

Funding for Schools Advice

In relation to Members' Community Allocation
Funding



SURREY

SUMMARY

This guidance note provides advice to County Councillors on the use of Member Allocations or Local Committee Capital Budget to fund projects within Schools.

This advice is intended to assist County Councillors in considering the suitability of potential schools proposals, prior to committing support to a project.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2001 the Cabinet has identified a budget for Members to spend on projects that respond to the local needs of their area.

Historically the funds were provided to be spent in support of the Council’s wellbeing powers (as set out in the Local Government Act 2000) – to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area. The Localism Act (2011) extended the Council’s powers, and this meant that the scope for the spend of members’ allocations was widened to deliver projects that sat within the Council’s “General Power of Competence”, and the Council’s Financial Framework.

Members Allocations - Each County Councillor has been allocated funds to be spent in line with the frameworks set out above.

FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

One area where there are strict regulations regarding the type of projects that can be funded through Members Allocations relates to Schools.

Schools are provided with a delegated budget which is based on a formula which must comply with the current School and Early Years Finance Regulations (these are updated every year), the purpose of the legislation is to ensure all schools are funded on a consistent basis and have a choice as to how to spend their budget. Delegated budgets are provided to cover revenue expenditure associated with core education provision including textbooks and library books (and electronic equivalents), routine maintenance of building and grounds, internal redecoration and replacement of normal classroom furniture, equipment and IT.

The Council (and therefore Members Allocations) may only fund Schools over and above the delegated budget share for purposes specifically listed in the regulations, i.e. over and above that which most schools would normally be expected to need and to provide from their delegated budget. The fact that schools may choose to deliver the core curriculum in novel ways (or by using external speakers or external organisations) does not itself mean that the costs are not core curriculum costs. It should not matter whether the application is from the school, the PTA or a third party organisation if it is for the benefit of the school.

Therefore Members Allocations funding needs to be carefully considered, examples of eligible expenditure might be:

- Capital expenditure (i.e. contributions to significant building works or grounds work that improve the site).
- Community focussed expenditure (i.e. expenditure that allows the premises to be used by the wider community, or running after school activities not linked to the

curriculum, such as breakfast or after school clubs or childcare, or sports facilities with significant community use)

- Expenditure on school improvement at a school where standards were giving cause for concern. In practice this would mean schools which were graded by OFSTED as inadequate (or repeatedly as requiring improvement) and/or considered by Surrey’s advisers as at risk of being considered as inadequate. While improving standards is a core priority for all schools, it is acknowledged that some need additional support in this area
- Other assistance which is specific to individual pupils (eg assisting needy pupils with the cost of. extracurricular activities which the school would not normally be expected to fund)
- Support for external activities which might be considered to fall within the LA;s powers to provide education or experience in music or the performing arts (and not specifically related to national curriculum delivery)
- Activities which might be considered recreational and social training and educational or recreational leisure time activities
- Activities intended to widen pupils’ knowledge of careers or industry over and above that normally provided within school.

Officers are happy to provide advice to Members in this area prior to agreements with schools to help ensure that no precedents are set for other schools who may have similar requests and that there is no challenge to the funding formula which must be open and transparent and applied equitably to all schools

It should also be noted that expenditure on a particular item in one year does not necessarily mean that the same type of funding would be eligible in another, as delivery of education evolves into core curriculum items as technology and teaching methods develop.

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