



WARD BUDGET GUIDE 2017/18

PLEASE NOTE:

The final date for receipt of completed AND signed Ward Budget application forms is

Friday 9 March 2018

(Any part completed applications or applications received after this date will not be accepted)

Prepared by Committee Services

May 2017

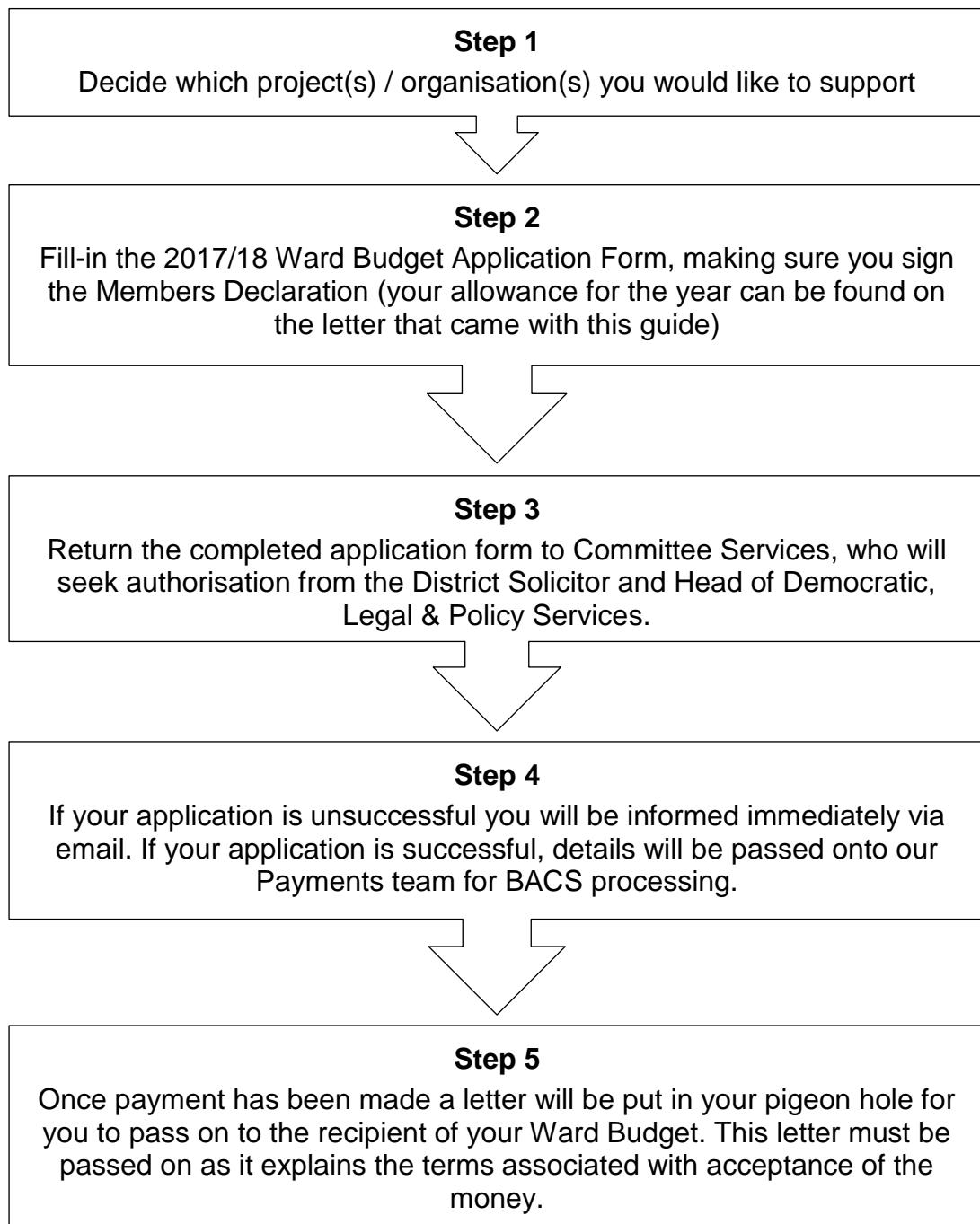
Contact: committeeservices@wycombe.gov.uk



WARD BUDGET STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

If you would like to discuss a Ward Budget application or require any further information please contact Committee Services:

Email: committeeservices@wycombe.gov.uk phone 01494 421214/421210



INTRODUCTION

1. This guide provides an outline for Members and Officers on how the Ward Budget scheme works.
2. The scheme aims to be as simple and flexible as possible. However it is necessary to have some rules governing its operation, in order to ensure that Members and the Council's legal and financial positions are safeguarded.
3. The following link to the Council's web site will provide details of past allocations made by the Scheme:
<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/About-the-council/Councillors-and-meetings/Ward-budgets.aspx>
4. Members are encouraged to seek out appropriate schemes that can be accommodated within the Ward Budget scheme, rather than inviting general applications, which may result in some organisations being disappointed.
5. Donations for charities supported by the mayor's Appeal must go directly to the charities, rather through the Mayor's Appeal, in order to avoid any confusion as to where the money has come from.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WARD BUDGET SCHEME

6. The Ward Budget scheme was introduced in relation to Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000, which gave councils broader powers to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas (Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the 'general power of competence', has since widened the former power in the 2000 Act).
7. The scheme enables Members to put forward proposals for expenditure against a specific budget, earmarked for promotion of the well-being of the local communities, which they represent.
8. It can be applied to enable the Council to respond flexibly to local priorities. However, proposals must be consistent with the Council's policies, deliver value for money and should be used to benefit more than one person.
9. The scheme is designed to be flexible, enabling Members to have wide-ranging discretion over the way in which their budget is spent, whilst also adhering to clearly defined processes which ensure that all decision-making is transparent, accountable and auditable.

HOW THE FUNDS CAN BE USED

10. The Ward Budgets can be used to fund new projects or to provide additional 'match' funding against already committed resources. 'Match' funding can be against either internal or external resources.

11. Ward Budgets can be used for projects which sit outside of a Member's ward, providing it can be demonstrated that people from within the ward can participate and / or benefit from the project.
12. Aside from the Ward Budget scheme the Council also offers a range of grants for local not-for-profit community and voluntary groups working for the wider benefit of Wycombe district residents. Being in receipt of a grant does not preclude an organisation from being awarded Ward Budget funding, however as a general rule, the Scheme should not be used to fund these organisations, unless there is a specific project.
13. Ward Budgets are to be used for specific initiative, projects, renovations etc. it is not envisaged that they are used for the general running costs / administration of an organisation.

More information on the Ward Budget scheme and grants process can be found at www.wycombe.gov.uk

EXCLUDED PROJECTS

14. The Ward Budgets cannot be used:
 - a) For Party Political purposes.
 - b) For activities for which the Authority has no clear legal powers or where the District Solicitor has advised that the project is unlawful or improper.
 - c) Where expenditure would be contrary to a Council policy.
 - d) Where it is a matter in which the local Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-disclosable pecuniary interest to which the Members Code of Conduct applies, Members are referred to the Code of Conduct and are recommended to take advice if any doubt arises.
 - e) Where it would create an on-going financial commitment. An individual Member may indicate that 'in principle' he or she will again fund a project from his or her Ward Budget in the following financial year. However, any funding for the 'second' year will always be dependent upon the Council making the necessary budget provision and therefore cannot be guaranteed before the start of the financial year. Where a longer term project would involve on-going financial commitment the Ward Budget can be used to 'pump prime' to test whether a project is viable (this would normally be done in collaboration with other bodies who may be able to pick up the revenue budget in future years). For each ward (not per Member), a contribution can only be given to the same organisation/project for two years out of each four year term, covering single and multi-member wards.

15. On a project that relates to a function which is the legal responsibility of another statutory body or organisation, e.g. highways or education matters.
16. Where only one individual or a very small number of people will benefit
17. A repeat application for the same project for more than one year or within 2 years of a successful application.
18. All applications will be considered bearing in mind the above criteria. If you are not sure whether the application you have in mind will be eligible for funding please contact in the first instance Committee Services:-
 - committeeservices@wycombe.gov.uk
 - phone 01494 421635/421210; or
 - the District Solicitor (ext. 3251).

BUDGET ALLOCATION

19. The Council may, on the recommendation of the Cabinet, allocate an amount from the Ward Budgets fund as part of the revenue budget process. The budget can be spent on capital or revenue items.
20. In 2017/18 the amount to be allocated to the fund is £90,000. This sum has been apportioned to each Member of the Council in relation to the size of electoral roll of their ward. The unspent balance at the end of each year can be used at the Leader of the Council's discretion.
21. The sums are allocated to individual Council Members; however, it is possible for two or more Members to pool their budgets to fund a project covering more than one ward or a project that will be of benefit for people from any ward to a single project.
22. Members may allocate part, or all, of their fund to an organisation already in receipt of Council funding. However, they may want to take this into account when deciding how to allocate their fund.
23. Unused elements of individual Ward Budgets cannot be carried forward year on year, as the objective of the scheme is to have more activity for Members in their local communities and this is not consistent with accruing the funds over a number of years.
24. No proposal to spend a Ward Budget allocation will be approved, nor payments made, after 31 December of the financial year preceding a District Council election. No proposal to commit funding 'in principle' for more than the current financial year will be approved in the financial year preceding a District Council election.
25. No proposal to spend a Ward Budget allocation will be approved, nor payments made, until after 1 July in the financial year of a District Council election.

26. No proposal to spend a Ward Budget will be approved following the announcement of a District Council by-election or when the need for a by-election becomes known if that allocation directly benefits the ward where the vacancy has/will occur, or for 6 weeks following the by-election.
27. Any Member who is also a Bucks County Councillor or a prospective Bucks County Councillor will need to take extra care in relation to the Code of Conduct in the lead up to a County Council election.

WARD BUDGET SCHEME ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

28. In order to access their Ward Budget, Members must complete a Ward Budget Application Form (a copy of which is attached).
29. Any queries with regard to the rules of the scheme should be directed to Committee Services committeeservices@wycombe.gov.uk phone 01494 421635/421210. When completed the form should be passed to Committee Services, who will consult with the District Solicitor prior to any application being approved by the Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy Services.
30. A BACS payment will be made to the benefiting organisation and a letter will be given to the Member, addressed to the benefiting organisation, outlining that the payment is made on the understanding that it is for the purposes for which it is approved only and that if the money is not to be spent on this purpose it should be returned to the Council. Payments cannot be made to any individual's bank account.
31. Payment is also made on condition that the expenditure is subject to audit. Organisations will be expected to obtain and retain (for a period of 3 years) evidence of the expenditure for audit purposes. Members are asked to give the organisation the letter.
32. The Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy Services may, from time to time make minor amendments to the administration of the scheme and the scheme will be subject to review following each year of operation.
33. In the event of the application refusal being disputed the final decision will rest with the Chief Executive.

UNSPENT WARD BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

34. The total of any unspent ward budget allocations is calculated after the deadline each year. The Leader is then consulted on whether all, some or none of the unspent funds should be allocated. Any proposals from the Leader are reviewed and considered to ensure they are in line with the ward budget scheme in force at that time, prior to approval.