

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

24 MAY 2018

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Environment & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Cllr Smith

Community Participation Budget Report

1. Summary

This report highlights the information provided to the People Select Committee on 18th December outlining the financial situation with regards the Community Participation Budget and the details of the uncommitted Ward allocations at that time. The report also provides an update on the financial situation and highlights the success of a high level of committed Ward budgets for 2017/18.

2. Recommendations

- 1) Cabinet to endorse the continued use of the Community Participation Budget Guidance with the expenditure of any uncommitted Ward allocations of the Community Participation Budget to be considered at the discretion of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport.
- 2) Cabinet to endorse the process of officers providing recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport of potential changes to the list of eligible projects and how the budget is allocated across the Wards.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Financial concern has been raised at the level in previous years of the level of uncommitted funds of the Community Participation Budget being carried forwarded.

Intervention as required at the discretion of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport would seek to allay these concerns and ensure expenditure and commitment of this budget.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's

code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

24 MAY 2018

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BUDGET REPORT

SUMMARY

This report highlights the information provided to the People Select Committee on 18th December outlining the financial situation with regards the Community Participation Budget and the details of the uncommitted Ward allocations at that time. The report also provides an update on the financial situation and highlights the success of a high level of committed Ward budgets for 2017/18.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Cabinet to endorse the continued use of the Community Participation Budget Guidance with the expenditure of any uncommitted Ward allocations of the Community Participation Budget to be considered at the discretion of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport.
- 2) Cabinet to endorse the process of officers providing recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport of potential changes to the list of eligible projects and how the budget is allocated across the Wards.

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to the Community Participation Budget being in existence some funding for local projects was allocated to a Borough wide fund called the Minor Highway Improvement Budget, which was prioritised by officers.
2. In 2006/07, following comments from Ward Councillors that this budget was not evenly distributed across the Borough, the Members Advisory Panel approved changes to this budget.
3. The Community Participation Budget (CPB) started in 2007/08 under the name the Small Environmental Improvements Budget with a funding allocation of £400,000 per year. The name of this budget was then changed to reflect the importance of community participation in the development of project ideas for the wards.
4. The budget is divided across the Borough on a ward-by-ward basis based on the ward populations.

5. The CPB can be used to fund a variety of projects ranging from small engineering schemes that improve the function of the space on or adjacent to the highway or small projects that improve the local amenity space. Details of eligible and ineligible projects can be found within the CPB Guidance (see Appendix 1).
6. While any unspent funding from previous years can be carried forward and added to the following year's allocation this should be kept to a minimum. Justification for carrying forward funding should be reserved for committed projects which cannot be delivered before the financial year end due to work programme capacity issues or other delivery constraints. However, the majority of funding that has been carried forward previously each year has been uncommitted to a specific project.
7. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Wards prefer not to commit their entire available budget each year 'just in case something comes up'. However, provision is built into the CPB to accommodate such scenarios. If a project exceeds the available remaining Ward budget it is permitted to draw down funding from next years allocation.
8. Exceptions to this rule are:
 - a. when there are impending elections,
 - b. if there is to be no budget allocation in the following year or
 - c. if the whole of the CPB annual funding has been spent/committed.
9. Should 'something come up' in the Borough that requires funding to address the situation; it may be that if there are resources available within the CPB this funding could be reallocated to resolve the issue.
10. Whilst this situation has yet to arise, as there have been Ward allocations carried forward at the end of each year of the CPB, as overall Council budget becomes further constrained greater scrutiny will be given to unallocated budgets.
11. There has been a strong desire from Ward Councillors to retain the CPB, with the overall budget being extended repeatedly, as this budget can (often) be used to meet the needs of their constituents where there would otherwise not be a resource to do so.
12. Having substantial allocations remaining towards the end of the year however does not meet the aims of the budget to respond to requests from local residents.

2017/18 expenditure

13. At the end of 2016/17 there was an overall unspent budget of £248,975, which was carried forward and added to the 2017/18 allocation to give a total available budget of £648,975.
14. Towards the end of 2016/17 several Wards put forward requests to be implemented but due to Community Services work programme being at capacity these schemes

were not able to be delivered until early in 2017/18. The carry forward of funding uncommitted to projects was approximately £150,000

15. Table 1 and the following graph highlights for each Ward the annual allocation, how much budget was available at the start of the year and how much budget was remaining at the time the report was presented to the People Select Committee on 18th December 2017.
16. Since the report was presented to the People Select Committee and following a number of reminders there were several further requests from Ward Councillors which significantly increased the level of expenditure and commitment of their Ward allocations. This information is highlighted in the final column of table 2.
17. This is testament to successful application of the Guidance in reducing the level of uncommitted funds being carried forward.
18. The level of uncommitted funding to be carried forward into 2018/19 is approximately £5,000; a significant improvement compared to that of approximately £150,000 the previous year.
19. However, as in previous years, it has not been feasible to deliver all of the scheme requests, especially those submitted in the final quarter, with Community Services work programme being at capacity. This has resulted in approximately £225,000 being carried forward to 2018/19, but as indicated above only approximately £5,000 of this is uncommitted to a specific project.
20. Further work is required to ensure that scheme requests are submitted earlier to ensure these can be delivered before the end of the financial year.

Potential changes to the list of eligible projects and Ward budget allocation

21. Members of the People Select Committee requested changes to the list of eligible projects be considered to broaden the scope of the Community Participation Budget and consider budget allocations be set per member as opposed per ward.
22. Officers have begun to collate a list of project requests made by Ward Councillors which are currently not permitted within the Guidance as eligible projects. The Guidance is due to be refreshed at the end of 2018/19 ready for distribution to Ward Councillors following the local elections in May 2019. Prior to circulation this will be presented to the Cabinet Member for approval of any changes. The potential of allocating funding to each Ward Councillor rather than to each Ward will also be considered by the Cabinet Member at this time.

Table 1. Original & Remaining Budget by Ward

Ward	Annual Allocation	2017/18 Budget	Remaining Budget
01 Billingham Central	£15,210	£19,858	£11,733
02 Billingham East	£15,275	£25,365	£14,125
03 Billingham North	£19,206	£27,216	£8,796
04 Billingham South	£14,116	£62,241	£1,223
05 Billingham West	£11,690	£21,396	£14,592
06 Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	£13,634	£29,294	£987
07 Eaglescliffe	£21,972	£24,084	£14,061
08 Fairfield	£12,185	£30,254	£2,393
09 Grangefield	£13,978	£19,096	£7,422
10 Hardwick	£14,980	£25,038	£9,067
11 Hartburn	£13,736	£35,471	£29,018
12 Ingleby Barwick East	£21,241	£27,850	£4,884
13 Ingleby Barwick West	£22,692	£23,747	£22,028
14 Mandale & Victoria	£23,502	£24,524	£10,535
15 Newtown	£15,548	£15,917	£796
16 Northern Parishes	£7,016	£10,275	£2,760
17 Norton North	£14,329	£20,763	£10,428
18 Norton South	£16,031	£19,912	£1,053
19 Norton West	£13,123	£18,680	£8,973
20 Parkfield & Oxbridge	£15,648	£18,212	£13,781
21 Roseworth	£15,177	£15,664	£12,695
22 Stainsby Hill	£13,647	£28,182	£7,226
23 Stockton Town Centre	£14,175	£32,306	£4,924
24 Village	£14,500	£15,939	£282
25 Western Parishes	£7,046	£16,872	£13,413
26 Yarm	£20,343	£40,821	£20,666
Total	£400,000	£648,975	£247,861

Community Participation Budget Spend

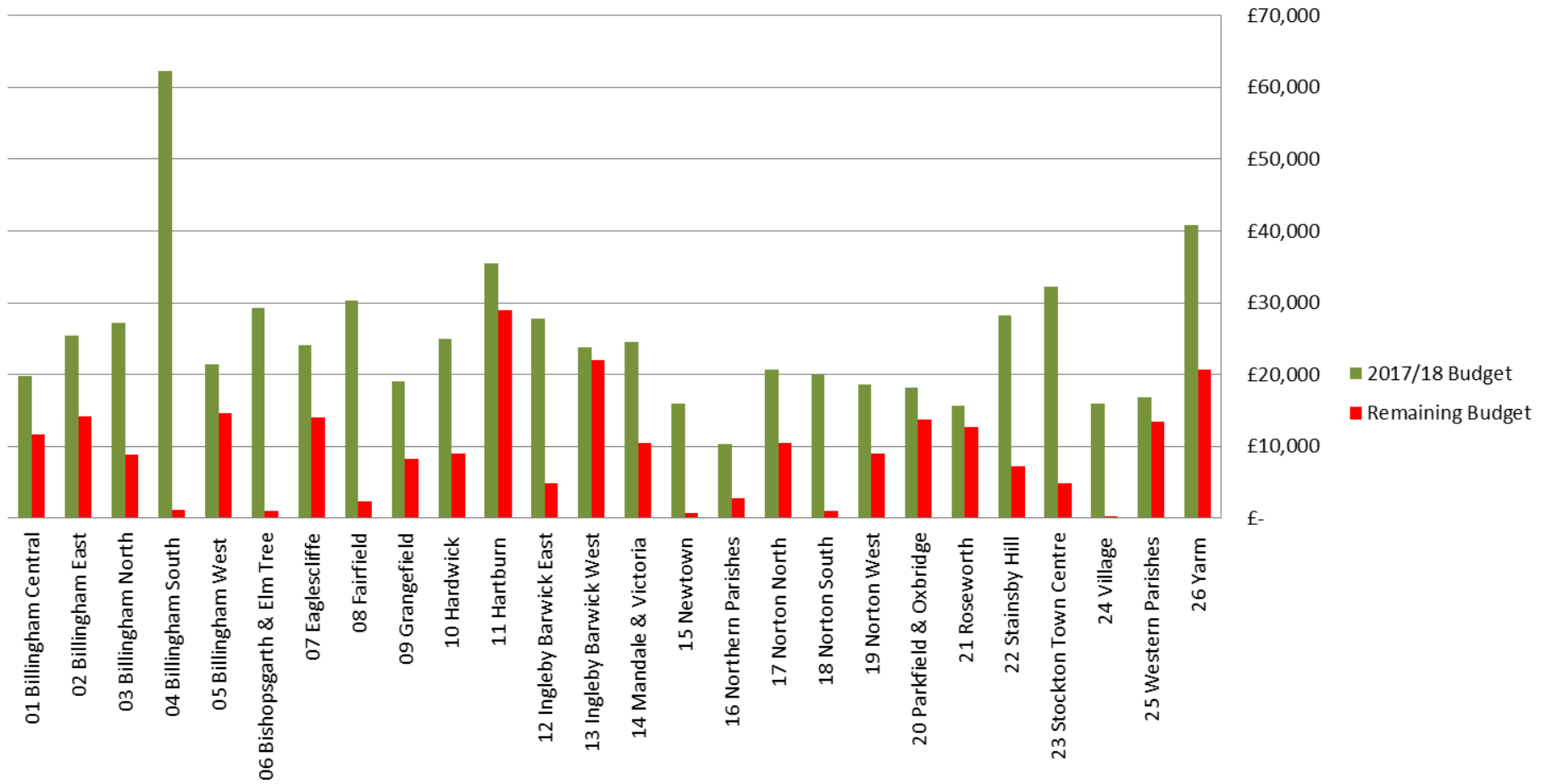


Table 2 – Schemes being Investigated & Potential Uncommitted Budget

Ward	Annual Allocation	2017/18 Budget	Remaining Budget	Schemes being investigated	Potential Remaining Uncommitted Budget	Updated Remaining Uncommitted Budget
01 Billingham Central	£15,210	£19,858	£11,733	Potential match funding to a Town Council project for lighting in John Whitehead Park	£1,733	£1,733
02 Billingham East	£15,275	£25,365	£14,125	Provision of parking bays at Beamish Road	-(minus)£2,213	-(minus) £2,214
03 Billingham North	£19,206	£27,216	£8,796	Minor resurfacing scheme at Bolam Grove and verge parking scheme at Foxton Drive	£1,600	-(minus) £3,397
04 Billingham South	£14,116	£62,241	£1,223		£1,223	£211
05 Billingham West	£11,690	£21,396	£14,592	Installation of pedestrian dropped kerbs at Burniston Drive	£12,800	£92
06 Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	£13,634	£29,294	£987		£987	£937
07 Eaglescliffe	£21,972	£24,084	£14,061	Installation of dropped kerbs at several locations. Parking improvements at Sycamore Road. Unkempt shrubbery removal at several locations.	-(minus)£3,293	-(minus) £2,603
08 Fairfield	£12,185	£30,254	£2,393		£2,393	£2,393
09 Grangefield	£13,978	£19,096	£7,422	Installation of an overrun area to protect grassed area from vehicular damage	£3,047	-(minus) £4,786
10 Hardwick	£14,980	£25,038	£9,067		£9,067	£4,067
11 Hartburn	£13,736	£35,471	£29,018	Potential parking provision at Upsall Grove, near to school. Speed limit change at Hartburn Village.	£5,018	£462
12 Ingleby Barwick East	£21,241	£27,850	£4,884	Potential CCTV project with Town Council, subject to meeting in January	£4,884	£4,884
13 Ingleby Barwick West	£22,692	£23,747	£22,028	Improvements to open greenspace/play area at The Rings	£0	£28
14 Mandale & Victoria	£23,502	£24,524	£9,770		£10,535	-(minus) £4,721
15 Newtown	£15,548	£15,917	£796	Open greenspace improvements at the former Bishopton Centre, Wrensfield	£0	-(minus) £2,187
16 Northern Parishes	£7,016	£10,275	£2,760		£2,760	£2,760
17 Norton North	£14,329	£20,763	£10,428	Access improvements to the open greenspace at Darlington Lane	£8,000	£3,757
18 Norton South	£16,031	£19,912	£1,053		£1,053	£1,053
19 Norton West	£13,123	£18,680	£8,973	Disability improvements to The Glebe Community Centre	£1,651	£624
20 Parkfield & Oxbridge	£15,648	£18,212	£13,781	Installation of dropped kerbs at Windsor Road. Measures to address parking issues at Kingfisher Way.	£3,781	£500
21 Roseworth	£15,177	£15,664	£12,695	Potential contributions to footway resurfacing schemes to provide additionality	£2,000	£981
22 Stainsby Hill	£13,647	£28,182	£7,226		£7,226	-(minus) £5,322
23 Stockton Town Centre	£14,175	£32,306	£4,924	Commitment to play provision improvements as match funding to s106 contributions reflected in budget	£4,924	£3,603
24 Village	£14,500	£15,939	£282		£282	-(minus) £4,240
25 Western Parishes	£7,046	£16,872	£13,413	Potential contribution to Parish Council project for Whinney village gateway features	£12,000	£390
26 Yarm	£20,343	£40,821	£20,666		£20,666	£2,872
Total	£400,000	£648,975	£246,965		£112,124	£4,830

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

23. Resources of £400,000 per annum have been allocated for the Community Participation Budget from the Medium Term Financial Plan following years – 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

24. There are no legal implications associated with the eligible projects for the Community Participation Budget.

RISK ASSESSMENT

25. The Community Participation Budget is categorised as a low risk. Existing management systems will be sufficient to control and reduce any risk

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

26. The Community Participation Budget impacts, particularly on the liveability objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

27. This report itself is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as it does not reflect a policy change.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

28. People Select Committee, relevant portfolio holder and appropriate officers.

Name of Contact Officer: Richard McGuckin
Post Title: Director of Economic Growth and Development
Telephone No. 01642 527028
Email Address: richard.mcguckin@stockton.gov.uk

Education related

No

Background Papers

Community Participation Budget Guidance 2017 – Appendix 1
People Select Committee Response – Appendix 2

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors

All

Property

N/A

Appendix 1
Community Participation Budget Guidance

Community Participation Budget Guidance

Community Participation Budget Guidance

Contents

1. Purpose
2. Background
3. What will the Community Participation Budget fund?
4. How is the budget allocated across the Borough?
5. How can projects be put forward?
6. Deadlines for project submission
7. Meeting community need
8. What if more than one idea is suggested for a Ward or the Ward Councillors cannot reach an agreement on which projects to carry forward?
9. What if a project idea exceeds the available Ward budget?
10. Who will design, manage and carry out the works?
11. Is there other funding available to carry out additional environmental improvements?
12. What if a Ward has uncommitted funds at the end of the year?
13. Changes to the eligible projects

Appendices

Appendix A

Examples of eligible and ineligible schemes

Appendix B

Project Initiation Request Form

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to advise on the approach to the allocation and use of the Community Participation Budget (CPB).

It also highlights the changes made to the eligible projects, providing a rationale for these changes, and sets out the deadlines for expenditure.

2. Background

The CPB started in 2007/08 under the name the Small Environmental Improvements Budget with a funding allocation of £400,000 per year. The name of this budget was changed to reflect the importance of community participation in the development of project ideas for the Wards.

The continuation of the budget in 2017 for 3 years was agreed through the Medium Term Financial Plan, which was approved by Cabinet (16th February 2017) and Council (22nd February 2017).

3. What will the Community Participation Budget fund?

The CPB can be used to fund a variety of projects ranging from small engineering schemes that improve the function of the space on or adjacent to the highway or small projects that improve the local amenity space. Examples of eligible and ineligible projects can be found in Appendix A.

4. How is the budget allocated across the Borough?

The CPB is divided between Wards on the basis of population per Ward.

Any unspent funding from previous years may be carried forward and added to the following year's allocation, if available.

However this should be kept to a minimum as the Council's overall financial situation may mean that any unspent funds at the end of the financial year may be reabsorbed into the corporate account or reallocated to other budgets.

5. How can projects be put forward?

Ward Councillors are requested to put forward project ideas by completing a project request form (See Appendix B). Officers from Highways, Transport and Design and/or Direct Services will then assess these project ideas to determine their feasibility and eligibility for this programme. The Urban Design Project Officer will keep Ward Councillors updated with the progress of each request.

6. Deadlines for project submission

Ward Councillors are encouraged to submit project requests as soon as possible in order that they can be fully investigated and programmed in for implementation to meet the end of financial year expenditure deadlines.

With this in mind the following deadlines are to be followed

Bulb planting requests – no later than the end of August
Tree planting requests – no later than the end of November
All other requests – no later than the end of October

Any project requests received after these dates will likely have to be implemented in the following year.

7. Meeting community need

Ward Councillors are requested to include with the project request details of the level of community need and support. This could be in the form of submitted petitions, letters/emails from residents or a questionnaire survey.

If the project is feasible officers will undertake any required statutory consultation for which any associated fees would be covered by the CPB.

8. What if more than one idea is suggested for a Ward or the Ward Councillors cannot reach an agreement on which projects to carry forward?

If there is more than one eligible project for a Ward it is the responsibility of the Ward Councillors to prioritise the projects.

If Ward Councillors cannot reach a decision as to which projects are to be carried out the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport will make the final decision with technical advice from relevant officers.

9. What if a project idea exceeds the available Ward budget?

If a requested project exceeds the wards available budget it would be permitted to draw down funding from the next years allocation. The exception to this rule is when there are elections or when it has been identified that the budget will not be available in the following year.

10. Who will design, manage and carry out the works?

Appropriate officers within Highways, Transport and Design and/or Community Services will design, manage the delivery of the schemes.

The Council's Community Services team will carry out the implementation of the schemes. If work programmes warrant it, external contractors will be commissioned to carry out schemes under Council's standard procurement procedures.

11. Is there other funding available to carry out additional environmental improvements?

It is possible to offer the CPB as match funding to other potential budget sources. Possible options include, but not limited to:

Capital funding through the Area Transport Strategy (ATS)

Town and Parish Council precepts

Thirteen Group (Tristar Homes) may have small budgets to carry out environmental improvements that have been requested by its tenants.

12. What if a Ward has uncommitted funds at the end of the year?

Any uncommitted budgets as of 31st December will be discussed with the Cabinet Member to identify potential projects for possible reallocation of this remaining funding.

13. Changes to the eligible projects

Due to the revenue budget pressures for the ongoing maintenance, the siting of planter tubs/troughs, hanging baskets and other floral displays is not permitted on Council owned land (NB - the planting of trees and bulbs is still permitted). It is, however, eligible to use the CPB to contribute to schemes where a third party landowner is to take on the ongoing maintenance of the scheme, e.g. Town and Parish Councils.

While waste bins are still permitted; a stronger emphasis must be placed on areas where there is no provision and where there is a serious litter/dog fouling issue. Officers will provide an assessment of the area for any bin request to determine if a bin is warranted or not - i.e. there is no bin provision in the area and litter/dog fouling is a serious issue (a high volume of complaints). Should the assessment determine that additional litter/dog bins are not required the Ward Councillors will be advised of the reasons why. A recommended project could be that the existing bin provision in an area is repositioned to meet the need.

Projects carried out through the Town and Parish Councils are eligible to receive match funding from the CPB.

The maximum level for match funding from the CPB towards projects identified through the Area Transport Strategy has been removed. Ward Councillors may wish to use the CPB to wholly fund prioritised projects. Ward Councillors should refer to the ATS protocol.

Appendix A

EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE SCHEMES

The following schemes are **not eligible** for the CPB as they have on going revenue budget implications, or are beyond the scope of the CPB. These projects will be only undertaken through core resources.

- x Street lighting or feature installations
- x Salt Bins / additional gritting
- x Private building facade improvements
- x Demolitions
- x Revenue Projects (e.g. street wardens)
- x Individual crossings to private driveways (to be funded by property owner, unless considered as part of a footway maintenance scheme or larger parking scheme)
- x Shrub planting areas and new hedges

The following schemes are only eligible in partnership with a Third Party who will take on the ongoing maintenance of the scheme – e.g. Town or Parish Council.

- ? Floral Displays, hanging baskets and planter tubs troughs

The following schemes are eligible subject to a technical need assessment community support and any associated statutory consultation.

- ? Traffic calming
- ? Pedestrian Crossings
- ? Installation of Speed Indication Devices (SID's) and Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS's)
- ? Larger scale accessibility improvement schemes (cycleway and footway improvements)
- ? Resident Parking Zones
- ? Traffic Regulation Orders

It would be eligible to fund or provide a contribution to the following, subject to the location being approved through the public transport scoring matrix.

- ? Installation of new or replacement Bus Shelters
- ? Installation of low floor bus platforms

The following schemes would be eligible wholly for the CPB, subject to area need analysis. These schemes are highly unlikely to be funded by the LTP/ATS.

- √ Parking Bays and Lay-bys
- √ Verge parking Treatment
- √ Installation of bollards

- √ Footpaths along desire lines
- √ Replacement of old bench seats
- √ Fencing and handrails
- √ Replace concrete bollards
- √ Tree planting
- √ Bulb planting
- √ New waste bins
- √ Application for Legal Orders and installation of gates where there is serious issues with crime and antisocial behaviour
- √ Removal of unnecessary signs and poles (street clutter)
- √ Installation/monitoring of CCTV cameras (connected to the surveillance centre)
- √ Dropped kerbs to aid pedestrian crossing
- √ Works to bring unadopted sections of Highway to adoptable standards
- √ Artistic enhancement projects (e.g. sculptures, heritage trails)
- √ Public Right of Way improvements
- √ Contributions Green Infrastructure improvements
- √ Community Gardens (match funding to a developed scheme)
- √ Highway repairs (e.g. filling potholes, resurfacing) – subject to need analysis
- √ Improvements to Community Centres (match funding to a developed scheme)

Appendix B

PROJECT INITIATION REQUEST
SCHEME: E.g. Letsby Avenue grass verge treatment
Name of Councillor submitting:
Origin of request: <i>I.e. Ward Surgery, petition, request from resident, Cllrs. own observations etc.</i>

Other Ward Councillors: - Indicate if other Ward councillors agree to the scheme

Please insert names	Agree	Disagree
Cllr		
Cllr		
Cllr		

Brief Outline: Please describe **the problem to be addressed** and the scheme requested (there may be alternative suggestions to solve the problems);

E.g. Parked vehicles damaging grass verges on Letsby Avenue from numbers 4 to 42 and road too narrow for on street parking. Request is for hard standing to replace grass verges.

Key Stakeholders: - Please describe the key local stakeholders in the scheme, for instance; residents, Parish/Town Council, any action groups or lead members of the community who should be involved in developing and delivering the scheme. (If this is not known, officers will be able to suggest key stakeholders.)

Consultation: -Please note if officers are requested to carry out consultation a fee will be charged and deducted from the Ward allocation

Has any consultation been carried out with local residents? YES/NO (please delete)

<p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p><i>Please indicate evidence of consultation and the level of support. E.g. petitions, letters from residents, notes/minutes of a public meeting, questionnaire.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NO</p> <p><i>Please note a project idea cannot progress without the majority support of the local community. Please indicate what consultation is intended to be carried out.</i></p>
<p>Do you require officers to carry out consultation? YES/NO (PLEASE DELETE)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Signed..... Date</p>	
<p>Please return completed forms to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EGDS@stockton.gov.uk</p> <p>In the subject line of the email please put 'Community Participation Budget'</p>	
<p>For Office Use:</p>	
Highways, Transport and Environment	Direct Services scheme
Date Received: -	Officer Dealing: -
Technical Recommendation: -	
Estimated Costs: -	
LIST ANY RISKS OR REVENUE IMPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED?	

Appendix 2

People Select Committee Response to Community Participation Budget 'Reporting in' Review –
18th December 2017

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BUDGET – ‘REPORTING-IN’ REVIEW (OFFICER-LED)

SUMMARY

This paper presents People Select Committee Member views regarding the 'reporting-in' review (Officer-led) in relation to the Community Participation Budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend that:

- 3) Cabinet endorse the expenditure of uncommitted Ward allocations of the Community Participation Budget at the discretion of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport, as outlined in the Community Participation Budget Guidance.
- 4) Officers provide recommendations to the Cabinet Member of eligible projects requested by local residents.

DETAIL

1. Following initial discussion by Scrutiny Liaison Forum, Executive Scrutiny Committee agreed that the People Select Committee should receive and consider a report regarding an Officer-led 'reporting-in' review in relation to the Community Participation Budget (CPB).
2. Officers presented a report to the People Select Committee on the 18th December 2017 outlining the current financial situation with regards the CPB and highlighting details of uncommitted Ward allocations. Members were asked to provide comment and challenge.
3. Key aspects of the report were noted as follows:
 - The CPB can be used to fund a variety of projects ranging from small engineering schemes that improve the function of the space on or adjacent to the highway, or small projects that improve the local amenity space. Details of eligible and ineligible projects can be found within the CPB Guidance (included in the report).
 - The £400,000 per year budget is divided across the Borough on a Ward-by-Ward basis based on the Ward populations.
 - At the end of 2016/17 there was an overall unspent budget of £248,975, which was carried forward and added to the 2017/18 allocation to give a total available budget of £648,975.
 - While any unspent funding from previous years can be carried forward and added to the following year's allocation, this should be kept to a minimum. Justification for carrying forward funding should be reserved for committed projects which cannot be delivered before the financial year-end due to work programme capacity issues or other delivery constraints. However, the majority of funding that has been carried forward previously each year has been uncommitted to a specific project.

- There has been a strong desire from Ward Councillors to retain the CPB, with the overall budget being extended repeatedly, as this budget can (often) be used to meet the needs of their constituents where there would otherwise not be a resource to do so. Having substantial allocations remaining towards the end of the year however does not meet the aims of the budget to respond to requests from local residents.
- There is currently over 50% of the annual budget unallocated with only just over a quarter of the financial year remaining. Even with the schemes that are currently being investigated, it is anticipated that if all of these schemes are taken forward, there would still be a significant amount of funding remaining to be allocated.

4. Members debated the contents of the report and made the following observations:

- Committee agreed that the issue of unspent budgets needed to be addressed, and that Councillors would be very reluctant to lose this fund. Concerns were expressed that Wards who do not use their budget will lose it, which will ultimately affect others.
- Members highlighted the problems caused by 'split' Wards (where more than one political group was represented within a single Ward), and queried whether it would be possible for an allocation to be split evenly between each of the Councillors who represent such a Ward. Resources could still be pooled within a Ward if desired, and this proposal may also prevent unnecessary time delays in terms of Councillors having to get together to identify and decide on the projects they want to support. Officers considered that such a change could be administered relatively easily, and advised Members that they would discuss this matter with the Cabinet Member, with a view of considering the proposal in detail when the CPB Guidance/Criteria is next reviewed. The earliest the CPB can be reviewed is at the end of its current financial cycle (2018/19) as some Members will have already made commitments to schemes and projects using next year's allocation.
- Historical carry-forward of unspent budgets was discussed, and Officers re-iterated that this should be kept to a minimum. Carry-forward effectively means an under-resourcing in one year and an over-resourcing the next.
- Whilst there is understandable concern around some Wards not utilising this fund, Councillors should guard against spending their budget for the sake of it.
- In considering those schemes that were deemed ineligible for support, Members noted the number of project proposals that were effectively personal parking requests outside residences. Issues around restrictions on play area proposals were also highlighted, as was the frequent problem of private land which would benefit from the installation of dog bins.
- Members felt the CPB was an excellent concept, but expressed frustration as to what cannot be done with the funds. One way of reducing the level of unspent budgets could be to extend the scope of schemes that this money can be used for, which would ultimately benefit Stockton-on-Tees residents. Discussion ensued around a proposal to widen the scope of the CPB to include one-off contributions to social community projects – whilst it is understandable that there are restrictions on schemes that involve ongoing costs/maintenance, a wider variety of projects could be considered if requiring a one-off cost. Officers advised Members that this matter would also be discussed with the Cabinet Member, with a view of considering the proposal in detail when the CPB Guidance/Criteria is next reviewed. The earliest the CPB can be reviewed is at the end of its current financial cycle (2018/19) as some Members will have already made commitments to schemes and projects using next year's allocation.

- Committee agreed with the two recommendations contained within the report, along with proposals around Ward allocations being split evenly between the Councillors who represent that Ward, and the scope of schemes/projects that the Community Participation Budget can support being extended to consider wider proposals that involve one-off costs, to be considered when the CPB Guidance/Criteria is next reviewed (end of its current financial cycle (2018/19)).

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Name of Contact Officer: Gary Woods

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

Telephone No. 01642 526187

Email Address: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk