
Annual ward funding report 2025-26

Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 2nd November 2026

Lead director: Sean Atterbury

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Lee Warner
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- Report version number: Final

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of how Ward Funding was spent across the city between April 2025 and March 2026. 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.
- 1.2 An annual budget of £18,000 per ward is allocated which can be used to support projects that bring benefits to that ward. The total annual budget for ward funding is £378,000
- 1.3 In non-election years each ward is permitted to carry over up to 10% of the annual ward budget. An underspend of £14,529 was carried over from the previous financial year 2024/2025 to give a total budget of £392,529 for ward funding in 2025/2026.
- 1.4 In 2025/2026 a total of 559 applications for Ward Funding were received. Of these 52 were withdrawn, leaving 507 for consideration. A total of 426 applications were successful in receiving Ward Funding.
- 1.5 The total amount of ward funding approved for grants for the financial year 2025/2026 was £378,609.
- 1.6 A global underspend of £13,025 was carried over to the current financial year, 2026/2027.
- 1.7 No carry over of ward funding will be permitted for the current financial year, as local elections are due to take place in May 2027.
- 1.8 The report provides further detail on the category and type of grant funded activities delivered, the overall number of volunteers engaged, and the amount of matched funding leveraged.
- 1.9 The report also summarises updates to the ward funding policy which are made to improve processes and timescales.

2. Recommended actions

- 2.1 Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the report on ward engagement and community funding for the year 2025/2026.

3. Background and options with supporting evidence

3.1 The annual ward funding is provided as appendix A.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

This report presents a summary of how ward funding has been spent across the city for 2025/26. As such there are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 14th October 2026

5.2 Legal implications

The report is for noting and therefore does not give rise to any direct legal implications.

Signed: Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor, Commercial Legal Team

Dated: 14th October 2026

5.3 Equalities implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report as it is for noting, however ward community funding supports a wide range of local projects and activities that contribute to the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty by helping to foster good relations between different communities, encouraging participation in community life and improving access to opportunities and services for residents from a range of protected characteristics. Ongoing monitoring of applications and outcomes should continue to ensure that the funding remains accessible, equitable and able to respond to the needs of Leicester's diverse communities. The report includes examples of support provided to community groups serving women, families, older people and culturally diverse communities.

Protected groups under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 14 October 2026

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications arising directly from the recommendation to note this report. The report highlights that ward funding has supported some environmental improvement and community-based projects which may contribute to Climate Ready Leicester objectives.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 20 October 2026

5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

N/A

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A: Annual ward funding report 2025 – 26

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of how Ward Funding was spent across the city between April 2025 and March 2026. 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 is allocated a yearly budget of £18,000 which can be used to support projects that bring benefits to that ward. Councillors support a wide a range of activities, events and projects. Councillors also have the flexibility to make local arrangements for their ward to set limits on how much funding can be allocated to each application.

Constituencies

East	South	West
Belgrave	Aylestone	Abbey
Evington	Castle	Beaumont Leys
Humberstone and Hamilton	Eyres Monsell	Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields
North Evington	Knighton	Fosse
Rushey Mead	Saffron	Westcotes
Thurncourt	Spinney Hill	Western
Troon	Stoneygate	
	Wycliffe	

In 2025/2026 a total of 559 applications for Ward Funding were received. Of these 52 were withdrawn, leaving 507 for consideration. The table below provides an outline of the number of applications received and of those, the number withdrawn:

Wards	Number of applications received	Number of applications withdrawn	Number of applications for consideration
East	200	22	178
South	213	15	198
West	146	15	131
Total	559	52	507

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 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 Ward Funding Policy, as outlined below

What cannot be funded?

1. Ward Community funding cannot be used for the following:
2. Staffing, except temporary staff or specialist staff brought in to do a specific and short-term piece of work (for up to a maximum of 12 months)
3. Full costs of infrastructure, running costs or capital investment
4. Recoverable VAT – Ward Funding cannot be awarded for monies that will be reclaimed back as recoverable VAT by the applicant / organisation
5. Any liability arising out of illegality or negligence
6. Any form of gambling (except small fundraising activities e.g., raffle, tombola)
7. Exclusively religious activity
8. Political activity
9. Applications where previously awarded funds have not been accounted for with an evaluation and evidence of expenditure
10. An event or activity which has already taken place e.g. an application that is submitted on the day of or after the activity, event, or project has taken place (Retrospective Application).

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, highlighting the merits and/or limitations of the application, based on officer opinion. Ward Councillors are asked to consider these findings to determine their decisions.

Case study

Ward: Eyres Monsell

Amount awarded: £499

Project name: Femina (Polish) Women's Community.

Summary of activity/event:

Femina began as an exercise, and yoga group for Mum and Tots, for [mainly, but not exclusively] Polish women in the community. The aim was to create a safe space, to enable local mums to integrate, share experiences, and culture. Ward funding was awarded toward the costs of the room hire, and exercise mats.

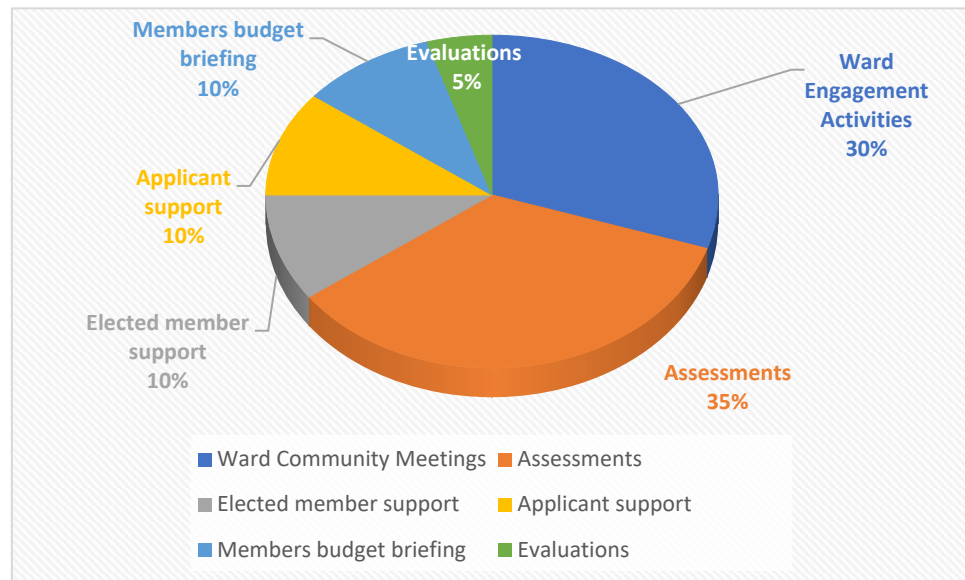
Outcome:

Femina registered as a CIC (Community Interest Company) in 2025 and secured National Lottery funding to develop their business plan. In addition to the original 'Mother and Tots Yoga Groups, Femina now provides; Self Defence Classes for Women, Women's Health Sessions; Art and Crafts Groups; Meet and Chat Groups; 'Tot's on the Mats'; Body Conditioning Sessions, and Zumba Classes. Femina hosts Family Sports Days, Festive Celebrations, and is currently Developing its work with older people.

From Femina's original begins as a small community activity, Femina has developed an interactive website, and a charitable arm to the organisation, as a result of the funding awarded.

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 organise and facilitate 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 Community 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.

Assessments

Once an application has been submitted, it will be assigned to the relevant Officer who is responsible for bids relating to 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 assessment is peer moderated by another Ward Community Engagement Officer and then group moderated for a final time by all officers.

Budget meetings

Ward Community Engagement Officers arrange to meet with Ward Councillors to discuss all of the applications which have been received, ensuring assessments and applications are supplied prior to the meeting. During the budget meeting, Officers and

Councillors discuss each application and assessment and confirm 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 final decision.

Applications will also be e-mailed to Ward Councillors. Officers will then monitor the outcome and responses. Once a decision is reached on an application, the Ward Funding 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, payments are processed, and Officers send confirmation e-mails to all applicants informing them of the outcome of their application.

Elected Member support

Ward Engagement officers provide support to Elected Members in relation to Ward Funding Applications and their Ward budget, Ward Community Meetings, community patch walks and general enquiries about work within their wards.

Evaluations

For every application that has been supported, an evaluation along with evidence of expenditure is required by the stated deadline. If these are not received by the given deadline, Officers follow up with applicants. Applications are only closed once evaluations have been received and receipts and invoices checked to reconcile expenditure for audit purposes.

Ward Engagement Activities

Each ward receives support for up to three ward engagement activities. This could be in the form of a ward meeting, patch walk, coffee morning or information fair. The support provided by the team includes liaising with Councillors to arrange suitable dates and venues and set the agenda. Requests for written updates from the relevant service areas are also made. After the activity, an action log is produced and published.

Successful applications

Between April 2025 and March 2026, out of 507, a total of **426** applications were successful in receiving Ward Funding. The following table provides details of the number of successful applications per constituency:

Wards	Number of applications received for consideration	Number supported up to £500	Number supported over £500	Total Number supported	Total Number not supported
East	178	76	68	144	34
South	198	84	80	164	34
West	131	61	57	118	13
Total	507	221	205	426	81

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

Category	Description
Arts and Culture e.g. Celebratory Events	Projects that are specified as arts related or include key cultural aspects. These can sometimes be inclusive around religion for example Holi, Eid, Christmas and Halloween events, that are open to all.
Developing and Supporting Communities	Projects designed to meet the current needs of the community, making neighbourhoods stronger and empowering for sustainable development such as mental health advice workshops, school projects, community information events and foodbanks.
Education and Improving Skills	Projects that support the community in gaining further skills such as ICT, numeracy and literacy, employability and self-confidence.

Environmental	Projects that help improve the environment throughout neighbourhoods and communities such as City Warden clean ups, clearance of fly tips, litter picking campaigns, and work in Parks with volunteers.
Social and Community	Projects that promote community cohesion, to integrate and network such as family fun days, day trips and lunch clubs.
Sports and Leisure	Projects that improve health and well-being through sports and leisure such as football tournaments, various sporting activities, indoor bowls, dance troupes, and knit and natter groups.
Other work e.g. Traffic and Highways	Work/initiatives around highway improvements, speeding, 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.

	Type of activity							
Wards	Arts & Culture	Developing & Supporting Communities /Volunteering	Education and Improving Skills	Environmental	Social and Community	Sports/ Leisure	Other	Total
East	9	71	6	7	12	23	16	144
South	21	81	5	13	9	23	12	164
West	18	49	9	8	7	12	15	118
Total	48	201	20	28	28	58	43	426

The following table provides details of the amount of funding awarded in support of activities across the different categories. The total awarded was £378,609.

	Type of activity							
Wards	Arts & Culture	Developing & Supporting Communities /Volunteering	Education and Improving Skills	Environment al Events/ Projects	Community / Social events	Sports/ Leisure	Other	Total
East	£3975	£59,620	£5450	£10,345	£10,640	£15,250	£23,453	£128,733
South	£13,596	£69,946	£3811	£5855	£26,972	£12,982	£10,582	£143,744
West	£14,950	£38,552	£7000	£7720	£8636	£21,044	£8230	£106,132
Total	£32,521	£168,118	£16,261	£23,920	£46,248	£49,276	£42,265	£378,609

Case study

Ward: Aylestone.

Amount awarded: £1000.

Project name: Old Aylestone Choir.

Summary of activity/event:

The Old Aylestone Choir are a 'not for profit' community 'vocal group' for all ages. That met weekly to sing, and rehearse for community concerts, and festivals. The Old Aylestone Community met for over eighteen years. As a result of the national Covid -19 Pandemic restrictions prevented the choir from meeting to sing, and plan for their community events. Consequently, through the inability to meet, and loss of regular subscription payments, the choir disbanded. Residents realising the benefits of a local choir applied for ward funding to assist in re-establishing the choir. The Old Aylestone Choir successfully secured ward funding, towards the cost of room hire, and music scores, enabling the Choir to re-form.

Outcome:

The Old Aylestone Community Choir, are once again up and running, meeting weekly to sing and rehearse for their seasonal concerts, and services. Funds raised from the events are donated towards a chosen Charity. The Choir states as a result of the ward funding support the benefits of being a member of the Choir are, an improvement to health and well-being, improved circulation, breathing and cerebral activity, and improved posture, and an overall sense of well-being, social interaction and community.

Volunteer engagement

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

Wards	Volunteers per session	Total Number of sessions / Activities	Total volunteer hours
East	1478	4803	1721
South	1691	3007	3070
West	1137	6378	1885
Total	4306	14,188	6676

Council schemes

Through discussions with residents and Council services, ward specific priorities or issues are often identified. A total of 36 applications for Council led projects/schemes were awarded Ward Funding to a total value of **£45,477** (12.8% of the total amount of funding awarded) to help address local issues and priorities that could not be funded by core service budgets. The table below provides details of the service areas that received funding in 2024/25.

Wards	Number of schemes	Amount of funding
City Wardens	6	£6,825
Festivals/Events	1	£3,000
Highways/Transport	6	£9,750
Housing	1	£10,082
Libraries	14	£7,300
Environmental	5	£8,000
Parks & Green Spaces	2	£1,500
Cleansing Services	1	£1,720
Total	36	£45,477

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 £335,257.10 of matched funding was leveraged through the Ward Funding scheme. The table below shows the matched funding by constituency area:

Wards	Amount
East	£116,947
South	£155,262.80
West	£63,047.30
Total	£335,257.10

Summary 2025-2026

Ward Community Funding has continued to demonstrate significant value locally and support for residents and communities. Over that past year (2025/2026), Ward Councillors supported a wide range of projects, activities and initiatives that strengthened neighbourhoods, promoted inclusion, supported health and wellbeing, encouraged volunteering, and enabled residents and community organisations to respond directly to local priorities.

The Ward Community Fund has continued to provide an important mechanism for supporting grassroots organisations, smaller community groups and locally led activity that may otherwise struggle to access funding opportunities. The breadth of projects delivered throughout the year demonstrates the flexibility and responsiveness of the scheme in meeting the differing needs of communities across the city.

In addition to supporting community activity directly, the scheme has also continued to leverage substantial additional investment into local neighbourhoods, with over £335,000 of matched funding secured alongside Ward Funding allocations. Volunteer engagement also remains a significant strength of the programme, with thousands of volunteer hours contributing toward the successful delivery of funded activities and events.

Ward Funding Policy

A number of updates to the ward funding guidelines are to be introduced for 2026/27 following learning and feedback received during the year from applicants, Ward Councillors and officers. The aim is to strengthen governance, improve consistency and support more timely decision making.

The key changes are:

- The introduction of clearer application response windows for both applicants and Ward Councillors to reduce application drift and improve certainty for applicants.
- A strengthened process for monitoring and reporting applications where decisions remain outstanding.

These changes are intended to support Ward Councillors and improve ward funding response times whilst retaining the flexibility to respond to the unique priorities and needs of their local communities.