

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM TASK GROUP

27 September 2016

Present: Councillor S Cavinder (Chair)
Councillors K Hastrick, A Joynes, R Martins and M Mills

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

15 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

16 Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

17 Minutes of previous meeting

The notes and agreed actions of the meeting held on the 7 September 2016 were submitted and signed.

18 Survey of councillors' views - analysis of results

The chair invited comments from task group members on the survey conclusions.

During discussions, the following themes were identified:

- there was wide-ranging support for the continuation of Neighbourhood Forum funds
- expenditure on projects covered by other budgets e.g., highways projects otherwise covered by Hertfordshire County Council, was exceptional and limited to only a few projects per year. It should not therefore be excluded in the guidelines
- there was support for a new process of pooling any remaining ward budgets to a single pot after a specified period e.g., mid-December, at which point all wards could apply for the money. Two further suggestions were made on this point:

- the Task Group could continue to play a role, helping to assess applications to this single funding pot
- any money left over after this process – which was anticipated to be very limited – could be given to the chairman’s chosen charities for the relevant year
- Neighbourhood Forum budgets should not be merged with Watford Borough Council’s Small Grants Fund
- it was important that officers continued to be involved in the assessment and approval of projects, irrespective of their size or value
- there should be a change in the application process with applicants applying directly for funds, preferably using online forms.

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Task group recommendations

The task group agreed that it now had sufficient information to draw together its conclusions for Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

It was agreed to identify the main headings, with the feasibility of the recommendations to be investigated by the committee and scrutiny support officer outside the meeting.

The task group proposed that:

- forum funds should continue and the amount increased to £3,000 per ward
- funding should be focused on local organisations, groups and charities
- guidelines should be reviewed to clarify:
 - how often recipients could receive funding (normally not more than once a year, however the type of project, rather than the organisation, should be the guide)
 - proportionality criteria
 - declaration of members’ interests
- money allocated to individual wards should be spent by a given date. After this point, any remaining funds should be pooled so that all wards

could bid for the available funds. At the end of the year, any remaining money in this pool should be allocated to the chairman's chosen charities

- recipients should apply for funds directly, preferably using online forms
- recipients should complete a feedback questionnaire on their completed projects
- wards should be encouraged to minimise their administration costs for forum meetings in order to seek the most cost effective means, particularly in regard to advertising
- the name "Neighbourhood Forums" should be changed to "Neighbourhood Locality Funds"
- funds should be relaunched with all forms and information available on the Council's website.

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Next steps

The full recommendations would be agreed by correspondence. This would include discussions between the committee and scrutiny support officer and other council officers to agree the feasibility and practicability of the recommendations.

It was not thought necessary to agree a further meeting of the task group.

The task group wished to note their appreciation to the chair.

Chair

The Meeting started at 10.30 am
and finished at 11.40 am