



Colchester Councillor Locality Budgets

A guide to the use of Colchester
Councillors' Locality Budgets
2020-21

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1.0 Purpose of the Locality Budget

[The Community Enabling Strategy](#) was approved on 3 June 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 a sum of money has been divided equally between all 51 Colchester Councillors to use on supporting initiatives within their wards.

As well as delivering the objectives of the Community Enabling Strategy, projects should be aligned with the themes of the [Council's Strategic Plan for 2018-21](#):

- **Growth** – ensuring all residents benefit from the growth of the borough
- **Responsibility** - encouraging everyone to do their bit to making our borough even better
- **Opportunity** – promoting and improving Colchester and its environment
- **Wellbeing** – making Colchester an even better place to live, and supporting those who need the most help

2.0 What Locality Budgets can and cannot be used for?

The guiding principle here is very clear, whatever you spend your locality budget on **MUST NOT** have any ongoing revenue implications for the Council's budget.

They can be used to enable or encourage communities or support activities to bring communities together for events or activities. Supporting vulnerable residents or the organisations and groups that support them locally is also an option.

The main thing to remember is that you are distributing public funds and as such you need to be able to justify, if asked, how you have chosen to spend the money within your Ward. All spend is published on the Council's website.

If you are still not 100% sure you may wish to consider the following examples of what Locality Budgets can and can't be spent on:

2.1 Examples of what your Locality Budget CANNOT be used for:

- Projects, activities or spend that has any ongoing revenue or cost implications for council resources; this includes budget and staffing resources. Examples; newly sited bins, trees, benches on Council land.
- Activities for which the Authority has no clear legal powers to fund, eg. Highways improvements.
- Newly sited bins and benches, (unless the Parish/Town Council or Community agree to maintain/empty).
- Projects or activities that could impact on the Council's reputation or breach Equality or Safeguarding principles and law.
- Caution is suggested when using Locality Budgets to supplement gaps in funding when there is no obvious longer-term sustainability, and clarity needs to be made around the one-off nature of the any locality budget funding at the outset.
- Projects or activities that place any ongoing liability on the council.

2.2 Examples of what your Locality Budget CAN be used for:

- For projects within a Councillors ward, or for projects outside the ward where people from the ward can participate, eg providing a contribution towards a Community Centre outside the ward, but potentially used by constituents.
- Community gardens, community centres
- Enabling local groups, social / youth clubs
- Supporting vulnerable residents or voluntary sector organisations
- Community safety initiative
- Planting in communal areas
- Match funding other eligible projects
- Community events or activities
- Environmental clear up activities
- One-off funding arrangements with no guarantee of funding in subsequent years.
- To provide bins, benches or trees to **replace** similar damaged or dilapidated items.

3.0 Joint Applications

Locality budgets can be pooled with other Ward Councillors to go further or for bigger projects or used to match fund projects for existing/new activities.

The application form has an option for joint contributions

4.0 How do I apply?

Councillors should complete the electronic Locality Budget application form. Completion will include confirmation that their application complies with the Locality Budget criteria, has no ongoing revenue implications for the Council and the Councillor's confirmation of any pecuniary interest. By submitting an application, Councillors take responsibility to ensure that the funds are spent as requested.

Once the application is completed and processed, payment will be arranged to the relevant organisation or an internal transfer. Direct payments will be made by electronic transfer to an approved bank account.

Grant Awards must be of £100 or more from each Councillor and recipients can only be paid electronically.

5.0 Deadlines

We recommend you start using your budget early in the financial year, and do not leave applications until the last minute. Planning your budget spend allows for consultation with your constituents and fellow Ward Councillors.

Applications must be made by the **last working day in January 2021** to enable them to be processed in the municipal year and for the accounts to be correctly closed.

6.0 Carry Forward

- Unspent money cannot be carried over to the next financial year, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Any request must be received in writing by the relevant officer before the application deadline (end of January).
- Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis but should be for something specific with agreed timescales that must be within the next financial year (i.e. not just a general carry forward for no specific spend).

Outdoor Planting Applications - It is particularly important to plan spend for outdoor planting projects - bulbs, trees and benches (where replacing existing or where local communities or parish / town councils are maintaining). All applications for such spend must be received by **1st September** to enable ordering in bulk and ensure quality bulbs/trees are planted at the correct time of year.

7.0 FAQs

Can I pool the Locality Budget?

Yes, more than one Councillor can contribute from their Locality Budget to a specific project or group (for example if projects cover several wards). However, a maximum of £12,000 can be allocated to any individual project or group within any one financial year.

Can I carry forward unspent budget?

Unspent money cannot be carried forward unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request must be received in writing by end of January 2021 and be for specific spend (not general carry forward). See above for details.

Can payments be made to individuals?

Payments directly to individuals should be avoided. Where there is no other option the Councillor should seek advice from the Locality Budget Administrator about how to demonstrate the legitimacy of the transaction.

Can I apply for subsequent funding for the same organisation?

Councillors choose how to spend their Locality Budget in line with the criteria. If funding is allocated to the same organisation in subsequent years, be aware that all expenditure is published on your Councillor profile on the website.

8.0 Useful information

Consult your colleagues

Councillors are encouraged to consult as widely as possible with appropriate groups and individuals, including Residents' Associations, Tenants' Associations, County Councillors, other Ward Councillors, the Community Enabling Team at the Council, Neighbourhood Teams, Parish and Town Councils, and Voluntary Groups. Councillors are encouraged to work in partnership with Councillors from their fellow political group as well as other political groups wherever practicable.

Use of Colchester procurement section

The use of Colchester procurement methods is to be encouraged and promoted as it may be possible to obtain equipment etc. at advantageous prices and reduce VAT liability, and/or expert advice and assistance will be available on the choice of supplier and type of product to best meet the needs of the beneficiary.

Transparency

Please be aware that full details of proposals, commitments and actual expenditure by each Councillor will be made available on the Council's website along with the amount of money still available to be spent / committed.

For further information on the scheme please contact Siobhán McLeod, Community Enabling Officer on 01206 506596, or email siobhan.mcleod@colchester.gov.uk