

Ward Engagement & Funding



Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Annual Report 2020/21 ward engagement

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of how ward funding was spent across the city between April 2020 and March 2021. This report seeks to provide an insight into the various projects and initiatives that took place in wards and those that were important to residents locally.

Summary

The past year has presented exceptional challenges for local communities responding to the unprecedented situation brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst community groups and organisations have had to find new and creative ways of operating in lockdown and under social distancing restrictions, there has been a truly impressive response from local residents and voluntary organisations from every background and across all areas of the city to support those in need and boost the health and wellbeing of all.

Ward community funding has been crucial in supporting the needs of local communities to deliver much needed interventions. The Neighbourhood Services Ward and Community Engagement Team have continued to operate throughout the pandemic, supporting residents and community organisations by phone and online. The team have had an expanded function during this period. Whilst continuing to support ward Councillors in the administration of ward funding and supporting community organisations to make applications, they have also managed a telephone response group for all neighbourhood service enquiries, providing advice and information where possible, and signposting residents to the appropriate services and agencies as required.

The total ward funding allocation across 18 wards for 2020-21 was £393,650 consisting of £378,000 allocation for this year and £15,650 carried forward from the previous year, 2019-20. 288 applications were approved across all 18 wards with total ward funding of £370,703.88 allocated. Unallocated funding will be carried over to support projects in the next financial year. In addition to the standard ward community funding allocation, in 2020-21 the Council made available £105,000 of one off funding for the Community Mobilisation Fund to support community action during the pandemic. The Community Mobilisation Fund has provided support through a number of ways including food banks and provision of hot meals to isolating residents unable to leave their homes.

Ward Community Meetings and events have not been permitted to take place in usual way over the past year. Despite the restrictions on physical meetings alternative methods were piloted over the winter period with 11 online meetings taking place. Democratic Services Officers working with the Ward & Community Engagement Team have supported Councillors to undertake this activity

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using the Zoom platform. Consideration is given to options for future approaches to ward community meetings and early feedback from the pilot meetings.

What is Ward Community Funding?

Each of Leicester's 21 electoral wards hold community events where members of the public have the opportunity to meet councillors and council partners to help shape the services provided in their community. Each ward is allocated an annual budget of £18,000 which can be used to support projects that bring benefits to that ward. In 2020/2021 a total of **422** applications for ward funding were received and of these **72** were withdrawn, leaving **350** for consideration. The table below provides an outline of the number of applications received and of those, the number withdrawn:

Constituency	Number of applications received
East	129 (22)
South	147 (30)
West	146 (20)
Total	422 (72)

Case study

Ward:	Abbey
Amount awarded:	4 x £2,000
Project name:	I.T for all

Summary of activity/event:

Four Primary schools in Abbey Ward applied for ward funding to purchase extra ipads, laptops or kindles to ensure that children from low income families were not disadvantaged and to enable them to remote/home learn in the same way as the rest of the school during the Coronavirus pandemic

Outcome:

Across the four schools, over thirty items of equipment were purchased, which ensured the continuation of home learning for children in Abbey Ward schools during these unprecedented times.

The application process

Councillors are supportive of projects that bring benefits to their ward and those that address local priorities. Councillors tend to want to support as wide a range of activities as possible and for this reason generally do not support many proposals which would take up a large proportion of their funds. To assist with this, Councillors have the flexibility to make local arrangements for their ward to set limits on how much funding can be allocated to each application.

Each application is reviewed against key priorities defined locally by ward councillors and against predefined criteria ensuring applications do not breach any of the funding conditions as set out within the guidance for Ward Funding, as outlined below.

What cannot be funded?

Ward Community funding **cannot** be used for the following:

- Staffing, except temporary staff or specialists brought in to do a specific and short term piece of work
- Full costs of infrastructure, running costs or capital investment
- Recoverable VAT
- Any liability arising out of illegality or negligence
- Any form of gambling (except small fundraising activities e.g. raffle, tombola etc)
- Exclusively religious activity
- Political activity
- An event or activity which has already taken place
- Applications from organisations from which previous evaluation information and funding has not been accounted for.

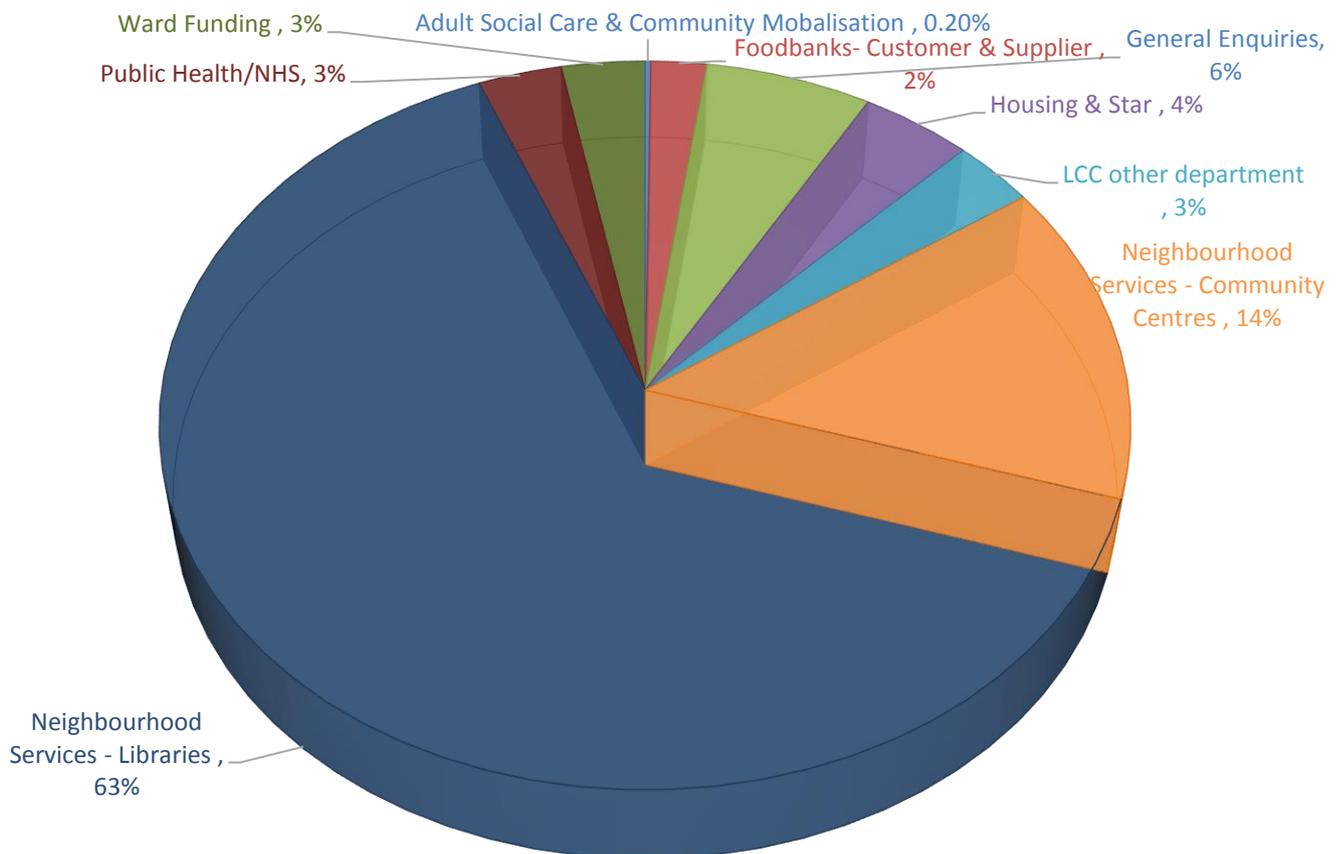
Following the review of each application, Councillors are presented with an assessment, summarising the key points of the application and any additional information received on request. It will include a recommendation to Support or Reject based on compliance with ward funding guidelines and also highlight the merits and/or limitations of the application. Ward Councillors are asked to consider these assessments to determine whether to support applications for funding.

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Ward Engagement Helpline

The ward engagement helpline allows applicants to call the team for information, advice and guidance around any stage of the application process. As a direct and swift response to Covid-19, from 23rd March 2020, all community centre and library phone lines were diverted to this helpline, and the ward engagement team were tasked with providing signposting and information for a wide range of enquiries from the public. A total of 2,511 phone calls have been recorded. The breakdown of types of enquiry is as follows:

- Adult Social Care & Community Mobilisation
- Foodbank Enquiries – Customer and Supplier
- General Enquiries
- Housing and Supporting Tenants And Residents (STAR)
- LCC - other department
- Neighbourhood Services – Community Centres
- Neighbourhood Services – Libraries
- Public Health/NHS enquiries
- Ward Funding



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Ward Engagement and Neighbourhood Services Helpline – Call Type

Neighbourhood Services – Libraries 63%

Telephone calls during the early and mid-part of the restrictions covered queries relating to the library services opening, and book loan returns. Call queries also included requests for access to online library services, printing, and computers. More general calls included requests for orange refuse bags, telephone number requests for other, non-council services, and general information.

As the restrictions eased after the first lockdown, Neighbourhood Services expanded the services being delivered. Order and collect, books at home, and the telephone contact service, resulted in a slight reduction of calls to the helpline, however calls relating to libraries remained consistently high.

Neighbourhood Services - Community Centres 14%

Telephone calls concerning community centres remained consistent, with queries that covered:

- Opening Times
- Queries concerning eat in and take away food availability, in particular, at the African Caribbean Centre
- Room hire availability
- Availability of Adult Learning classes

General Enquiries – 6%

General enquiry calls cover enquiries relating to people who were experiencing very difficult situations, and circumstances as a result of the restrictions. The calls under general enquiry included requests for help with;

- Domestic violence
- Families with no food

People who were alone and isolated

Housing and STAR (Supporting Tenants and Residents) – 4%

Telephone calls relating to both Housing and STAR, which are based in some Neighbourhood Services Centres, reduced mid-way through the restrictions. In the early stages some customers needed signposting to the separate helpline service and contact point for the housing department, or STAR services.

Ward Funding – 3%

Overall telephone calls relating to ward funding have decreased over the restriction period. Ward engagement work continued as normal over this time frame. The majority of calls related to people enquiring about funding to support;

- Food Parcel supplies and delivery

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- Online activities
- Positive mental health related projects

Public Health / NHS – 3%

Telephone calls relating to public health and the NHS increased in the later stages of the restrictions. This was following the opening of additional test and rapid testing centres based in some of the Neighbourhood Services centres, along with the availability of the vaccine. The calls cover information request on:

- Booking a test
- Test results
- Opening times

Other Council Services 3%

The helpline received the majority of the calls to other Council services in the early stages of the first lockdown. These calls were varied ranging from requests for waste management, the community safety ASB team and electoral services.

Food Bank Enquiries – 2%

The food bank related calls were in the main from families who said they were suffering from hardship and required urgent assistance.

Case study

Ward: Eyres Monsell

Amount awarded: £750.00

Project name: Perfect You – Covid Virtual Befriending Project.

Summary of activity/event:

'Perfect You' – a Covid Virtual Befriending Service, was set up, a qualified counsellor and four volunteer counsellors. The project aimed to assist and support residents within the Eyres Monsell ward, who were experiencing mental health, social isolation, and loneliness issues, due to the imposed restrictions. The befriending service project provided weekly contact, via telephone and zoom calls, with people who had either seen the service advertised locally or had been referred by other services. The contact service was also supported by an online website, that provided suggestions and exercises that people could read, and follow, in order to gain positive reinforcement and self-esteem building tools.

Outcome:

'Perfect You' – Covid Virtual Befriending Project received over 100 calls from December 2020 to March 2021 from people within the Eyres Monsell ward. The calls ranged from people who just wanted to talk, to people who expressed concerns over their mental health, due to their regular services being temporarily closed. The Project was able to provide support, and a friendly 'ear' when people most needed it.

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Successful applications

Between April 2020 and March 2021, a total of **288** applications were successful in receiving ward funding. The following table provides details of the number of successful applications per ward.

Constituency	Number of applications received for consideration	Number supported over £500	Number supported up to £500	Total Number of applications supported
East	107	46	31	77
South	117	73	32	105
West	126	47	59	106
Total	350	166	122	288

Types of ward funded activity

Ward funding was provided for a number of local priorities and events determined by ward councillors. As part of analysing the successful applications each project/activity was identified under the most appropriate category relating to the purpose of funding. The categories are identified as follows:

Category	Description
Education and Improving Skills	Projects that support the community in gaining further skills, e.g. computer, numeracy, and literacy, back to work and self-confidence.
Community and Social Events	A way of promoting community cohesion, to integrate and network. Examples include family fun days, day trips and lunch clubs.
Environmental events/projects	Improving the environment throughout neighbourhoods and communities. Examples include City Warden clean ups, clearing fly tipping and litter picking campaigns, and work in Parks with volunteers
Sports and Leisure	A way of improving health and well-being through sports and leisure. Examples include football teams, various sporting activities, indoor bowls, knitting clubs, art groups and exhibitions
Developing and Supporting Communities	To meet the current needs of the community, making neighbourhoods stronger and empowering for sustainable

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	development. For example, Coronavirus initiatives, mental health advice in schools projects, community events and foodbanks
Arts /Cultural/Celebration Events	Events that are specified as key cultural aspects, can sometimes be inclusive around religion for example Holi Celebrations, Eid Celebrations, Christmas, and Halloween events that are open and welcome to all.
Traffic and Highways	Work/initiatives around highway improvements, speeding and raising awareness throughout the community, and traffic safety including installation of bollards.

The table below provides an outline of the number of applications supported across the different types of activity.

Constituency	Type of activity						Total
	Community / Social events	Arts & Culture/ Celebration Events	Developing & Supporting Communities / Volunteering & Other	Education and Improving Skills	Environmental Events/ Projects	Sports/ Leisure	
East	7	3	32	9	11	15	77
South	6	7	62	13	8	9	105
West	3	11	47	22	8	15	106
Total	16	21	141	44	27	39	288

The following table provides details of the amount of funding awarded in support of activities across the different categories. The total awarded was **£378,233**.

Constituency	Community/social events	Cultural/celebration events	Developing & Supporting Communities / Volunteering & Other	Education and improving skills	Environmental event/projects	Sports and leisure	Total
East	£5,423	£1,780	£47,291	£11,020	£39,155	£17,850	£122,519
South	£12,700	£4,840	£72,412	£32,298	£10,467	£12,579	£145,296
West	£1,100	£6,760	£48,136	£28,566	£13,510	£12,346	£110,418

Case study

Ward: Evington / Thurncourt / Troon.

Amount awarded: £1,500 - £500 per ward.

Project name: Covid -19 Food Share.

Summary of activity/event:

The Covid-19 Government restriction saw the temporary closure of local lunch clubs for many vulnerable older people across the city. To ensure that older, vulnerable, isolated people in the Evington, Thurncourt, and Troon wards, received hot meals, regular contact and support during the Covid 'lockdown', ward councillors funded a local food share to include cooked meals in their service provision. The project was organised to enable the cooks from the existing lunch clubs to cook hot, wholesome meals in the food share kitchens. The meals were then distributed across the wards to the people who would ordinarily attend the lunch club for their meals. The delivery volunteers safely delivered the hot meals following public health covid-19 guidelines. They were also able to check on the lunch club members isolating at home and provide support if needed. In addition to the hot meals and support, the volunteers would make contact with vulnerable people, who did not ordinarily attend a lunch club, to ensure that hot meals were available if needed, to many of the other vulnerable people and families within the wards.

Outcome: Across three wards, 250 hot meals were prepared and delivered twice a week, by the food share. In addition to hot meals, the Foodshare Project delivered 300 food parcels a week to vulnerable families in the areas.

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Covid-19 Specific Ward Funded Projects

Ward Councillors utilised their ward funding budgets to support Covid-19 specific projects and initiatives, that significantly helped in building strong community resilience, cohesion, and community action. These included food banks, online fitness, socially distanced befriending and support accessing essential services, devices for schools to support with home learning and health awareness support.

The total amount of ward funding spent on Covid-19 specific projects was **£128,536**, which amounts to **41%** of the total amount of funding awarded in 2020/2021.

Constituency	Number of Projects Supported	Total Funding Amount
East	25	£28,450
South	37	£50,100
West	38	£49,986
TOTAL	100	£128,536

Public participation

The following table provides a breakdown of the estimated number of people participating and/or considered beneficiaries of ward funded activity. The table also provides a comparison of the number of beneficiaries against the amount of funding awarded.

Constituency	Number of estimated attendees within the ward	Number of estimated attendees from outside of the ward	Total Estimated Number of attendees
East	41,437	23,598	65,035
South	89,948	75,738	165,686
West	51,327	10,062	61,389
Grand Total	182,712	109,398	292,110

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Volunteer engagement

The table below provides information about the estimated number of volunteers engaged in organising, coordinating, and delivering ward funded activities.

Constituency	Number of volunteers						Total
	Community /Social Events	Cultural/ Celebration Events	Developing & Supporting Communities / Volunteering & Other	Education and Improving Skills	Environmental Events/ Projects	Sports/ Leisure	
East	53	36	273	12	10	68	452
South	32	36	312	12	44	109	545
West	13	53	333	20	15	76	510
Grand Total	98	125	918	44	69	253	1507

Council led schemes

Through discussions with local residents and Council services were able to deliver ward specific priorities through ward funding projects. A total of 45 applications for Council led projects/schemes were awarded Ward Funding to a total value of **£129,825.00** (this represents 34% of the total amount of funding awarded) to support identified local priorities. The table below provides details of the service areas that delivered ward funded projects to support local priorities in 2020/21.

Service area	Number of schemes	Amount of funding
Children /Youth Services	9	£6510
City Wardens	7	£32,340
Community Safety	4	£11,650
Highways/Transport	13	£50,310
Housing	6	£7,900
Libraries	1	£750
Parks	5	£20,365
Total	45	£129,825

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Declared 'Other Sources' Funding

Ward funding applicants are required to itemise other sources of matched funding drawn in to support the full delivery of projects. The additional funding contributions made possible by the ward funding programme in 2020-21 are summarised in the table below:

Constituency	Amount
East	£154,958
South	£212,360
West	£174,693
Total	£542,011

Community Mobilisation Fund (Amy Oliver)

The Council allocated £105,000 in a Community Mobilisation Fund to support community action during the pandemic. This fund supported various organisations such as foodbanks, homeless charities and other voluntary groups. Some of the ways these organisations assisted communities are provided below:

- Providing additional funding to the foodbanks & homeless charities to support with additional demand.
- Delivering food or collecting prescriptions to those who were shielding.
- Providing activity packs to children.

The spend by constituency is provided in the table below:

Constituency	Total
East	38,063.48
South	32,814.95
West	31,638.94
TOTALS	102,517.37

Ward Community Meetings (Matthew Reeves)

Background

The Council has been holding Ward Community Meetings in their current ward based format for over a decade. They are an open, transparent and effective means of Councillors engaging with their communities and within neighbourhoods where discussion and debates can be held on matters of local importance and they offer an outlet for communities to express their views directly with their representatives, relevant officers or other agencies. There is also a budget associated with the work of Ward Community meetings and this can be spent on matters of local priority identified at Ward Community Meetings, as detailed elsewhere in this report.

The framework which determines the meetings objectives and how they operate is detailed at part 3 of the Council's Constitution. Whilst they aren't formally part of the Council's decision making structure, they offer a clear route for matters of concern to be raised with decision makers. Each ward in the City has the opportunity to undertake 3 meetings or other forms of engagement (such

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as a patch walk) per year. Most wards however utilise a familiar meeting format within a suitable accessible venue within each ward which tends to have good public recognition.

Prior to the pandemic, most wards would hold meetings in community venues, often covering different parts of their ward throughout the year. These would be held in a traditional meeting format with an agenda and action notes arising.

Other wards have explored different approaches to holding meetings. This has included a 'hybrid' type format where part of the meeting is more formal ie receive updates on ward matters, and the other part is informal where elected members and officers are available to speak with residents on a one to one basis. There are also examples where the entire event has been informal discussions. Some wards have also used meetings to invite guest speakers along, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Another format which has been used has been to hold patchwalks where officers and residents gather in a particular location and walk through a defined area and any local issues can be identified and passed on to relevant service officers to look into.

Current status

In common with all the Council's formal meetings and other forms of Member / community engagement, the holding of Ward Community Meetings has been restricted over the past year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Holding public meetings in community venues was understandably not possible. However, towards the end of 2020, several pilot / trial meetings, were developed following efforts to explore how they could work in a virtual format. A call for interest was made to elected Members, and plans were put in place to hold meetings which covered a range of areas across the City to see if the public were willing to engage using virtual meeting formats.

These initial meetings worked well, most had good levels of attendance and engagement and they were able to act as a positive part of the consultations into the City's Local Plan and hospital reconfiguration proposals. It does however have to be acknowledged that not everyone was willing or able to access virtual meetings and some feedback on this basis was received.

Moving forward

It is anticipated that in the new municipal year, as restrictions ease, the programme will be more in line with the usual meetings or engagement events for each ward.

The format of these meetings very much depends on the progress of the government's roadmap, availability of suitable venues and willingness of people to engage in public meetings. It is therefore anticipated that some further meetings may be held in a virtual format and moving towards in person events as it becomes safe to do so and there is public willingness to engage in this way. Whilst it is difficult at this point to give a clear indication of when it may be possible to hold physical meetings events in a public format, officers will keep this under review and raise this with Members when this will be possible.

Ward Community Engagement officers are meeting with elected Members from each ward to discuss possible options for holding meetings or events in their ward. The option to hold virtual meetings remains an option going forward and this can be considered alongside the other possible formats. Elected Members are very much welcomed to consider the wide range of different types

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of meetings or events and discuss the feasibility of holding these with their Ward Community Engagement officer once it is safe to do so.