids should be supported at a ward / area level be investigated by officers.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder supports this recommendation. Further work will need to be required as to how this can be established, perhaps through a Member working group on this issue and collaboration at ward level?</li> </ul>
<p>8. That Officers assess the practicality of undertaking checks on bids suitability of meeting the scheme rules before passing to Members for authorisation. If the outcome of this is positive and it is accepted by the Portfolio Holder, the flow chart diagram would need to be changed to address this issue.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is clearly a Member's responsibility and to that end Members should re-assure themselves that when making a decision on a grant application they are satisfied as to its suitability for the scheme; should Members have any queries and if requested, Officers where appropriate will provide Members with the requisite advice.</li> </ul>
<p>9. That consideration is given to the establishment of a method of determining whether organisations were potentially overbidding for funds in the expectation of receiving a reduced amount that would actually meet their requirements.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new mandatory field 'Breakdown of costs' on the application will meet the scrutiny recommendation for applications over £500.</li> </ul>
<p>10. That a process be documented detailing the steps to be taken in the event of a bid being undersubscribed, particularly when the amount of funding awarded would not support a scheme's full requirements.</p> <p><b>Action: All Members, Mandy Williams and Fiona</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder will consider the introduction of deferring a grant application if the proposal is not awarded the full amount. The applicant to be requested to submit a new application with a revised cost and project scope to enable the proposal to be delivered.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Rolfe</b></p> <p>11. That all successful bidders be required to submit receipts and evidence of the event either in written or photographic form. The council officers can audit a required sample but will archive the evidence for future scrutiny by members and photographs may be used in council publications and training purposes.</p> <p><b>Action: SIAS, Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CDO's currently undertake an audit of 10% of applications, this will continue.</li> <li>• The Shared Internal Audit Service in 2015 gave Substantial Assurance to the current audit process and felt there were effective controls in operation.</li> <li>• All applicants are requested to keep photos and editorials and this is explicit when accepting a grant.</li> </ul>
<p>12. That after the completion of a project, all relevant Members be sent a copy of the applicants six monthly online monitoring feedback form, to keep those Members aware of the outcomes.</p> <p><b>Action: Community Select Committee</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder does not support this request as it should be incumbent upon the awarding Members to undertake this monitoring of their Budgets.</li> </ul>
<p>13. That applicants who receive only a partial amount of the original bid should receive an electronic message that reads 'Your application for funding has achieved the following amount ...' and that in this instance the applicant be invited to re-submit a bid.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This should be read in conjunction with the Portfolio Holders response to recommendation 10.</li> <li>• New wording is suggested:</li> </ul> <p>Your application for the sum of: £??? for the project named: XYZ because it has not been supported as required it has been unsuccessful at this time. Please look carefully at your application and consider whether the project can be scaled-down and still deliver the desired outcomes. If so please re-apply with a new application.</p>
<p>14. That during the audit process, repeat and high bidders should be focussed on in addition to the usual 10% random checks.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams, Fiona Rolfe and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder is in favour that a sample of repeat and high bidders are incorporated in to the audit process.</li> <li>• That the Community Select Committee determine what quantum of sample do they feel is sufficient?</li> </ul>

<b>Community Select Committee</b>	
<p>15. That the communications leaflet should be updated, to include best practise example schemes and ideas to encourage minority groups that currently do not access the scheme.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is to be read in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder’s comments at recommendation 1.</li> <li>• The redesigned scheme guidance should be equitable and include case studies.</li> </ul>
<p>16. That consideration be given to new and innovative methods of promoting LCB awareness to young people.</p> <p><b>Action: Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having considered the recommendation the Portfolio Holder suggests the following use of innovation (not exclusive of)</li> <li>• Twitter messages, the use of #tag.</li> <li>• An analysis is undertaken of the level of spend by diverse groups.</li> <li>• That the general public’s awareness is raised by “tweeting” on approval of each LCB grant as follows: Cllr ..... has given £ from his/her LCB to ‘organisation name’ add link to LCB information page.</li> </ul>
<p>17. That a summary of LCB spends be published in the Chronicle (or other SBC publications) on a quarterly / yearly basis to celebrate successes of LCB funding.</p> <p><b>Action: Lucie Culkin, Mandy Williams and Fiona Rolfe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder is in favour of the use of Chronicle articles and ward newsletters to promote the grant scheme generally as long as the articles are balanced and are non-political in stance.</li> <li>• We should also encourage grant applicants to put forward their projects to feature in Chronicle.</li> </ul>
<p>18. That consideration is given to the timescales for LCB approvals being made more flexible, especially around the summer and Christmas holiday periods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I.T. has responded below regarding timescales and flexibility. Given the current flexibility of 4 weeks for determination, the ability to use Member proxy for determination and associated resource implications the Portfolio Holder remains content with the status quo.</li> </ul> <p><i>“The approval period is controlled by a parameter within the expired applications process that runs daily. This could be altered by either</i></p>

<p><b>Action: Community Select Committee</b></p>	<p><i>manually amending the code to add additional days onto the period (currently 28 – 4 weeks) this would have to be done manually - say 30 minutes each time or adding functionality to the administration forms so the period is controlled by the Community Development Officers.”</i></p>
<p>19. That Officers consider the possibility of allowing LCB funds to be carried over from one financial year to another as an accrual for identified specific named projects as Member research had shown that other local authorities appear to do so.</p> <p><b>Action: Community Select Committee</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portfolio Holder is supportive of this recommendation <u>on an accrual basis only</u> and suggests that the Committee forward this recommendation to the Resources Portfolio Holder for their comment.</li> </ul>

A copy of these recommendations has been sent to the named officers for a response on behalf of the Executive.