



Allocating Local Committee Funding 19 March 2003

KEY ISSUE:

The Woking Local Committee has a delegated budget of £17,850 per Member, and an allocation of approximately £100,000 to be spent by the whole committee on capital projects. The Local Committee needs to agree criteria and processes for deciding how this will be spent. The Local Committee should also agree the allocation of the Surrey County Council Community Safety budget for Woking.

SUMMARY:

Decisions about the use of the Members' allocation should follow the same procedure as last year with minor amendments on the basis of experience or recommended by Audit. Proposals for spending the capital allocation should be assessed and a decision made once the exact allocation is known (probably July 2003). The Local Committee should confirm its previous support for using the community safety budget for domestic violence outreach, with the remainder for the administration of the community safety strategy through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to resolve that:

a) decisions about the use of the Members' allocation should be made according to the process and criteria described in paragraphs 4 to 13 of this report

b) decisions about the use of the capital allocation should be made according to the process and criteria described in paragraphs 16 to 20 of this report

c) £15,000 of the community safety budget, as previously agreed, be allocated to the domestic violence outreach project, and the remainder to a maximum of £3,000 to the administration of the community safety strategy through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Introduction and background – Members’ allocations

1. Each local committee has a delegated budget of £17,850 per Member.
2. Before decisions are 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
3. This report recommends answers to these questions, based on the arrangements used in 2002/03 and comments from Audit.

Process and criteria for assessment and decision on Members’ allocations

The process

4. The Local Director will inform all Members of the Local Committee of all suggestions for use of the Members’ allocation which she receives.
5. A suggestion only becomes a proposal for formal assessment where:
 - a. a Member of the Local Committee recommends the suggestion for assessment. 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.
And
 - b. 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
 - c. the form is received by the Community Support Team for Woking before the deadline set by the Local Director.
6. The assessment is in two stages.

Stage 1: Officer assessment

7. 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.

Stage 2: Committee decision

8. The Local Director will prepare a report covering all the proposals, with recommendations where it is clear how a proposal relates to the Committee's criteria. Members will then make their decisions collectively. An individual Member cannot compel the committee to accept a proposal. If the committee cannot agree to the proposed use of the funding then the funding will remain unspent.

The criteria

Officer assessment

9. The Local Director / Local Transport Manager will assess each suggestion to make sure that it meets criteria set by Audit, and that it
 - a. supports the priorities of the Surrey County Council Corporate Plan and Woking Community Strategy
 - b. is possible to implement within the time and budget.

Committee decision

10. 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.
11. A large project that benefits a lot of people will take priority over a project that benefits only a few people.
12. Within this framework, projects are more likely to be funded if they meet the following criteria
 - a. The funding is needed as a "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.

Introduction and background – capital allocation

13. Each local committee has a delegated capital budget of approximately £100,000. The exact amount will not be known until July 2003, after the Council knows how much it spent in 2002/03.
14. Before decisions are made, Members need to decide the process and criteria by which proposals will be assessed and decisions made.

Process and criteria for assessment and decision on capital allocations

The process

16. Proposals for spending the capital allocation should be assessed and a decision made once the exact allocation is known (probably July 2003).
17. The Local Director and Local Transportation Manager will prepare a report for the July meeting of the Local Committee listing possible uses of the capital, and how each measures against the criteria set by the Committee.
18. Local Committee members and the Local Transportation Manager may put proposals onto the list for assessment.

The criteria

19. The Local Director / Local Transport Manager will assess each suggestion to make sure that:
 - a. It is legal.
 - b. It is possible to implement within the time and budget.
 - c. Funding from the Local Committee would not simply replace funding from another source and there is no probable alternative source of funding.
 - d. It either
 - increases the budget and scope of an existing capital transportation programme which has already been prioritised in the Local Transport Planor
 - enables the Local Committee to carry out a scheme which supports the priorities of the Surrey County Council Corporate Plan and Woking Community Strategy and significantly improves the quality of life of local people.
20. Within this framework, projects are more likely to be funded if they meet the following criteria

- a. The funding needed is a "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.

Personal interests and conflicts of interest

21. It is likely that Members may need to declare a personal interest, especially in relation to the Members' allocations. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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 organisation. 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.

Introduction and background – Community Safety budget

25. The Surrey County Council Community Safety budget for Woking is likely to be between £16,000 and £18,000 in 2003/04. The Local Director for Woking

represents Surrey County Council on Safer Woking. the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for Woking. The budget should be allocated taking into account the views of the partners, Woking Borough Council and Surrey Police.

26. The Woking Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has a three-way agreement with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships of Runnymede and Surrey Heath to support a domestic violence outreach project covering the whole police NW Surrey division for three years. The Surrey County Council contribution to this partnership for the Woking element is £15,000 a year.
27. The Local Committee should confirm its previous support for using the community safety budget for domestic violence outreach.
28. In previous years, the remainder of the budget has been used to ensure that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is effectively serviced and supported so that it can develop action plans to implement the community safety strategy and monitor its implementation. It is recommended that the same is approved for 2003/04, up to a maximum of £3,000.

Conclusion

29. 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
Correspondence between Audit, Assistant Chief Executive and Local Director for Woking between November 2002 and January 2003
