

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting24th April 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Small Environmental Improvements Budget 2007/08 –Community
Participation Improvements Budget 2008/09

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the delivery of Small Environmental Improvements during 2007/2008.

Members were reminded that in February 2007 the Members Advisory Panel approved the protocol for the Small Environmental Improvements Budget and the dividing of the Capital Programme budget allocation of £400,000 per year for 2 years (2007/08 & 2008/09) between the wards on the basis of population per ward.

This approach represented a significant change in the delivery of local priorities and services, in that communities, through their ward councillors, were able to influence the public realm improvements in their own areas.

Cabinet noted that in February 2008 a further allocation of £400,000 per year was approved for a further 2 years – 2009/10 & 2010/11.

It was explained that across the 26 Borough wards a total of 92 projects were carried out, these projects varied in size from the installation of a single waste bin to the creation of additional car parking areas. Specific details of the schemes undertaken were provided to Members.

From the allocation of £400,000 for 2007/08 the projects implemented were projected to expend £370,000 by the end of March 2008, leaving £30,000. The remaining funding would be rolled forward into 2008/09 and added to the appropriate wards allocation.

Members were provided with details of some of the feedback received relating to the programme:

- Several Members had highlighted the size of the available budget as a major constraint for the programme, given the amount of requests

received.

- Requests for additional parking provision is the most popular request received from members of the public.
- Certain schemes require a greater level of investigation, involving several sections/disciplines of the Council and the development of a detailed design to ensure the scheme meets the necessary specifications for adoption. In some cases it had been necessary to apply for details of the locations of utility apparatus, this can take up to 8 weeks.
- Officers required as much detail as possible for requested schemes to assist in the assessment and costing of the particular scheme.
- It was better to implement certain schemes at certain times during the year.
- Several Members identified large scheme, which exceeded the annual allocation for their ward. They welcomed the opportunity to use the following years allocation to ensure that these schemes could be implemented. However, the combining of annual allocations were not appropriate when there was an election scheduled in the following year.
- The need for Members to indicate the level of consultation was essential prior to requests being processed.

Cabinet was provided with changes in ward population which would result in a change of funding allocation, effective from 1st April 2009. It was suggested that this be reviewed every 2 years. Members noted received representations suggesting that the current allocation criteria be examined with consideration being given to allocations being based on actual need.

It was noted that the type of works for the Small Environmental Improvements Budget carried significant legal and liability issues, simply because such works existed within the public domain. It was therefore important that contractors that were used were properly covered in legal, insurance and quality terms. In addition, construction regulations, highway and traffic law (including accredited Street Works status) had to be adhered to and maintenance liabilities, procurement practices and Health and Safety regulations had to be understood. The Council remained liable for such works and activities within the public domain. Consequently, any schemes should be agreed and delivered through the Council professional services of both Direct and/or Technical services as appropriate.

RESOLVED

1. the progress made with delivery of the Small Environmental Improvements in 2007/08. be noted.
2. the feedback received from Members, officers and the public be noted.
3. the process for the Small Environmental Improvements Budget be endorsed.
4. the use of combining annual allocations of funding to implement larger schemes be approved with a maximum of 2 years allocations being combined, except during any year prior to an election. Any "one off" special projects that, for instance, combine contributions across several wards could be considered subject to the appropriateness of the project and the agreement of all ward members affected.
5. the changes in ward populations and the impact on the budget allocations, effective from 1st April 2009 be noted and that the current allocation criteria for funding be examined ahead of the next financial year.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To report progress made on the delivery of first year of the Small Environmental Improvements Budget with Members asked to note the amendments to the procedure for future years.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday 2nd May 2008

Proper Officer
28 April 2008