

PART 12 – WARD IMPROVEMENT FUND GUIDELINES

- 1.1 The Trainee Accountants within the Finance Strategy Team will be the central point of contact for members in relation to Ward Improvement Funding (“WIF”). WIF is a budget held and managed by the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with ward members.
- 1.2 The procedure for approving WIF proposals and releasing the funds is as follows:
 - The ward member(s) should complete and sign part 1 (page 1) of the Request for Release of Ward Improvement Funding Form, which includes information regarding members interests; and the form should then be sent to Corporate Finance. E-mail copies will be accepted to wif@medway.gov.uk.
 - Corporate Finance will confirm that there are adequate funds available for the WIF proposal and forward the form to the Chief Operating Officer for completion of Parts 2 and 3 (page 2). The Chief Operating Officer may either accept or reject the WIF proposal, giving due consideration to whether it meets the essential criteria, and notify the member(s) accordingly.
 - Where the request requires technical input, the Chief Operating Officer may refer it to a Director, who will then assign a lead officer to confirm that the WIF project is feasible and can be delivered within the proposed fund allocated. The lead officer must complete part 2 of the form.
 - The Director must then either accept or reject the WIF proposal, giving due consideration to whether it meets the essential criteria, and notify the member(s) and the Chief Operating Officer accordingly.
- 1.3 The essential criteria for WIF are as follows:
 - The WIF proposal should command community support and strictly relate to an unmet need in the ward(s), or improve social, economic or environmental wellbeing in the ward(s). This can be demonstrated through constituency and surgery feedback, consultation exercises already undertaken e.g. residents opinion poll, consultation on the council’s 5 year and other plans, complaints analysis and analysis of civic warden calls logged, or future involvement exercises conducted for this purpose.
 - No budget should already exist to cover the WIF proposal. This is to reflect the principle that the funds should not be considered as an extension of existing budgets.
 - Members may, at their discretion, agree to pool their WIF with another member to a fund a proposal that delivers a benefit across ward boundaries.
 - The project can be completed within the financial year and have no ongoing revenue implications. This is to ensure that the investment has an impact on Medway in the short term and does not commit the council to long term expenditure such as on-going maintenance costs for bollards/lighting, or emptying costs of litter and dog bins and refilling of salt bins.

- The project should be fully costed. This must be carried out by members/officers before the director assesses the proposal. Officers must confirm that there are no on-going costs of the proposal.
- Any approvals required from other bodies must have been received before the WIF proposal is submitted. An example might be where permission is required from another agency or landowner to take forward a project or where planning permission is required
- The proposal for WIF funding must constitute lawful expenditure for the Council. For example, the Local Government Act 1986 prohibits local authorities publishing any material which, in whole or part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. The Council must also comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity issued by the Secretary of State under the 1986 Act.
- Any works or services required from other bodies must be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Submissions must be made in sufficient time to ensure that schemes can be completed before the end of the financial year as there will be no automatic roll-forward of unspent amounts. In past years, where a project has been committed with director approval before the 31 March but circumstances such as workload or the time of year in the case of tree planting, for instance, have prevented expenditure occurring, then funds have been rolled over, but there is no guarantee that this will continue in future years.