

WBI guidance notes for ward councillors 2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ward Based Initiative (WBI) scheme was first introduced in 2008-09, to provide councillors with funding to progress minor capital schemes within their wards.
- 1.2 The establishment of a Capital Receipts Incentive Scheme (CRIS), approved by Executive Board in October 2011, is being administered under the WBI scheme. The key feature of CRIS is that 20% of each eligible receipt generated will be retained locally for re-investment, subject to a maximum per receipt of £100k, with 15% retained by the respective ward and 5% pooled across the council and distributed to wards on the basis of need via community committees. Some receipts are excluded from the scheme and these are largely receipts that are already assumed to fund the council's budget or are earmarked in some other way to previous or future spend. Any land sale valued less than £10,000 is, by statute definition, revenue income and is therefore not eligible for CRIS.
- 1.3 CRIS injections to the capital programme are made half yearly and are allocated equally to each councillor within the respective ward.

2. Eligible schemes

- 2.1 The expenditure must be for the acquisition or improvement of any council asset or, in the case of a grant to a community or voluntary organisation, must be for works to their premises that will result in reduced running costs and must fall within the definition of capital expenditure as set out in the capital finance regulations. This includes:
- the purchase or laying out of land
 - the purchase or refurbishment of buildings to enhance the building rather than maintain it
 - the purchase of equipment for council use (schools, libraries, community centres – for schools, see paragraph 5.8)
 - CCTV.
- 2.2 Schemes must be consistent with existing targets and priorities set out in the council's policy framework and with departmental asset management plans.
- 2.3 Schemes must provide benefit to whole wards or communities and not confer private benefit to individuals or small groups of individuals. Councillors should consider whether the scheme is one in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI). The categories of DPI are:
- Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation
 - Sponsorship
 - Contracts
 - Land
 - Licences
 - Corporate tenancies
 - Securities.

The Localism Act came into force on the 1 July 2012. This removed the personal and prejudicial elements from the National Code of Conduct and replaced them

with a declaration of any DPI. Councillors (or their spouse or civil partner) are no longer under any obligation to declare their involvement with any organisation unless they work for the organisation or have shares of more than £25,000 in the organisation. Where councillors have a DPI they should also ensure that it is recorded in the register of interests.

3. Financial criteria

- 3.1 The total scheme cost will be inclusive of fees for design and supervision and any other associated costs (planning permissions, building regulations).
- 3.2 Schemes must result in no additional revenue costs for the council, unless these can be met from within existing departmental budgets.
- 3.3 Joint sponsorship of projects can be made with other ward members.

4. Joint funded schemes

- 4.1 Departments can joint fund WBI schemes, only if such a programme of works is included in the capital programme. Any such matched funding by the sponsoring department would require that additional authority to spend be obtained independently of the WBI scheme in line with normal governance procedures.

5. Initiating schemes

Work on LCC land or property

Applications must be made through the relevant sponsoring department and should be made on a WBI scheme submission form, attached at appendix A.

- 5.1 It is essential that proposals complement existing departmental service plans and strategies. Therefore, councillors should discuss the scheme proposals with the head of service or nominated officer. That officer will be able to advise on:
 - the council's legal powers for such expenditure
 - the estimated capital costs
 - the potential revenue costs (and the likely ability of the service to meet those costs)
 - whether the proposals are likely to secure approval.
- 5.2 The formal submission document, signed by the councillor(s) is to be forwarded to the sponsoring department. Where the form is signed by 1 or 2 councillors, the form should indicate whether the other ward councillor(s) have been made aware of the proposals. The head of service with responsibility for the asset must approve it as being within current council policies, in the interests of the council and as involving no more expenditure than is proportionate to the benefit to be achieved and is satisfied that there are no other reasons (including alternative proposals) which make it inappropriate to approve the proposal.
- 5.3 Full details of the scheme should be provided to determine:
 - whether and how the proposal meets the WBI eligibility criteria
 - whether and how the proposal meets the WBI financial criteria
 - whether and how proposals are consistent with existing targets and priorities set out in the council's policy framework and with departmental asset management plans

- whether any CCTV project meets the community safety criteria, details of which are available from the community safety officer
- that schemes relating to schools meet the criteria (see paragraph 5.8)
- that schemes with matched funding identify that the funding has been agreed by all parties.

Any useful background information such as site drawings, plans and photographs in support of the application should also be provided. Insufficient details can unfortunately delay the progress of a scheme whilst clarification is sought.

Work to non-LCC land or property (for example a community or voluntary organisation)

These applications should be made on the same WBI scheme submission form, attached at appendix A. However, the community or voluntary organisation must complete a WBI grant application form, attached at appendix B.

- 5.4 There is no need to directly involve a sponsoring department when making an application to provide a grant to a community or voluntary organisation. It is the responsibility of the community or voluntary organisation to evidence the savings on running costs.
- 5.5 Once an application is approved, the grant payment will be processed on the condition that evidence of expenditure incurred is subsequently provided in line with the following conditions:
- Grant payment under £5,000 – payment will be made directly to the community or voluntary organisation, which must then provide evidence of expenditure as soon as they are able, after the works have been completed.
 - Grant payment over £5,000 – evidence of expenditure must be supplied before payment is made. In special cases, part payment can be made if this causes financial difficulties to smaller organisations.

5.6 CCTV schemes

All WBI proposals for CCTV schemes must comply with the council's criteria for CCTV schemes as advised by the community safety officer.

5.7 Energy efficiency schemes

In order to support the sustainability agenda, match funding from the council's energy efficiency reserve is available for eligible WBI schemes. The reserve was established to provide pump priming funding to energy efficiency initiatives. All proposals should be discussed in the first instance with the sponsoring department who will advise on the merits of the proposal and on whether match funding would be available. In the majority of cases, funding will be made available as a loan, with a maximum payback period of five years. After the payback period, the service area will benefit from the ongoing efficiencies and the energy efficiency reserve will ultimately become self-sustaining.

Another priority area is renewable energy technologies. For advice on such capital investment, please contact the climate change officer.

5.8 Schools

All WBI proposals relating to schools must be assessed by the built environment service within children's services using the six criteria set out as follows (the criteria will rank equally in determining whether the proposal will be supported):

1. Condition

The proposal should relate to building condition issues categorised as poor and identified as priority 1 or 2 as identified by the condition surveys carried out as part of developing education's asset management plan.

2. OFSTED identified premises deficiencies

The proposal should address premises deficiencies identified in the school OFSTED report that would directly contribute to the raising of standards.

3. Curriculum computers

A priority for support would be for schools which fall below a minimum ratio of computers to pupils of
1:12 in Primary Schools and
1:8 in High Schools.

Proposals should be justified in terms of the overall deficiency of equipment at a school or to support the essential renewal or replacement of equipment in line with the school ICT development plan.

4. Capital for revenue savings

Proposals should be cost effective in reducing future revenue expenditure, for example energy efficiency schemes, and may also contribute to improving the learning environment.

5. School security

Proposals should improve the security and safety of pupils, staff, premises or equipment. Evidence of priority need should be supported by a high level of reported incidents.

6. Developments or improvements to facilities

Proposals to contribute to improved educational standards or to promote social inclusion will require the endorsement of Childrens Services Asset Management Board (CSAMB).

5.9 Grants for facilities co-located with schools

Proposals which are for a facility based on a school site, for example a sports facility or a community centre, will not automatically be subject to the same prioritisation criteria as school schemes. The position will depend on the particular arrangements in force on each site. Where a grant is proposed for such facilities, then officer advice should be sought at the outset to clarify the position.

6. Approvals process

6.1 When received, the application will be checked to make sure:

- there are sufficient funds available for the proposal to qualify within the financial limits
- that the proposal meets the eligibility and financial criteria outlined above
- that it is within the legal powers of the council to make the grant

- external organisations in receipt of grant awards will be required to enter into a legal agreement with the council to protect the council's investment in the future. Legal requirements will be scaled dependant on the level of council investment.

6.2 The proposal will then be submitted to the deputy Chief executive or, under the scheme of delegation, chief officer audit and investment for approval.

Until all necessary approvals have been obtained, no firm commitments of funding can be given.

7. Final approval scheme

7.1 Following the above approvals, a scheme will be set up in the council's capital programme under the sponsoring service area and the scheme will proceed like any other council capital scheme. This means that the council's financial procedure rules and contract procedure rules must be followed with regard to tendering and appointment of contractors.

7.2 If, during the WBI process, it becomes apparent that the WBI element of a joint funded scheme exceeds or will exceed the approved amount, the head of the sponsoring service will seek agreement from the councillor(s) to the revised cost before proceeding further (subject to the additional funds being available).

7.3 Schemes that do not meet the WBI criteria will get the option of funding the scheme by other funding sources such as through the Members Improvements in the Community and the Environment (MICE) Scheme. MICE Funding is used for low value schemes and can be used on both capital and revenue projects. If a WBI submission does not get approved then MICE may be suggested as an option.

8. Position statements

8.1 The chief officer audit and investment will maintain a record of the value of schemes relating to each ward, will undertake scheme monitoring and will provide other financial monitoring information as required.

9. Contact points

9.1 WBI matters will be co-ordinated by the same staff that administer the MICE Scheme. They are within the capital and treasury section of audit and investment, part of the strategy and resources directorate

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