

APPENDIX C(i)

Extract from Committee

EXECUTIVE

25 MARCH 2013

SUBJECT: TOWARDS FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY – CEASING OF WARD BUDGETS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

LEAD OFFICER: CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES) & STEVE SWAIN, PRINCIPAL DEMOCRATIC OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To advise on a proposal to discontinue the provision of ward budgets.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 As part of the budget proposals consideration has been given to discontinuing the ward budget scheme. Ceasing the scheme would provide a saving of £33,000 per annum.

3. Background

3.1 Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council broad powers to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of its area. It is of particular relevance to promoting Members' community leadership role and the development of this scheme.

3.2 In the Strategic Plan 2007 –2012, a provision was identified for £1,000 per Ward Member to spend on community projects in their own wards. The wording within the strategic plan was:

Outcome Sought:

“Greater involvement of local residents with Councillors through the operation of Ward budgets”

Operation:

“The introduction of Ward budgets, whereby each Councilor takes control of a small budget to deliver/support community initiatives”

3.3 The scheme was approved by Executive on the 26 August 2008. The initial budget for 2008/09 was rolled forward into 2009/10 which gave each member a sum of

£2,000 to allocate in that year. Each member has had £1,000 to allocate in subsequent financial years.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 Following the recent all member seminar on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Ward Budgets were identified as an item that could be offered up as a potential saving.
- 4.2 Ward Budgets were set up to provide funds to be spent on a wide variety of schemes to benefit the residents of a Councillor's ward. It is unlikely that the ceasing of the scheme will cause any undue consequences for any individual/organisation as funding was not to be provided towards the every day running costs of organisations. Examples of Ward Budgets awarded during the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13 are detailed on **Appendix 1**.

5. Policy Scrutiny Committee Comments

- 5.1 The Policy Scrutiny Committee considered the proposal at its meeting held on 12 March 2013 and made the following comments:-
- The funding had been useful
 - Once the Council had achieved financial sustainability consideration should be given to reinstating the ward budgets scheme

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 The Council's refocused priorities are as follows:-
- Growing the local economy
 - Protecting the city's poorest people from the effects of the recession; and
 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing

and are supported by the Towards Financial Sustainability programme.

- 6.2 The proposal to discontinue the ward budget scheme will offer up a saving which will be included within the programme.

7. Organisational Impacts

7.1 Finance

- 7.1.1 If the scheme is discontinued a saving of £33,000 per annum would be made which would contribute to the Towards Financial Sustainability target.

7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

7.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

7.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the scheme and the key findings incorporated into the scheme when it was approved in 2008. It is not anticipated that any equality, diversity and human rights issues will arise if the scheme ceases. It is unlikely that the ceasing of the scheme will cause any undue consequences for any individual/organisation as funding was not to be provided towards the every day running costs of organisations. A further Equality Impact Assessment has now been completed in respect of ceasing the scheme this has confirmed that the ceasing of the scheme will not affect any particular group/characteristic differently.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That the Executive discontinue the Ward Budgets scheme.

Key Decision Yes

Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply No

Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

Does the report contain Appendices? No

List of Background Papers: No

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