

# Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission

Ward Engagement & Funding Report 2021 – 22

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# Annual Report 2021/22 Ward Engagement

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of how Ward Funding was spent across the city between April 2021 and March 2022. This report seeks to provide an insight into the variety of projects and initiatives that took place in the wards, and some of those that were important to residents locally.

## 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 a yearly budget of £18,000 which can be used to support projects that bring benefits to that ward. In 2021/2022 a total of **482** applications for Ward Funding were received and of these **60** were withdrawn, leaving **422** for consideration. The table below provides an outline of the number of applications received and of those, the number withdrawn: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         | 144 (14)                        |
| South        | 194 (30)                        |
| West         | 144 (16)                        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>482 (60)</b>                 |

### Case study

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Ward:           | Abbey            |
| Amount awarded: | £500.00          |
| Project name:   | Day at the coast |

#### Summary of activity/event:

Through isolation, many people did not get to meet one another for 18 months. No groups had met at the local Tudor Centre as the Centre was closed to groups mixing and became a track and trace venue for COVID cases. Once restrictions had eased, a representative from each of the groups that meet at Tudor Centre got together and arranged a day out at the coast for local people to enjoy. Ward funding was used to pay for transport.

#### Outcome:

An excellent day was had by the 50+ people who attended, and by socialising together, this resulted in small groups starting to meet up again at the centre.

This reduced loneliness and social isolation caused by the pandemic, and improved the health and wellbeing of the local community.

\*Spinney Hill and Wycliffe Wards carried out a similar scheme to the above to the benefit of local people

## 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 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 thoroughly 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 or 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 whether the application is in breach of the Ward Funding guidelines and also highlight the merits and/or limitations of the application. Ward Councillors are asked to consider these findings to determine whether to support applications for funding.

## Case study

Ward: Belgrave

Amount awarded: £1,087

Project name: Belgrave Community Dog Club

### Summary of activity/event:

The Belgrave Community Dog Club are a group of residents who came together to create a local dog club. The Club's objectives were to address the concerns over the growing number of dog owners in the Belgrave ward, who use the Cossington Recreation Park to walk and exercise their dogs, in some cases irresponsibly. The Club received ward funding to be able to work with the dog owners who had limited control or who were inexperienced in owning a dog, to prevent bad dog, and owner behaviour, uncleared dog fouling, and to reduce the fear of dogs, by people who use the park.

### The Dog Club Provided:

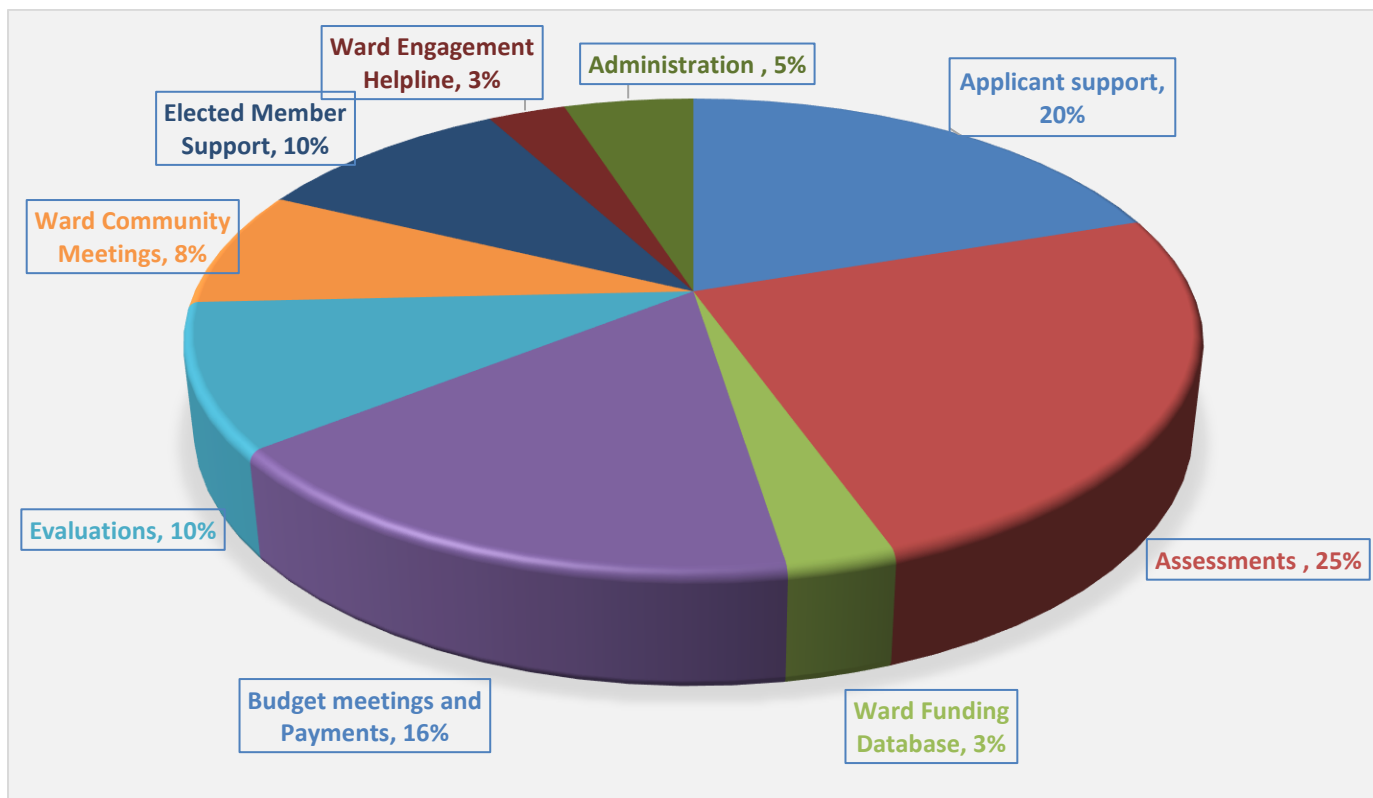
- Free, six-week dog and owner obedience training sessions, held on Cossington Recreation Park led by a qualified trainer
- Information on the legal responsibilities of owning a dog
- Equipment to dispose of dog fouling
- Organised joint walks
- Information on dog nutrition and wellbeing
- A contact point for non-dog owners to be able to discuss issues or problems with dogs on the park

### Outcome:

The obedience training had eight to twelve participants, each week, during the six-week course. This resulted in up to twelve puppies, and dogs being socialised, and receiving basic obedience training. The overall outcome was that all park users could enjoy the park, feel safe around dogs, and a reduction in uncleared dog fouling. The Community Dog Club have been supported in two other wards, Aylestone and Eyres Monsell to deliver the Community Dog Training Project, within the ward's parks and green spaces.

## Ward Engagement Duties

The ward engagement team manage all aspects of Ward Funding Applications, from submission by applicant right up until the evaluation has been received. Officers also play a significant part in the organisation and facilitation of Ward Community meetings across the city. Although every day can be different for each Ward Community Engagement Officer, below is an approximate breakdown of time spent on various duties, followed by a brief description.



### Applicant support

Ward Engagement Officers provide one to one support to applicants wanting to apply for Ward Funding. Officers meet with applicants in person, at either Community Centres or Libraries, where they provide advice and support with submitting their application. Officers will discuss the process with applicants along with explaining the requirements needed to meet the criteria and guidelines, including the evaluation stage. Officers also provide support to applicants over the phone and via e-mail.

## **Annual Report 2021/22 Ward Engagement Assessments**

Once an application has been submitted, it will be assigned to the relevant Engagement Officer who is responsible for the ward that has been applied to. Officers read through each application and contact the applicant to gather any additional information. Once all necessary information has been received, an assessment is then completed with an overview of the project, and a detailed check that the application meets Ward Funding Guidelines. Every assessments moderated by another Ward Community Engagement officer who is not connected with the application.

### **Ward Funding Database**

All applications can be accessed through the Ward Funding Database, and it is where the Engagement Officers monitor each application. Officers update and make notes on each application along various stages of the process. For example, dates of contact with applicant, dates of application sent to members and once a decision has been reached on an application. Officers also extract data and reports from the database which are needed to obtain information on previous applications and to provide a breakdown of current spend per Ward.

### **Budget meetings and Payments**

There are three funding rounds per year (end of January, May and September) and after each funding round, officers arrange to meet with Ward Councillors to discuss all of the applications received, ensuring assessments and applications are supplied prior to the meeting.

During the budget meeting, officers and Councillors discuss each application and assessment to inform their decision. Councillors may ask for additional information to support their decision which may require officers to make further contact with applicants before Councillors can make a decision.

Applications under £500 do not need to be considered at a budget meeting. Instead, Officers will e-mail members the application and assessment under a fast-track process. Officers will then monitor the outcome and responses from members.

Once a decision is reached on an application, the database is updated accordingly. All supported applications are listed on a report generated ahead of Executive sign off.

Once supported applications have been signed off by the appointed Executive lead, Ward Engagement officers send e-mails to all applicants informing them of the outcome of their application.

## **Annual Report 2021/22 Ward Engagement Evaluations**

For every application that has been supported, an evaluation along with receipts and invoices are required by stated deadline. Officers proactively chase outstanding evaluations with applicants. Applications are only closed once evaluations have been received and receipts and invoices checked to reconcile expenditure.

### **Ward Community Meetings**

Ward Engagement Officers discuss venues, dates, and agendas at budget meetings with members. Officers will contact the Democratic Support Team to inform them of the preferred venue and dates. Once an agenda is confirmed, officers will then contact those asked to attend and the confirmed agenda will also be sent to the Democratic Support Team who will publish online. Prior to the Ward Meeting officers will e-mail members all confirmed attendees and send over the budget briefing report which will be presented at the Ward Meeting. Prior to the Ward Meeting, officers ensure that any necessary actions noted in the previous meetings minutes, are followed up and completed, ready to confirm at the Ward Meeting.

At the Ward Meeting officers will support Members at the head table by highlighting any matters to the Chair and to confirm the action log from a previous meeting. Officers are also on hand to take back any concerns or queries from the public and that they are noted in the minutes if necessary. Officers present the Ward Funding Budget under the agenda item where a breakdown of the funding is presented. Often members of the public have questions on the budget or how they can access funding and so officers will answer accordingly.

After the Ward Meeting, officers confirm with the Democratic Support Team that the minutes are correct ahead of publishing. Officers also monitor and track the actions noted.

### **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. Officers take calls and provide information and support accordingly. Each call is logged on a spreadsheet. If the call is for a specific officer, then an e-mail is sent to inform them of the call. This information is used for annual reports.



### Case study

Ward: Westcotes

Amount awarded: £500

Project name: Stay Fit and Healthy in Pregnancy

#### Summary of activity/event:

The 'Stay Fit and Healthy in Pregnancy' Project was formed following a meeting of two pregnant women, who met in their doctor's surgery. They began to discuss resources and healthy activities which would enable them to stay fit and active whilst pregnant. The women wanted to provide a space that would enable themselves and other women to access prenatal exercises, breathing techniques, health and nutrition, and general self-care advice and information. The project aimed to engage, in particular, with those from diverse backgrounds to increase knowledge and awareness. The Ward Funding enabled the women to hire a room in a local community centre and help pay towards the initial costs for a specialist instructor. The weekly prenatal classes also included specialist information sessions on health, nutrition and self-care during and after pregnancy, from local health care providers.

#### Outcome:

The group expanded from six to twenty two women. Many of the women have given birth, including the women who started the project. As a result of the success of the project the women will be looking to restart the group, to include prenatal and postnatal fitness and health sessions.

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## Successful applications

Between April 2021 and March 2022, a total of **363** applications were successful in receiving Ward Funding. The following table provides details of the number of successful applications per constituency:

| Constituency | Number of applications received for consideration | Number supported over £500 | Number supported up to £500 | Total Number of applications supported |
|--------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| East         | 144   | 68                         | 42                          | 110                                    |
| South        | 194   | 79                         | 62                          | 141                                    |
| West         | 144   | 46                         | 66                          | 112                                    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>482</b>  | <b>193</b>                 | <b>170</b>                  | <b>363</b>                             |

## 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 likely category relative to the purpose of funding. The categories are identified as follows:

| Category                                     | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Community and Social Events</b>           | A way of promoting community cohesion, to integrate and network. Examples include family fun days, day trips and lunch clubs.   |
| <b>Arts /Cultural/Celebration Events</b>     | 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.                      |
| <b>Developing and Supporting Communities</b> | To meet the current needs of the community, making neighbourhoods stronger and empowering for sustainable development. For example, Coronavirus initiatives, mental health advice in school projects, community events and foodbanks. |
| <b>Education and Improving Skills</b>        | Projects that support the community in gaining further skills, e.g. computer, numeracy, and literacy, back to work and self-confidence.   |

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|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Environmental events/projects</b> | 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. |
| <b>Sports and Leisure</b>            | 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.       |
| <b>Traffic and Highways</b>          | 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 | Developing & Supporting Communities/Volunteering | Education and Improving Skills | Environmental Events/ Projects | Sports/ Leisure | Other     |            |
| East         | 14                        | 10             | 46   | 5                              | 7                              | 22              | 6         | <b>110</b> |
| South        | 18                        | 10             | 76   | 9                              | 2                              | 20              | 6         | <b>141</b> |
| West         | 9                         | 10             | 54   | 3                              | 4                              | 20              | 12        | <b>112</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>41</b>                 | <b>30</b>      | <b>176</b>                                       | <b>17</b>                      | <b>13</b>                      | <b>62</b>       | <b>24</b> | <b>363</b> |

The following table provides details of the amount of funding awarded in support of activities across the different categories. The total awarded was **£383,929.12**

| Constituency | Type of activity          |                |  |                              |                                |                   |                | Total              |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|
|              | Community / Social events | Arts & Culture | Developing & Supporting Communities/Volunteering | Education & Improving Skills | Environmental Events/ Projects | Sports/ Leisure   | Other          |                    |
| East         | £15,136                   | £7,610         | £58,668  | £6,035                       | £17,416.50                     | £18,468.44        | £4,930         | <b>£128,263.94</b> |
| South        | £23,560                   | £8,296         | £77,471.42                                       | £13,445.58                   | £1,040                         | £18,380.98        | £3,800         | <b>£145,993.98</b> |
| West         | £5,500                    | £7,615         | £49,187.20                                       | £2,869                       | £8,930                         | £24,710           | £10,860        | <b>£109,671.20</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>£44,196</b>            | <b>£23,521</b> | <b>£185,326.62</b>                               | <b>£22,349.58</b>            | <b>£27,386.50</b>              | <b>£61,559.42</b> | <b>£19,590</b> | <b>£383,929.12</b> |

## Case study

Ward: Rushey Mead, Belgrave and Abbey wards

Amount awarded: £1200.00

Project name: 'I'm Jit and I'm an alcoholic'

### Summary of activity/event:

The applicant, after many years of drink addiction, causing years of heartache and pain to his family and friends, decided to try and get his life back on track. He was successful, with a great deal of family, friends, and agency support. He wanted to put a video together to talk about addiction, in particular the taboo nature of the subject within the South Asian culture. The video showed the implications of drinking heavily; loss of family, friends and relationships, loss of employment, increased debt, and exposure to domestic violence. After consulting with other agencies and individuals about the project, the applicant began to work with others to put the video together. The message was clear and powerful; 'Let's Get Talking'. The video emphasised the importance of asking for help and not being ashamed of struggling. The aim was to increase awareness of the negative effects of addiction, and to encourage conversation and peer support within the community.

### Outcome:

A preview of the video was attended by over 70 people at Judgemeanow College, with a Question and Answer session to follow. The video will now be shown in various venues in the hope that people affected by addiction can access help and support.

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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 Engaged |                |   |                              |                                |                 |            | Total       |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
|              | Community / Social events    | Arts & Culture | Developing & Supporting Communities/ Volunteering | Education & Improving Skills | Environmental Events/ Projects | Sports/ Leisure | Other      |             |
| East         | 224                          | 222            | 357   | 49                           | 35                             | 168             | 47         | <b>1102</b> |
| South        | 333                          | 438            | 608   | 69                           | 6                              | 143             | 112        | <b>1709</b> |
| West         | 75                           | 334            | 630   | 8                            | 16                             | 174             | 430        | <b>1667</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>632</b>                   | <b>994</b>     | <b>1595</b>                                       | <b>126</b>                   | <b>57</b>                      | <b>485</b>      | <b>589</b> | <b>4478</b> |

## Council schemes

Through discussions with local residents and Council services, ward specific priorities or issues are often identified. A total of 19 applications for Council led projects/schemes were awarded Ward Funding to a total value of **£46,806** (21.64% of the total amount of funding awarded) to help address local issues/priorities that could not be funded by core service budgets. The table below provides details of the service areas that received funding in 2021/22.

| Service area             | Number of schemes | Amount of funding |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Children /Youth Services | 0                 | £0                |
| City Wardens             | 3                 | £6,125            |
| Community Safety         | 0                 | £0                |
| Festivals/Events         | 1                 | £1,500            |
| Highways/Transport       | 4                 | £19,145           |
| Housing                  | 1                 | £607              |
| Libraries                | 7                 | £3,477            |
| Parks                    | 3                 | £15,952           |
| Police                   | 0                 | £0                |
| Public Health            | 0                 | £0                |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>19</b>         | <b>£46,806</b>    |

## Annual Report 2021/22 Ward Engagement Declared 'Other Sources' of Funding

As part of the application process, applicants show how the projects/activities are supported through other sources of funding. In total £567,767 of matched funding was leveraged through the Ward Funding scheme. The table below shows the matched funding by ward:

| Constituency | Amount          |
|--------------|-----------------|
| East         | £167,889        |
| South        | £171,403        |
| West         | £228,475        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>£567,767</b> |

## Ward Community Meetings

### 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 three meetings or other forms of engagement (such 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.

### Current Status

The coronavirus pandemic restricted the delivery of Ward Community Meetings over the past 2 years, and 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 of the City and to test engagement using virtual meeting formats.

Nevertheless, many restrictions have eased, and The Ward Engagement Team, Elected Members and Democratic Services are now able to deliver Ward Community Meetings in the same way as before. An initial trial of physical meetings has already taken place, in a safe and measured way, with more planned in. A holistic approach is being taken when organising these meetings, something that will continue going forward.

## Moving Forward

Ward Community Engagement officers will continue to support Ward Councillors with three engagement activities per year. These include Ward Community meetings, Consultation events and Patch walks. Officers will arrange planning meetings with elected Members from each ward, to discuss and agree the shape of each meeting going forward. The option to hold virtual meetings will now remain an option going forward, and this can be considered alongside the other possible formats. In partnership with the Democratic Support Team, Ward Engagement Officers will meet with elected members to set agendas, and discuss proposed dates and venues, with a view to increase participation and engagement from the local community.

In addition, Ward Community Engagement Officers will continue to process all Ward Funding applications from assessment right up to consideration from Elected Members and arranging payment. Officers will also continue to collate all evaluations for successful applications. Applicants are now able to receive one to one support with Ward Community Engagement Officers when applying for Ward Funding. Officers will be arranging drop-in sessions at Libraries or Community Centres, where potential applicants can come and be supported with the process. The team will also continue to take calls on the Ward Engagement Helpline and provide information and support to applicants.