

Essex County Council

Locality Fund 2020/21

What are Locality Budgets?

For the 2020/21 financial year the Council will make available the sum of £10,000 for each single member division, and £20,000 for divisions served by two councillors.

Members are able to make recommendations as to how the money is to be spent.

What can the money be spent on?

Money must be spent in a way which benefits the division. There are three main ways of spending it:

- making a grant to a registered charity, a parish council or a properly constituted community or voluntary association for the purposes of a specific service or project in the Division(s);
- buying goods or services; or
- commissioning services from ECC.

Is there anything that the money cannot be spent on?

We have tried to have as few rules as possible, but we do need some rules to ensure that everything is lawful, consistent with our standards and that Councillors are protected.

Money cannot be spent on or with:

- an organisation in which the Councillor is involved, unless the Leader agrees otherwise and makes a formal decision to that effect;
- an organisation which is political or undertakes any political campaigning activity or on a councillor's constituency business;
- anything which has a significant ongoing maintenance or support liability which ECC would be required or expected to bear – unless there is a separate agreement to bear the cost with funding identified;
- anything which benefits a particular individual, business or 'for profit' organisation;
- any organisation which does not operate on an inclusive basis – services must be available to the community without discrimination (recognising that some services are only useful to certain groups);
- any organisation which has previously misused public money;
- anything which is unlawful

Can money be spent outside a councillor's Division?

Yes, if it benefits the division or people living or working in it.

Is there a deadline for spending the money? When is the money required to be spent?

Money must be spent during the 2020/21 financial year and usually within 6 months of the award

Recommendations about spend will not be progressed during the ECC pre-election period and no recommendations may be made by anyone involved in an election.

Do councillors have to invite competing bids to allocate funding?

No. Some councillors may choose to work in this way for all or part of the money, but the budget recognises that councillors know the needs of their division. If a councillor does hold a competition, it is important that the rules are clear and that the competition is fair.

Does the money for a division have to be spent on one project?

No. There is no limit to the number of projects if the overall spend is within the budget for the division.

Can Councillors work together to 'pool' funds?

Yes, provided there is agreement, the money benefits all divisions represented by those councillors and is within the overall budgets for the divisions.

What if Councillors for a two member division don't agree how the money can be spent?

The default will be that they are each entitled to make recommendations about half the budget.

Is there a deadline for the scheme to be delivered?

We expect all projects to be completed within six months of the award.

Is there any advice available to councillors?

The ECC Strengthening Communities Team have much experience in allocating money to projects. This advice could be really helpful to councillors and they are ready and able to provide the advice needed. They can help by advising councillors on:

- ideas on how to maximise community benefit
- how to run a competition - if a councillor decides they wish to do this.
- how to use the money to leverage in funding from other sources

Can I spend the money on highways?

In principle, yes but please note that designing a highways scheme can be expensive and may have ongoing maintenance implications. Councillors can speak to their 'buddy' in the first instance if they want to investigate such a scheme.

What is the process to be followed?

We have tried to make the process as simple as we can:

Stage 1: The Councillor makes a recommendation as to how the money is to be spent. In reaching this recommendation the Councillor may do so in any way they wish.

Stage 2: The Councillor submits an application for funding to the ECC Democracy Team

Stage 3: The application will be checked to ensure that the proposal/recipient meets the criteria for funding:

- a. the proposal is supported by the relevant councillor(s); and
- b. if the proposal is for ECC to buy goods or services or provide them directly then the service which will be responsible confirms the scheme can be implemented within the proposed funding
- c. the proposal is otherwise eligible for funding
- d. there is enough money available to meet the cost.

Stage 4: Decision is made by relevant officer after consulting Councillor(s) concerned.

Stage 5: If scheme is agreed for delivery then any necessary permissions (such as landowner or planning permission) must be obtained by the Councillor or the Beneficiary before things can progress further. If the proposal is to pay a grant then a grant letter will be issued for signature by the beneficiary.

- money will normally be paid after the expenditure is incurred unless this will prejudice the delivery of the proposal in which case we may agree to pay in advance; and
- grant recipients are required to complete a monitoring form:
 - i. within one month of payment of grant; or
 - ii. six months of payment if money paid in advance