



Allocating Local Committee Funding

25 July 2002

KEY ISSUE: The Woking Local Committee has a delegated budget of £17,500 per Member, and £100,000 to be spent by the whole committee on capital projects. The Local Committee for Woking has already allocated £50,000 to be spent on transportation items. Decisions about the use of the remaining £155,000 will be taken at the Local Committee meeting in September.

SUMMARY: Decisions about the use of the Members' allocation should be made according to a clear process and clear criteria.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to:

Resolve that decisions about the use of the Members' allocation should be made according to the process and criteria described in this report.

Introduction and background

1. Each local committee has a delegated budget of £17,500 per Member, and £100,000 to be spent by the whole committee on capital projects. The local committee agrees all proposals for the use of this funding. Each local Member has a key role in influencing the way in which £17,500 is spent.
2. The Local Committee for Woking has already allocated £50,000 of the capital funding to be spent on transportation items.
3. Various suggestions have been put forward for how the remaining budget could be spent, ranging from very small and local improvements to large projects which would create a benefit to the whole of the borough and would use up most or all of the available money.
4. Before any of these suggestions are considered and funding decision made, Members need to decide:
 - how a suggestion becomes a proposal for formal assessment
 - the process by which proposals will be assessed and decisions made
 - the criteria against which proposals will be assessed and decisions made
5. This report sets out proposed answers to these questions. The criteria are based on the responses of five of the six Members to a questionnaire, and the process on guidance from Surrey County Council Committee Secretariat.

How a suggestion becomes a proposal for formal assessment

6. The Local Director will copy all suggestions that she has received to Members of the Local Committee.
7. A suggestion will only count as a proposal for formal assessment where:
 - a. it was already approved by the Local Committee this financial year as a possible use of up to £50,000 capital funding
 - or**
 - b. a Member of the Local Committee has recommended the suggestion for assessment
and the suggestion is described in writing on a simple form which sets out the aim, who will benefit, the estimated cost, the proportion of the estimated cost which it is suggested would come from the Local Committee's funds, and the estimated timetable. The Community Support team can help a Member find out the estimated cost
and the form is received by the Local Director before 9.00 am on Monday 5 August 2002.

The process by which proposals will be assessed and decisions made

8. The proposed process is in two stages.

Stage 1: Officer assessment

9. The Local Director (or Local Transport Manager, if more appropriate) will assess the proposals against the criteria and produce a brief report that will be circulated to all Members.

10. A proposal for use of the £105,000 (6 x £17,500) will only go to the Committee for stage 2 of the decision-making process if it is supported by at least one Member. This means that the Member feels that the project is worth serious consideration; it does not mean that the Member has made any commitment that money will be committed to the project.

Stage 2: Committee decision

11. Members will then make their decisions. The Local Director will prepare a report which includes individual Members' proposals, but the decision on allocation of the funding is a matter for the committee. An individual Member cannot compel the committee to accept a proposal. Nor can an allocation of £17,500 be spent contrary to the individual Member's wishes. If the committee cannot agree to the proposed use of the funding then the funding will remain unspent.

12. The situation on the remaining £50,000 capital allocation is different. There is no requirement for individual Members to propose ideas, nor do they have a veto on decisions, which are made as usual by majority vote of the whole Committee.

Personal interests and conflicts of interest

13. It is likely that Members may need to declare a personal interest, especially in relation to the allocation of the £105,000 allocated on the basis of £17,500 per member. The key issue is where this becomes a prejudicial interest and therefore prevents that Member from taking part in the decision to allocate his/her individual funding. This occurs where the personal interest is so significant that a member of the public, knowing all of the facts, would think that the judgement of the Member would be affected.

14. Where some or all Members pool their money on a particular project then any individual Member with a prejudicial interest should declare and leave the meeting with the remaining Members making the decision. If this would mean that more than 50% of Members have to withdraw, the Standards Committee should be asked to grant a dispensation to Members. This will need to be requested in advance of the meeting.

15. Where a Member has a prejudicial interest that Member should take no part in the decision or try to influence the decision. On this issue the individual Member is technically proposing a motion on how to spend his/her allocation and then taking no further part.
16. Where a Member wishes to allocate money to an organisation in which he/she could be considered as having a prejudicial interest, the Member should declare the interest and leave the meeting, so that the remaining Members make the decision *unless* the Member concerned represents the Council on the organisations. In that case, he/she has an exemption under the Code of Conduct and can therefore take part and vote. The Member will still have a personal interest and this should be declared and recorded in the usual way.

The criteria against which proposals will be assessed and decisions made

Officer assessment

17. The Local Director / Local Transport Manager will assess each suggestion to make sure that:
 - a. It is legal.
 - b. The project supports the priorities of the Surrey Corporate Plan and Woking Community Strategy.
 - c. It is possible to implement within the time and budget.
 - d. Funding from the Local Committee would not simply replace funding from another source.
 - e. There is no other probable alternative source of funding.

Committee decision

18. In deciding which proposals to fund, the Local Committee will aim for a portfolio of schemes which overall:
 - a. includes at least one comparatively large project of benefit to Woking;
 - b. benefits a variety of communities of interest (for example, young people, old people, ethnic minorities, disabled people), and different areas of Woking;
 - c. includes a mix of large and small projects, but not a lot of very small ones.
19. A large project that benefits a lot of people will take priority over a project that benefits only a few people.
20. Within this framework, projects are more likely to be funded if they meet the following criteria
 - a. The funding is needed “one-off”.
 - b. The project will demonstrate its impact before the end of the financial year.
 - c. The project will give long-term benefit.
 - d. The project is preventive in purpose.

- e. The project targets more disadvantaged areas or communities.
- f. Surrey County Council funding will unlock much more funding from other sources.
- g. If small and local, the project has a significant impact on the quality of life of the people affected.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 21. Where money is being spent outside the County Council, the County needs to satisfy itself that the money is being used in the way that the Committee intended. The County should also consider how the impact of their decisions will be evaluated, though this could be discussed after decisions about allocation are made.
- 22. The Surrey Community Support team is drawing up guidance on these two issues. The guidance will be reported to the next Local Committee on 11 September.

Conclusion

- 23. The process and criteria outlined above should ensure that decisions about the use of public money are made in a way that has integrity and is fair.

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Background papers: Questionnaires completed by Local Committee Members July 2002
