

Report of	Assistant Director of Community	Author	Melanie Rundle
Title	Locality Budgets		☎ 508816
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Background

The Community Enabling Strategy was approved in 2015. This encourages local communities to work together to improve and protect their neighbourhoods by increasing neighbourliness, social networks and civic participation. As part of the strategy £2,000 was agreed for each Councillor to help drive community enabling within their wards. As well as meeting the aims of the Community Enabling Strategy Locality Budget spend should also align with the Councils Strategic Priorities.

2. Reason For Scrutiny

Following a request from Scrutiny Committee Chair. Report includes analysis of spend since the introduction of Locality Budgets in 2015.

3. Action Required by Scrutiny Panel

To review the analysis provided and consider any recommendations going forward in regard to Locality Budgets.

4. Supporting Information – Locality Budgets Analysis

- 4.1 The Locality Budget Guidance ([click here](#)) sets out the aims of the scheme along with guidance for Councillors on what their budget can and cannot be spent on. It also sets out the process to follow to make an application.
- 4.2 There is a check on receipt of a request for funding but no formal monitoring of the scheme. Councillors themselves have the responsibility and flexibility of deciding what will support community enabling most effectively in their locality and to ensure the funding is actually spent on what they requested it for.
- 4.3 Officers key consideration is that spend does not generate any ongoing revenue budget implications.
- 4.4 The administration of locality budgets can be very burdensome and officers have worked with Councillors over the years to reduce this additional cost. Key improvements include moving the application process online and introduction of a minimum spend per application.
- 4.5 Councillors are only able to carry unspent funds over to the next financial year in exceptional circumstances and this must be agreed in advance.

4.6 Each year, the funds go toward a variety of projects but there are some general themes demonstrated through the analysis.

5. When was the money spent?

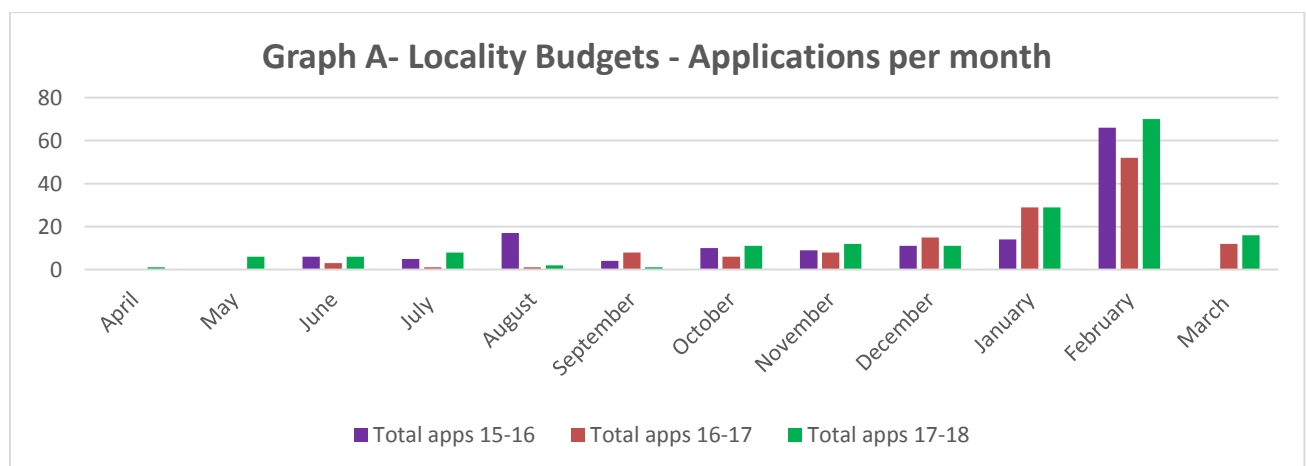
Ideally Councillors should be planning their locality budget spend alongside their local community enabling priorities and engaging with local communities very early in the financial year in an open and transparent way.

Leaving spend until the end of the year may limit the opportunities within communities, reduce the impact and possible value of these local resources for communities and adds to the administrative burden of the scheme.

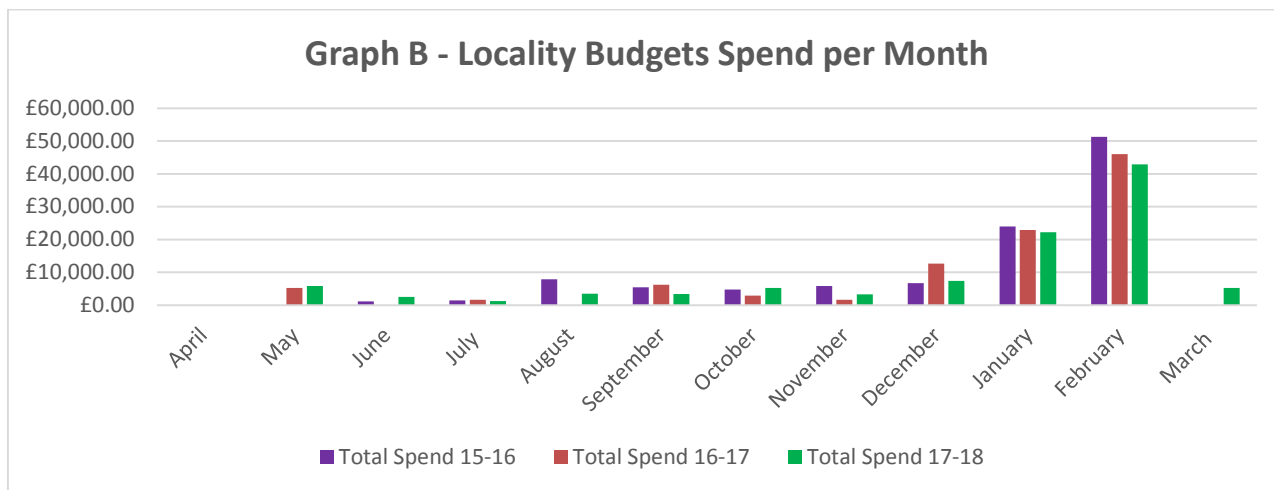
5.1 The below graphs show the rate of the application process across the year. Each shows a comparison over the last three financial years.

5.2 Graph A shows the number of applications being submitted and processed each month throughout the year. This demonstrates a pattern across the three years where a large proportion of applications are received in the last two months of the process, with the highest number in February.

5.3 In 2017-18, approximately £42.8k was processed in February. In the last two years, applications have been received after the February deadline, despite various reminders.



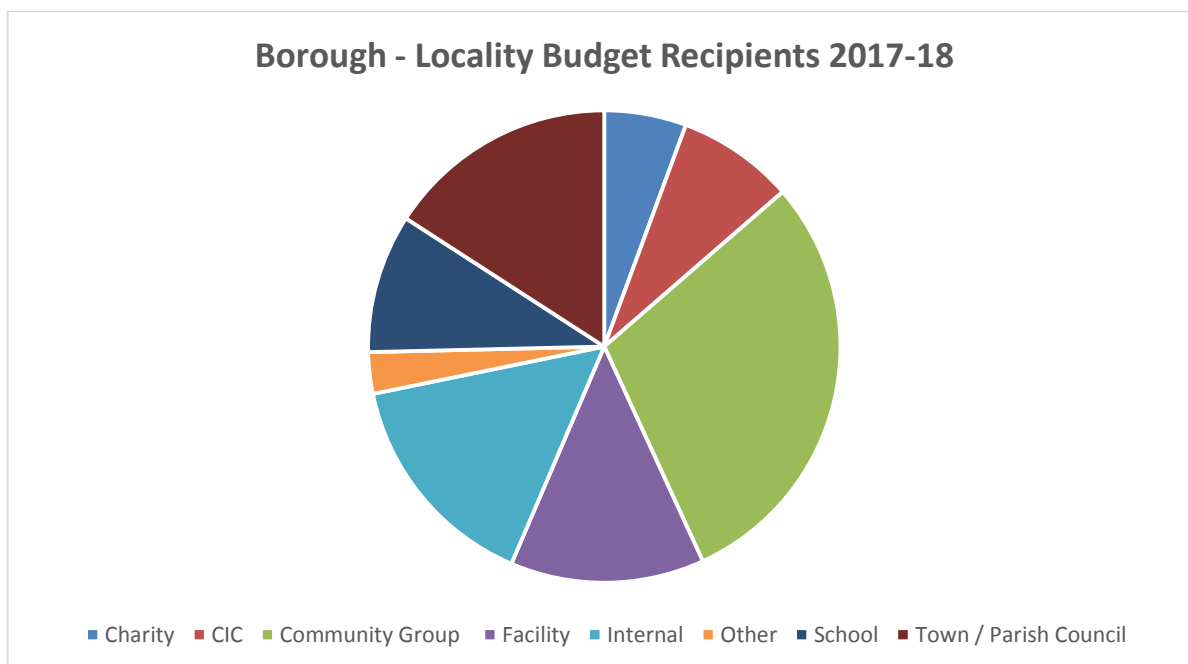
5.4 Graph B shows the amount of locality budget contributions processed and transferred through the year. This data shows an identical pattern in relation to submitted applications. The majority of total funds are processed in the last month.



5.5 See appendix A for a breakdown of Spend per Zone and Appendix B for details of unspent funds and carry forwards each year.

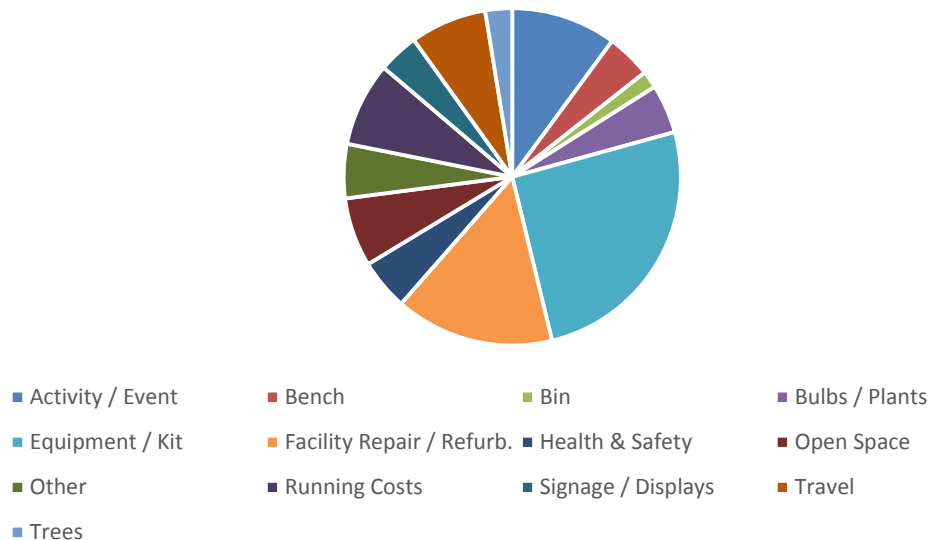
6. Borough Wide Summary

6.1 The table bellows shows that across the Borough as a whole in 2017-18, community groups are the most common recipient of locality budget funding, followed closely by internal services and products.



6.2 Across the Borough as whole in 2017-18, equipment and kit was the most popular category of contribution (as shown in table below). This includes a variety of activities and equipment which serves community groups and services. Repair and refurbishments to community facilities was the second most popular contribution.

Borough - Locality Budget Projects 2017-18



7. Good Practice

7.1 Plan early

Early planning alongside engagement with Communities and fellow Ward Councillors is likely to result in the most effective use of locality budgets.

7.2 Engage

A Ward Cllr lead application process open to local groups with a requirement to submit a 'mirror application' by a set deadline to the Ward Councillor can both engage the public and reduce the workload for the Ward Councillor who then merely needs to transfer the information from their chosen applications to the online form.

7.2 Avoid panic spending

Last minute spend often leads to having to make quick decisions about spend that may not provide the best enabling opportunities for communities so as part of the planning agree to get spend requests in well before the deadline date.

7.3 Size may matter

Consider how pooling of locality budgets with fellow Ward Councillors may enable something more significant to happen.

7.4 Follow up

Councillors have flexibility to spend their locality budgets on many things but they also have the responsibility of ensuring this has no revenue implications for the Council, could not place the Council or them as individuals in disrepute and that the money is spent in the agreed way. Thinking about how you check or get feedback from your applicants should be part of your approach.

8. Review and Improvement

Each year the portfolio holder receives feedback on the locality budget spend for the previous year and works with officers to look at ways to make improvements

going forward. For 2018/19 the following changes have been included in the process:

- 8.1** In line with both the Councils digital strategy and to ensure the process is as efficient as possible all applications received from Councillors must now be electronic and made using the online application process. Help and guidance will still be available where needed.
- 8.2** Work with Councillors to avoid last minute rush spending in February. This is both resource intensive and potentially reduces the opportunities for community enabling. Officers will increase reminders and have developed a quick guide to support Councillors.
- 8.3** The minimum spend for each individual application will increase from £50 to £100. At £50 it is possible for over 2000 individual applications (up to 40 per Cllr). Increasing the minimum spend to £100 still provides flexibility and up to 20 individual applications per Councillor but will reduce to a maximum of 735 Locality Budget applications across the whole scheme thereby reducing administrative burden.
- 8.4** A well planned and implemented local approach will negate the need to request a carry forward of Locality Budget. However it is recognised that in exceptional circumstances carrying a budget forward may result in a better project or be unavoidable. Officers will continue to work with Cllrs to limit carry forward requests in all but the most unavoidable instances.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 9.1** There are no Equality, Diversity or Human Rights implications.

10. Standard References

- 10.1** There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

11. Health and Wellbeing implications

- 11.1** The projects and services provided through use of the Locality Budget funding should have a positive impact on health and wellbeing of local residents and visitors to the Borough.

12. Appendices

- 12.1** Appendix A – Breakdown of spend per zone
- 12.2** Appendix B – Unspent funds and carry forward per year